Do Lyrics Contain Objectification?
A textual analysis.

By

Alyssa Klinksiek

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Radford University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in the Department of Music.

April 2018

Copyright 2018, Alyssa Klinksiek

Timothy L Channell — 4/27/18

Dr. Timothy L. Channell
Thesis Advisor — Date

4/27/18

Dr. Meredith Bowen
Committee Member — Date

4/27/18

Dr. Robert Glarner
Committee Member — Date

Abstract

Popular music should empower women as individuals with lyrics that recognize them as equals to men. Furthermore, music should contain positive messages that promote respect for women from men. This study examines the prevalence of female objectification in popular music media through a textual analysis of 100 songs from the 2012-2016 end of year lists of the Billboard Hot 100 and Hot Country Songs.

Objectification, as this study's framework, is defined as the depersonalization of an individual with an emphasis on their instrumentality (Loughnan et al., 2010). According to Gervais and Eagan (2017), women often face objectification from men and themselves in daily life through objectifying gazes and appearance commentary. Various studies have shown that female objectification leads to depression, anxiety, disordered eating, and decreased intellectual performance and internal motivation. This study used five objectifying categories to analyze the text: objectifying gaze, appearance commentary, sex as a main priority, women portrayed as a sexual possession, and women portrayed as subordinate. This thesis will discuss the analysis and research findings.

Acknowledgements

Thank you for the help and advice with the statistical analysis, Nathan Wycoff (Virginia Tech Department of Statistics).

Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures

Chapter One: Introduction

Young women generally grow up in a world that encourages them to protect themselves from advances by men, rather than teaching young men to respect women. Women tell stories of being told to always walk in groups to deter any attack or assault, or that they should carry their keys between their knuckles to use as a weapon. Young ladies are discouraged from walking around at night, as daylight begets safety. Young women pretend to be on their phone with someone, or actually call a random person if a man starts to follow them. It seems that, in order to stay safe, young women are taught to be afraid.

Recently, a spark to end this fear was ignited. One example of fighting sexual oppression in the music industry is Kesha's accusation of sexual, physical, verbal, and emotional abuse by her producer, Dr. Luke. She was bound to contracts that prohibited her from making music without him and Sony Music. In an effort to void the contracts without being in breach of contract, she sued him for the abuse in 2014. Dr. Luke countersued for defamation and breach of contract. Other stars, such as Taylor Swift, Lady Gaga, and Demi Lovato, voiced support for Kesha through statements on social media or other public platforms. However, she was still unable to release music unless she worked with her alleged abuser. In August 2017, she released her first album since 2012, but is still caught in a legal battle with Dr. Luke (Coscarelli, 2017).

Movements to showcase how prevalent sexual harassment is in American culture are emerging. In fall of 2017, an awareness campaign swept through social media. The organization MeToo, founded in 2006, started a hashtag for the Me Too Movement. Young women, primarily, posted the message "Me too. If all the women who have been sexually harassed or

assaulted wrote “Me too.” as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem,” along with the hashtag #metoo. *The New York Times* reports that tens of thousands of women responded to one post made by actress Alyssa Milano with the comment “Me too” (Cordea-Rado, 2017). Cordea-Rado also writes that other movements have used hashtags on social media to highlight sexual harassment, such as #yesallwomen in 2014.

Beyond social media campaigns, women post editorial stories to online magazines such as Odyssey and to their personal social media accounts detailing encounters with men (and sometimes other women) who have caused them at least fear, if not actual harm. Live events such as the Amber Rose SlutWalk, an effort to raise awareness to end rape culture, are becoming more popular. In the SlutWalk, women and men gather to stand against oppression, victim blaming, and derogatory labels. At the 2018 Golden Globes, women in attendance wore black to support the Time’s Up Movement. This movement, hosted by the Time’s Up organization, promotes action against sexual harassment/assault or other inequalities in the workplace.

To support efforts against sexual misconduct, how might change be affected in the music industry? Researchers have reflected that all forms of media, including music, contain “rampant sexualization, particularly in the form of sexual objectification” and that media may be the most significant source of sexualization, especially for adolescents (Volgman, 2017, pp. 2-3). Volgman (2017) also reflected that adolescents will be influenced by images and messages sent across in music media due to their personal attachment to the music videos and lyrics. As they see and experience sexualization and objectification through music media, they will learn to accept and adopt it into their everyday lives.

Current research may imply that music media can lead to the enculturation of oppression. However, does a majority of music contain objectifying themes? If music does contain female objectification, will it be more prevalent from male or female artists? Is there any change occurring over time? Which genres contain more objectification? In an effort to answer these questions, this study examined the lyrical content of popular music from the past 5 years for female objectification.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Feminist Point of View

Feminist ideals change frequently, and each large change is known as a wave. Feminist history is currently divided into three major waves by nearly all scholars, adequately named First, Second, and Third Wave Feminism. In support of these waves, the Library of Congress lists the three distinct waves as topical categories. Per the Library of Congress, the Seneca Falls Woman's Rights Convention is considered the first convention to address the civil and political rights of women. As such, Hewitt (2012) explained that First Wave Feminism is currently identified as the period of American History from the late 1840s-1920. First Wave Feminism centered around the women's suffrage movement. Scholars, including Hewitt (2012), postulated that their mission was completed once the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1919. Hewitt (2012) also discussed Second Wave Feminism, alternatively known as the Women's Liberation Movement, which took place from the late 1960s-1980. During this time, legislation for abortion, the Equal Rights Act, and education access were the highlights of the feminist movement. Third Wave Feminism originally emerged in the 1990s (Ferguson, 2017), and established the basis for current feminist models.

More recently, a Fourth Wave has potentially emerged. Munro (2013) believes that it may exist due to a cultural shift established by the Internet. As such, it is credited as having emerged around the same time that social media swept the nation, sometime around 2008-2010. Munro (2013) maintained that it evolved around the "call out" culture cultivated by social media and Internet campaigns to draw attention to perceived issues. However, others disagree with this notion. According to Evans (2016), "some feminists have sought to portray fourth

wave feminism as a post 9/11 response to the global inequalities, others have conceived of it as an inevitable consequence of the perceived failures of third wave feminism" (p. 5). Some potential perceived failures of the Third Wave include a lack of diversity and that there is no one definition of the movement (Evans, 2016). Other scholars have not recognized the Fourth Wave at all; Hewitt (2012) did not recognize it in *Feminist Frequencies: Regenerating the Wave Metaphor*, nor did Ferguson (2017) in *Feminist Theory Today*. Currently, the emergence of Fourth Wave Feminism is highly contested. As such, Third Wave Feminism will act as the framework for this study.

Third Wave Feminism is thought to be an effort to cross boundaries and "rid feminist practice of its perceived ideological rigidity" (Snyder, 2008, p. 176). Ferguson (2017) and Snyder (2008) examined the evolution of this contemporary wave. They postulated that while feminism still centers around gendered equality, it now recognizes two practices that synthesize the movement with other societal issues and engage a discussion: intersectional perspectives and interdisciplinary work. Additionally, Snyder (2008) proposed that Third Wave Feminists aim to encourage action, nonjudgment, and a dynamic, welcoming coalition. Ferguson (2017) agreed with the sentiment, writing "our main goal is to trouble [upset] power relations, imagine better worlds, and work to achieve them" (p. 283).

The first practice of Third Wave Feminism that Ferguson (2017) discussed, intersectionality, is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as "the interconnected nature of social categories such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination disadvantage" (n.d.). In short, it recognizes that it is possible to face more than one type of discrimination. As

such, feminist leaders and movements have begun to speak out against racial, queer, and class issues. According to Evans, "intersectionality denotes the multiple overlapping of oppression that affect an individual's life," (2016, p. 12). It also was "seen as one of the core defining features of the third wave" (Evans, 2016, p. 16). Organizations such as Women's March, an activist movement that formed after the 2016 presidential election, take political stances on police brutality, gun safety, workers' rights, environmental justice, and any other large social issue. Feminism is no longer about women exclusively, but a push for equality across all facets of society. Ferguson (2017) examined that intersectionality allows for four primary contributions to feminism: it prevents thinking in terms of "either/or"; it maintains an open door for generating new ideas; it is a reminder of how rich the context for all thought is; and it encourages individuals to seek out new and unfamiliar points of view.

Interdisciplinarity, the second synthesizing practice of Third Wave Feminism as discussed in *Feminist Theory Today,* is defined as encouraging the concept and practice of intersectionality in an academic setting. Examples of this include the fields of women's studies and ethnic studies, which allow for radical approaches of blended studies and backgrounds and constant inquiry from interconnected fields. Pushing this boundary allows transnational feminist theories to have a true blend of learned cultural, historical, political, philosophical, and geographical thoughts and perspectives (Ferguson, 2017).

When combined, *Feminist Theory Today* examined that the aforementioned concepts allow for a continuous feedback loop of theory and practice. The author writes:

> Data or practices act as equal partners with theory, equally lively and productive. Rather than imposing theory on data, we strive to stage encounters between our analyses and

> our examples, and we invite each to enhance or contest the other. Instead of books that are long on abstract analysis, with a perfunctory final chapter on some example or expression, we cultivate full-blown conversations among elements. (pg. 275)

This exemplifies the idea that feminist theories are made in response to real-life practices, and theories drive real-life responses. Many theories derive from subjective narratives (Ferguson, 2017).

Snyder (2008) discussed that the synthesizing and understanding of different cultures and perspectives has become more important because of technology; the current generation of young women face an onslaught of information, media influences, and beauty standards. As such, it is vital for feminists to demand social change in what appears before them in pop icons, music, film, and beauty trends. This becomes a basis of a less judgmental and rigid concept of what feminists can or cannot do, as well as who can and cannot be a feminist. Third Wave Feminism is seen as diverse and inclusive in contrast to past efforts. However, its diversity has yet to be proven. Hewitt (2012) explained that Second Wave Feminists considered themselves truly diverse, especially since they were engaged during the Civil Rights Movements of the 1960s and 1970s. They are now considered uptight, exclusive, and made up primarily of middle class white women (Evans, 2016; Hewitt, 2012;). True diversity has yet to be established, but, according to Ferguson (2017), the practice of intersectionality and interdisciplinarity allows for a continuous feedback loop to aid the prevention of stagnating ideas and exclusivity.

Why is feminism important to society? Ferguson (2017) observes “men define the world from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth” (p. 276). A masculine perspective exists, and Ferguson argues that creating a voice for women is important to criticize

current conditions and envision a better world. Women's narratives, especially those who face intersectional oppression in their sexuality, gender identity, and/or race, tell stories so that they can call forth the need for justice and respect for women. "To challenge oppressive power relations, we have to develop our voices" (Ferguson, 2017, p. 278).

When confronted with the basis of feminism, in which there is an uneven distribution of power in society, a few questions emerge: Does music media affect society's concept of gender and relationships? Is music media representative of women? Is it worth examining? Fischer and Greitemeyer (2006) wrote, "Given that music is omnipresent in our daily private and public life, the role played by music deserves more attention than it has received to date" (p. 1165). In this effort, Veerkamp (2014) examined radio, one of the largest music media platforms, in the article *Feminist frequencies: Why radio needs feminism*. One example found is that radio stations often employ "shock-jocks," a radio DJ personality type who often defiles feminist concepts and uses hate language to portray marginalized peoples. Veerkamp (2014) also stated that less than 50% of radio stations have a woman on staff; 86% of station managers are men. Additionally, Veerkamp (2014) revealed staggering majorities (80% in urban, 82.8% in country, and 90% in rock) of male lead singers.

Veerkamp (2014) also reported responses to the statement "Radio needs feminism because…" in which the respondent finished the sentence. It was modeled after a "meme" that circulated social media in 2014 in which women held signs saying "I need feminism because…" with their responses. Veerkamp received the following:

> ''Radio needs feminism because it's considered acceptable to mock women for their appearance on the air.''

> ‘‘Radio (still) needs feminism because there is still considerable under-representation of women reporters/hosts/‘experts’ discussing foreign policy, economics, science, and technology on local, regional, and national public broadcasting networks in the U.S.’’
>
> ‘‘I want to hear more women’s voices in tech/science radio. There is a direct correlation between the number of visible/prominent women in science and the number of girls who stick it out in math and science classes in school.’’
>
> ‘‘Radio needs feminism because, at times, the everyday space of the airwaves is heard the most.’’
>
> ‘‘Radio needs feminism because male DJs don’t realize how making jokes about women breastfeeding in public helps to create a community climate that does not support breastfeeding.’’
>
> ‘‘Radio needs feminism because the entire world needs feminism in many forms, and radio speaks to the world.’’

Respondents to this to this casual survey also talked about female radio hosts being subject to more scrutiny and criticism than male ones, a bias that seems to harken back to a debate in the 1920s about whether female announcers were undesirable (p. 309).

Veerkamp (2014) goes on to list additional reasons why radio needs feminism. Examples include a decline in women and minority employment in radio; women are not close to men in voice, representation, or pay; to curtail rape culture; to counter ads that sell goods through objectifying women; and because feminism is for everybody. It appears that music media may play a role in society’s concept of gender and relationships; it is not representative of women, and it is worth examining.

Sexual Degradation

Evolving a feminist framework around music media and lyrics becomes vital as feminism progresses in the effort to create inclusive media and pop icons. Bretthauer, Zimmerman, and Banning (2006) examined that relationship ideologies for individuals are often formed through messages received from society and media. According to them, people inherently develop a gender identity based on enculturation; this concept is the Cognitive Social Learning Theory. The article assumes a basis that music plays a central role in the socialization of adolescents through normalization. Additionally, they examined the idea that lyrics are processed by listeners and they will form conscious or unconscious perceptions.

Is music sexualized enough for it to be normalized? Cougar Hall, West, and Hill (2012) examined the sexualization of music from 1959-2009. According to the American Psychological Associations Task Force (2007), sexualization occurs when:

- A person's value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behavior, to the exclusion of other characteristics;
- A person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy;
- A person is sexually objectified—that is, made into a thing for others' sexual use, rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making; and/or
- Sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person. (Schick, 2014, p. 40)

Cougar West et al. cited that 8- to 18–year-olds listen to about 2.5 hours of music per day and that music is the second largest media consumption for the demographic. To complete the

study, they examined the Billboard Hot 100 list for 1959, 1969, 1979, 1989, 1999, and 2009. Two coders examined the lyrical content of the top and bottom five songs from each list to ensure accuracy between coders, and then the remaining 530 songs were numbered 6-95, with even numbers going to one coder and the odd numbers going to the other. In 1959, 11.1% of male artists' songs contained sexualized lyrics. In 2009, 32.1% contained sexualized lyrics. Equally mixed group artists are similar; 11.1% of their songs were sexualized in 1959, while in 2009, 41.7% of their lyrics were sexualized. The authors concluded:

"The recent significant increase of sexualization in lyrics of popular music, combined with both increasing amounts of time consuming music and few parental restrictions, are problematic for sexuality educators endeavoring to promote healthy sexual relationships and attitudes" (p. 115).

Since the late 1990s, studies have examined the content of music videos and lyrics including ones run by Bretthauer et al. (2006), St. Lawrence and Joyner (1991), Fisher and Greitemeyer (2006), and Volgman (2013). In the music studied, researchers found that women are often portrayed as submissive, subordinate to men, objects of sexual advances, in need of male protection, and in a position of passivity and self-sacrifice. Women are portrayed as possessions, sex objects, attractive, and childlike. Additionally, lyrics are becoming increasingly explicitly sexualized. Lyrics examined around the turn of the millennia show an overarching theme of men in power over women, with an overall position of being violent against women. Within that, women are objectified, owned by men, seen as conquests, and defined by their man. They are also more explicit in regard to sexual intercourse and risky behavior such as unprotected sex and drug use.

Concern for men's attitudes toward women has emerged with this constant reminder of gender roles. A study by St. Lawrence and Joyner (1991) examined whether or not heavy rock genres, such as metal, affected men's attitudes toward violence against women. They found that lyrics, in this context, did not make a significant difference. Their study found, instead, a correlation between heavy rock melodies and men being more sex-role stereotypical.

In another study, Fisher and Greitemeyer (2006) examined lyrical content in popular music genres, and found a positive correlation between misogynistic lyrics in pop music and negative attitudes toward women. They ran three separate experiments in which participates listened to either four songs with misogynistic lyrics or four songs with neutral lyrics, with the songs being of comparable genres and length in each group.

In Experiment One, they had participants listen to the music and then their aggression toward a male or female was measured. They found that men who listened to misogynistic lyrics were more aggressive toward women than women in the same group, men who listened to neutral lyrics, or women who listened to neutral lyrics. In Experiment Two, they added songs containing men-hating lyrics into the mix. Once the participants listened to the music, their feelings of vengeance (an important aggression-related emotion) were measured. They found men who listened to misogynistic lyrics had listed more negative attributes toward women and felt more vengeful than women who heard misogynistic lyrics. Women who heard men-hating lyrics listed more negative attributes of men than men in that group did, but not more than women who listened to neutral lyrics. In no conditions did female participants feel heightened vengeance toward men. Experiment Three used the three types of lyrical content established in Experiment Two, but the researchers measured word completion tasks, attitudes toward men

and women, positive and negative emotions, and actual aggressive behavior toward male or female targets. Men who listened to misogynistic lyrics were more aggressive toward women and had more negative word-completions than men or women in any other group. The women and men who listened to men-hating lyrics were more aggressive toward men than the participants who listened to neutral lyrics. Only the women in the group exposed to men-hating lyrics assigned more negative words to men. In general, they found the men and women were more aggressive toward the opposite sex when exposed to degrading lyrics about the opposite sex. For example, men who heard misogynistic lyrics were more aggressive toward women, but men who heard men-hating music were not generally more aggressive toward men. Fisher and Greitemeyer (2006) concluded their study stating:

> Overall, the present research mainly focused on the impact of misogynous music on men's aggression toward women because this kind of aggression is a much more serious and frequent problem in society than female aggression toward men. Most important, our research showed that misogynous music increases aggressive responses of men toward women. As a consequence, music with misogynous song lyrics should be considered as a potentially dangerous source that may elicit male sexual aggression. (p. 1175)

Despite the trend of degradation in lyrics having a negative impact on women, there have been studies with opposing results. Treat, Farris, Viken, and Smith (2014) conducted a study to examine whether degrading lyrical content affected male perception of female positive dating cues. These cues included body language, such as gaze and posture. They found that listening to degrading lyrics for the study had no effect on priming male aggression toward

women. However, they noted that men who listened to degrading music in a normalized pattern were more likely to be generally aggressive toward women. They also found a trend that social factors, such as the woman's clothing, affected male perception of dating relevant cues. If a woman wore more revealing clothing, men perceived her as more interested.

Studies with potentially inconclusive findings, such as the one by Sprankle et al. (2012), and Treat et al. (2014), also noted that daily music preferences may have an impact on male aggression and perception of women. Their study examined whether sexually explicit music videos and lyrics affected male aggression. They were unable to find a correlation between listening and/or watching degrading music lyrics/videos and increased male aggression toward women. Despite that, they recognized that preexisting preferences and normalized tendencies may have an effect that they were unable to test in their procedure. This trend of accounting for normal music preferences may relate to the Cognitive Social Learning Theory as discussed by Bretthauer et al. (2006); enculturation impacts the development of relationships, sexuality, and gender identification.

In addition to several studies documenting negative effects of media and music on women, there has been one looking at positive effects. In a study by Greitemeyer, Hollingdale, and Traut-Mattausch (2015), they examined the effect of pro-equality music on the perception of women. They conducted four different experiments, each with different samples, in which the samples were placed into two groups. One group listened to two songs with pro-equality lyrics, while the other listened to two songs with neutral lyrics by the same artists. The songs differed in each experiment, so the participants in Experiment One heard different songs than those in subsequent studies. Experiments One and Two focused on attitudes toward women,

while Experiments Three and Four examined pro-female behaviors. In all experiments, they found that the pro-equality lyrics increased positive attitudes and behavior toward women.

A general consensus emerges; while music lyrics may not directly impact male aggression toward women, they have an impact on the general attitudes toward women. Pro-equality lyrics promote positive attitudes, while lyrics containing misogynistic messages promote negative attitudes. In this regard, Greitemeyer et al. (2015) stated:

> On a practical level, it appears that media exposure may not only harm people's attitude and behavior toward women, but it may also be effectively used to improve how women are perceived and treated… music exposure may be an effective means to alter people's attitude and behavior toward women. (p. 65)

Female Objectification

Loughnan et al. (2010) defined two main aspects of generalized objectification: an emphasis on the person being an instrument or item without acknowledging them as an individual, and depersonalization of the subject. They go on to examine the implications and effects of objectification in and around gender discrimination. In the wake of Second and Third Wave Feminism, gender objectification in particular has come under scrutiny.

Gervais and Eagan (2017) discussed in their article *Sexual objectification: The common thread connecting the myriad forms of sexual violence against women* how objectification commonly manifests in society today. They stated that it is relevant in two primary realms: in media and in interpersonal interactions. In media, women are most often objectified with an importance placed on their physical appearance, specifically their bodies or individual body parts. In interpersonal interactions, an objectifying gaze is credited as the most common

manifestation. Gervais and Eagan defined an objectifying gaze as an occurrence in which "someone stares as a woman's body or body parts" (p. 227). According to the article, an objectifying gaze includes, but is not limited to, "ogling," "leering," and "checking out." Additionally, it occurs when individuals glance at a woman's body as opposed to maintaining eye contact during conversation. Loughnan et al. (2010) mentioned how women now expect an objectifying gaze from men. The male gaze reportedly causes extreme discomfort in daily interactions.

A second type of objectification covered by Gervais and Eagan (2017) was appearance commentary, which often accompanies an objectifying gaze. It is defined as "commentary including appearance criticisms, derogatory references to women's body parts and sexual innuendos, or descriptions of women with a primary focus on their sex appeal and sexuality." They also examined a type of social interaction called "bro talk," in which men engage in objectifying commentary about women with other men. Women engage in similar conversations Gervais and Eagan label as "fat talk," in which a woman makes demeaning statements about herself ("I'm so fat") and other women deny or refute it ("no, you're not"). They explain that objectifying commentary reinforces notions that women need to spend excessive time, focus, and effort to look attractive to other people.

Volgman (2013), Loghnan and colleagues (2010), and APA (2007) have discussed that, upon examining decades of studies, self-objectification leads to lowered well-being, culminating in depression, self-harm, and eating disorders. Beyond more traditional mental illness, self-objectification can lead to reduced intellectual performance, internal motivation, and efficiency. Another finding by Loghnan et al. (2010), which was also examined by Volgman

(2013), was that one type of objectification helped fuel the other; objectification is a cycle. A person accustomed to other-objectification will self-objectify. Conversely, an individual who regularly self-objectifies will be more receptive toward other-objectification.

Due to social media and smartphones allowing constant access, it seems that objectification is not the exception. Instead, it has become the rule (Gervais & Eagan, 2017). According to Gervais and Eagan (2017), the average woman sees objectification at least once a day and experiences objectification about every other day. They also examined that sexting and apps such as Snapchat, Tinder, and Grindr continue to place an importance on appearance and reinforce the concept that "women are, first and foremost, objects of sexual desire primarily for the use of heterosexual men" (p. 227). Volgman (2013, p. 3) stated that "virtually every media depiction conveys a message about behavioral norms and expectations of women and men." Gervais and Eagan (2017) captured the effects of "mainstream media" on objectification. In their article, "mainstream media" refers to any influencing factor in pop culture (i.e., advertising, magazines, film and television, music). They stated that "one of the primary culprits of objectification is objectifying media" (p. 231). Bretthauer et. al (2006) noted that on MTV, women were "objects of implicit, explicit, and aggressive sexual advances by men" (p. 31).

When did objectification become so normalized? The concept that objectification is affecting girls at younger and younger ages is becoming prevalent and recognized. According to a 2012 study by Starr and Ferguson, a group of 6- to 8-year-old girls preferred dolls that were dressed more provocatively because those dolls looked as though they were more likely to have friends to sit with at lunch. Dolls that were modestly dressed, instead, were perceived by

the children to be less likely to make friends. Objectification is permeating life for women daily, and it is a life-long message.

In the article *"Hit me baby": From Britney Spears to the socialization of sexual objectification of girls in middle school drama programs*, Schick (2014) examined adult complicity of sexualization and objectification of young girls. The study was focused around the drama program at a public middle school, specifically a program for sixth graders aged 11-12. The show examined was called *Las Vegas Lounge Lizard Revue* and featured several musical numbers using sexualized songs such as Britney Spears' "[Hit Me Baby]… One More Time," in which Spears takes on a sexy school girl persona in the music video, and Cristina Aguilera's "Big Spender," "a song typically identified with being sung by prostitutes" (p. 41). The girls were to dance like "sexy 'showgirls.'" Beyond that, one of the non-musical numbers featured a girl being hauled offstage by a "bouncer" for getting too feisty. In rehearsal, the (older) boy was hitting her, pushing her, while telling her to hit him. The teacher encouraged the interaction, while later another student told the girl she was getting "slapped around" and "abused a little" (p. 42). Schick noted that the other teachers, administrators, and parents all supported the show, "including its sexual objectification of girls and domination by older boys" (p. 51).

Schick (2014) made a few key observations about Spears' song, which resonate with the idea that women are socialized to sexualization and objectification at a young age:

> Her [Britney Spears] sexy schoolgirl persona at least borders on (though some, as discussed further below, claim it actually crosses the border into) what many have identified as child pornography, AKA ''kiddie porn''; (2) this sexy schoolgirl persona is not only popular with, but also often imitated by schoolgirls even today; and (3) this

> persona not only continues to be re-enacted in multiple contexts, but also continues to be indexed in multiple meta-discourses on the discursive and behavioral sexualization and associated abuse of girls. (p. 47)

Objectification of women is insidious in American culture, and it was further discussed by Gervais and Eagan (2017). According to their article, female objectification is an indicator of future sexual assault by men; it makes women more vulnerable and less assertive in the event of an attack. They also discussed perception of rape victims and rapists. Victim blaming, in which a rape victim is depicted as having deserved the rape because of how s/he dressed and past behavior, is objectification. Slut shaming, in which a woman is seen as "easy" due to dress and behavior, and subsequently less human because of it, is objectification. Additionally, Gervais and Eagan (2017) stated that society currently considers the rapist mindset as equally if not more important than that of the victims. They examined as evidence the case of Brock Turner, a Stanford student who raped an unconscious female behind a trashcan. He received 6 months in county jail out of a maximum of 14 years in a state prison. The reason for the "light sentence" was the judge fearing that anything more would have a "severe impact" on Turner's future. They stated the judge appeared to simultaneously "overlook the impact on the victim" (p. 229). As of December 2, 2017, the *New York Times* reports that Brock Turner is filing an appeal for his conviction as a sex offender. Salam, the reporter, wrote:

> A 172-page brief filed on Friday by Mr. Turner's lawyer, Eric Multhaup, said Mr. Turner did not get a fair trial for several reasons, including the exclusion of testimony by character witnesses who spoke of his swimming career and his performance in school

and attested to his honesty, the appeal said. About 60 pages focus heavily on how intoxicated the victim, known as Emily Doe, was on the night of the attack.

Unfortunately, sexual assault against women and girls is not isolated to college campuses, either. Schick (2014), in the reflection of how socialized sexualization affects adolescent girls, stated:

> From this point of view, it can be argued that boys are not naturally bound to engage in these male-dominant behaviors just because they are boys, but that they are being socialized to adopt these kinds of behaviors…While certainly this is not new, news reports also indicate that in North American communities today there has been an increase in at least two types of negative behaviors by adolescent boys. One of those has been a series of incidents involving sexual assaults by middle school boys against middle school girls on school campuses. (p. 52)

In relation to themes of objectification in music, past studies of lyrical content have had fairly consistent outcomes. Cooper (1985), Bretthauer and colleagues (2006), and Flynn, Craig, Anderson, and Holody (2016) have all documented that a majority of music analyzed contains themes of objectification and sexualization, especially in regard to women. This objectification includes self and other-objectification, portrayal of women as objects of sexual desire, increased importance on physical attractiveness, and sex as a top priority for men.

In line with some findings for sexual degradation in music, there was a study that found mixed results on the impact of sexualized lyrics on women's perception of objectification. Evans (2016) examined the relationship between rap/hip-hop music, which is often perceived as objectifying and sexualized, and its effect on young women (18-22). The hypothesis centered

around the impact of daily consumption of sexualized rap/hip-hop music on self-objectification, self-surveillance, depression, and disturbed eating. The hypothesis was not supported; no correlation was found to link consumption of rap/hip-hop and the four aforementioned themes. However, Evans discussed that half the sample responded to listening to rap/hip-hop for less than 1 hour per day, which may have had an impact on the results.

Bretthauer et al. (2006) noted that there is a lack of research dedicated to music lyrics and themes of power, sexism, and support of violence against women. They tested the lyrics of the top 20 songs off the Billboard Hot 100 lists from 1998-2003 for women/men and sex, women/men and love, and female/male need of the opposite sex. They found six general themes to code from those concepts: men and power (with the four subthemes of boss/subordinate relationship, men obtaining power through material items and fame/control, men owning women, and men as playing games to conquest women), sex as a top priority for men, objectification of women, sexual violence, women defined by their man, and women not valuing themselves (with subthemes of women attracting men through sexuality and women staying in relationships despite hurt/problems).

They found that 114 out of 120 songs analyzed contained at least one theme. While male messages about women being sex objects, possessions, and subordinate were distressing, Bretthauer and colleagues also noted that female artists self-objectified and sent the message that they were not inherently valuable or deserving of respect. They stated that evidence of these normalized themes in society are reflected in the fact that one out of three women have experienced violence in an intimate relationship.

Beyond the objectification of women by male artists, objectification by female artists is also concerning. In the study *A "man's woman": Contradictory messages in the songs of female rappers, 1992-2000* (Oware, 2009), the researcher examined lyrical content of songs by female rappers. Female artists have contributed to the evolution of rap and hip-hop. Their songs featured similar themes to ones by male counterparts, but also examined dating from a woman's perspective, domestic violence, sexism, and other gendered issues. Oware examined the lyrics through the lens of an intersectional facet of feminism, Black feminism as established by Patricia Hill Collins in her 1990 book *Black Feminist Thought*. Oware stated that Collins' concept is black women are considered "other," and subsequently face a more extreme form of objectification because of this otherness. With this lens, the researcher found that female rappers would verbally insult ("diss") other female rappers, although it was most often aimed at male rappers. Sometimes, female rappers would promote female empowerment in the same song featuring insults to other female rappers. Another category examined was female sexuality; Oware discussed whether or not the female artist is liberating herself from societal norms through self- sexualization. Oware highlighted, several times, the potential contradictory messages:

> Indeed, a majority of the songs examined had women who self-objectified, self-exploited, and used derogatory lyrics when referring to other women. The author finds that these contradictory messages, sometimes by the same artists, nullify the empowering messages that are conveyed and only reproduce and uphold male hegemonic notions of femininity. (pg. 786)

> Although female rap artists articulate a feminist approach in their narratives by employing empowering, autonomous, and independent lyrics, many of them also reappropriate the sexist and misogynist tropes that present women as hypersexual beings who are contained and controlled by, in this case, other women. Indeed, in this new paradigm it is Black women who hyperobjectify themselves and degrade other Black women. They employ the tools of the master that only strengthens the structure of their own oppression and domination. (p. 797)
>
> The Black feminist approach is lost, and in its place, arises a "man's woman"—a woman who imitates and reinscribes a White supremacist, misogynist structure. (p. 798)

In addition to findings by Oware, a study conducted by Flynn, Craig, Anderson, and Holody (2016) examined the relationship of genre and gender to objectification. They tested for mentions of body objectification, gaze, and attractiveness in six genres, as well as from male or female artists. The researchers found that of five of the six genres (rap, R&B/hip-hop, pop, country, and adult contemporary), over half of the songs analyzed contained some mention of one of the objectifying themes. Additionally, male artists were more likely to other-objectify, while female artists were more likely to self-objectify.

As it seems, women may not be safe from other women, or from themselves. It is apparent that both other and self-objectification occur in music media. Through objectifying gaze, appearance commentary, subordination of women, possession of women, and a priority on sex for men, people are socialized to perceive women with negative attitudes. However, there is a lack of literature reviewing objectification in lyrics after 2013. The need to analyze current, popular music lyrics exists; this current study plans to fill that void.

Chapter Three: Method

In response to the literature review, five main themes emerged to delineate objectifying interactions from general degradation of women: objectifying gaze, appearance commentary, sex as a main priority, women portrayed as sexual possessions, and women portrayed as subordinate. The five categories were coded numerically one through five. One represented objectifying gaze, two was appearance commentary, three was sex as a main priority, four was women portrayed as sexual possessions, and five was women portrayed as subordinate. Additionally, self-objectification of women was considered, although anything directed toward a male subject was not.

As explained in Table 1, the objectifying gaze, described as the most common form of female objectification by Gervais and Eagan (2017), was identified in music lyrics through specific mentions of looking at a woman, her body, or a female artist singing her desire to be looked at by men. Examples of phrases with objectifying gaze include “I watched you all night,” “you look so good in that dress,” “I want your eyes on me,” and “I want you to see me.”

Appearance commentary was identified through reference to a woman’s body, specific body parts, her overall appearance such as hair and clothing, referring to a woman by her body parts or as hot and sexy, or descriptions of how a body “should” look. Example phrases of appearance commentary included “I like a girl with curves for days,” “she’s got a nice booty,” or “her little black dress makes me feel so good.” Additionally, appearance commentary occurred when female artists compared “their” body to other women’s bodies, such as “I wish I looked like her.”

Sex as a main priority was identified through reference to non-committal sexual relations, such as one-night stands, or through reference to only the sexual relationship between two consenting adults. This meant a singer may have established a committed relationship, but put an emphasis on sexual acts. Additionally, any reference to picking up girls, leaving the next morning, the walk of shame, or other cultural references to casual, sexual relationships was an identifying feature.

Women portrayed as sexual possessions was identified through a prioritization of her usefulness for sex or other sexualized activities, her worth being derived from sexual experience and body appearance, and women obtained through the purchase of material items. Women obtained through the purchase of material items includes men buying her nice things, drinks, or a man dressing well to pick up women.

The final category, women portrayed as subordinate to men, was identified with women being dependent on a man or relationship; having her happiness or worth derived from a man or relationship; or women in a relationship being maintained through material items, such as flowers, without reference to larger efforts to fulfill a happy relationship. Additionally, women were portrayed as subordinate through sexually derogatory name calling, such as whore, prude, bitch, slut, or gold-digger, or any other form of slut shaming, in which a woman is put to shame for her sexual experience. Other forms of name calling, such as baby, sweetie, or girl, were scrutinized in a larger context before being considered sexually degrading. One final form of the portrayal of women as subordinate was the implication that a woman is easily replaced, or that all women are the same.

Table 1: Matrix Example

Objectification Theme	Correlating Number	Identifying Qualities	Examples
Objectifying Gaze	1	Specific mentions of looking at a woman's body	"You look so good" "I want your eyes on me"
Appearance Commentary	2	Direct reference to body, body parts, or overall appearance	"I like your booty" "I wish I looked like her"
Sex as a Main Priority	3	Emphasis on sexual aspects of relationships, or hook up culture	"This kind of love lasts a minute"
Woman Portrayed as a Sexual Possession	4	Woman only important for sex, and their worth comes from sex	"She's never cuter than when she's on me"
Women Portrayed as Subordinate	5	Woman: derive worth/joy from relationships; are replaceable; called by derogatory names	"These bitches are a dime a dozen" "I'm sad without him"

With a focus on lyrics from the popular and country genres, the sample of songs was selected from the top 10 of those two genres from 2012-2016, a total of 100 songs. The list of top 10 songs was obtained from the Billboard Hot 100 and the Billboard Hot Country Songs end of year charts. The list of pop songs can be found in Appendix A, while Appendix B contains the list of country songs. The lyrics for each song were obtained from an online database, a website called genius.com. Information for song title, artist name, featured artist, and record label was cross-referenced against Genius and iTunes to ensure accuracy. Additional information gathered was the sex of the artist. The sex information was collected as follows: A single male artist, or a group made up only of men was defined as "male." If the lead artist was male, with a featured female artist, or if the group had more men than women, the sex assigned was "primarily male." The same process was used to assign "female" and "primarily female." The final sex type was "equal," in which a group held the same number of men and women. Once

all lyrics and demographic information had been gathered, the primary researcher placed them into packets by year and genre.

The researcher went through each packet and did an initial data collection. When a line was found with objectifying content, it was highlighted and any correlating numbers were placed next to the line. This initial collection was done without listening to the music, but a second run through was done while listening to the music. This allowed the researcher to 1) understand how the lyrics related to each other in a broad context, and 2) ensure that songs with a male and female singer had their lyrics properly differentiated. For the final step of the textual analysis, the researcher transferred the information into an electronic Word document. This allowed a final run through of each song to confirm that information highlighted was in line with the previously established categories and ensured that nothing was missing.

There were instances in which the lyrics held cultural or metaphorical slang specific to the target demographic. To clarify the meaning, a Google search would be conducted to establish the meaning. An example was Rihanna's song "Work," in which the Barbadian artist uses Jamaican Patois in the lyrics. The first verse of the song reads:

> Work, work, work, work, work, work
> He said me haffi
> Work, work, work, work, work, work!
> He see me do mi
> Dirt, dirt, dirt, dirt, dirt, dirt!
> So me put in
> Work, work, work, work, work, work
> When you ah guh
> Learn, learn, learn, learn, learn

Meh nuh cyar if him

Hurt, hurt, hurt, hurt, hurting

After some review, the text contained the following lyrical meaning:

Work, work, work, work, work, work

[He said I have to]

Work, work, work, work, work, work!

[He sees me do my]

Dirt, dirt, dirt, dirt, dirt, dirt!

[So I put in]

Work, work, work, work, work, work

[When are you going to]

Learn, learn, learn, learn, learn

[I don't care if he]

Hurt, hurt, hurt, hurt, hurting

All of the categorical data, once collected, was placed into a matrix. Each category with multiple options, such as chart year, was listed out into separate columns. If a song fulfilled the criteria of the column, a 1 was placed; if not, instead there was a 0 coded. Table 2 is an example. If a type of objectification occurred at least once in a song, a 1 was placed into the corresponding cell to account for presence. The frequency of that type of objectification was then recorded in a different cell. As such, for example, two different columns accounted for the presence of objectification type 1 and the frequency of objectification type 1 for each song. This matrix finished as a 100x25 matrix: 100 rows of songs and 25 columns of categorical and objectification data.

Table 2: Matrix Example

Song Title	Artist Name	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Song X	Artist X	0	1	0	0	0

Once all objectification data was obtained from the text, the researcher found the overall frequency by adding together the frequency of each individual objectification type. Then, the songs were ordered from lowest to highest overall frequency to ascertain basic percentages and distributions. From there, all demographic observations were collected by counting by hand. As an example, to find the percentages of songs by female artists containing objectification type 3, the researcher would begin by sorting songs by gender. To do this, the genders would be simplified by male and primarily male, and female and primarily female were combined into just male or female. Once that had been prioritized, the researcher would then comb through and highlight each occurrence of objectification type 3 in a song by a female. The number of highlighted cells would become the percentage.

In addition to those observations, the presence and the frequency of objectification was examined through tests modeled with a logistical regression and a quasi-poisson Generalized Linear Model (GLM), respectively. The tests were run with an arbitrary baseline, which was selected by the program. For this, the baseline was arbitrarily chosen by the program as 2012 female country songs. This allowed for all other demographic categories to be compared to the same category in the baseline. The five objectification types, as well as an overall objectification category, were examined against the demographic categories. For example, it checked the sex male against the baseline sex female for objectification type 1 (objectifying gaze).

The level of significance was 0.05. These results helped examine if there is a difference is the level of objectification between the broad demographic categories of genre, gender, and chart year. The lower the p-value, the truer a difference exists.

Additionally, an estimation coefficient was established. This allows for a prediction of which demographic category is more likely to have the objectification type. Thus, if the p-value tells us there is a significant difference between male and female artists for objectification type 1 (gaze), the estimation would then reveal if male or female artists are more likely to contain lyrics with mentions of objectifying gaze. For this number, zero is no difference; a positive integer shows a correlation to the examined category. However, a negative integer shows a negative correlation to the examined category; this means there is a stronger correlation with the baseline category. For example, when examining the results between male versus female baseline for objectification type 1 (gaze), if the estimation coefficient is 0.85, then there is a correlation to male artists. If the estimation is -0.85, then it is correlated to female artists. One caveat with the estimation is that this coefficient is relevant if, and only if, the p-value is significant. Without a level of significance, the estimation is an arbitrary observation.

With the baseline categories being 2012, female, and country, all data collected is examining a difference between each category and its correlating baseline. Sex is male against female and mixed against female. Genre is pop against country. Each year from 2013-2016 is against 2012. If another baseline had been chosen, such as 2016, male, and pop, then the categories would switch, but ultimately reveal the same information. For example, with 2012 as the baseline, the relationship for 2016's use of objectification type 1 (gaze) might show a significant difference between 2012 and 2016, with a negative estimate. This coefficient shows

that 2016 has a lower use of objectifying gaze; thus, is it more common in 2012. If the baseline was switched to 2016, the p-value between the two years would still be significant, and the estimation would still show a correlation with higher use in 2012.

Chapter Four: Discussion and Limitations

Discussion

When examining the data, it became obvious that there were far more male/primarily male artists than female/primarily female. When counted, 78% of the artists were male/primarily male; 20% were female/primarily female; 2% was equally mixed. Eighty-six percent of country artists were male/primarily male (43/50), and 70% of pop artists were male/primarily male (35/50). Much like with past research, an underrepresentation of women quickly emerges.

The occurrence of objectification exposed that 32% of the songs held no objectifying content. Of these songs, 14 were pop, 18 were country, 25 by male (32.1% of total songs by male artists), and 5 were by women (23.8% of total songs by female artists). In addition to containing no objectification, 14 songs were about content other than relationships or sex. Of these 14 songs, 6 were from pop, 8 from country, and 5 by female artists.

When examining the songs with the highest count of total objectification, the songs were ranked from highest to lowest frequency. The song with the highest overall objectification was “Panda” by Desiigner, with a total of 90 occurrences. A majority of his objectification occurred in the chorus, and emerged as portraying women as sex objects and as subordinate. The chorus, in which a majority of the objectification occurred, was about how he (the artist) was able to attract women through his material possessions and wealth.

In the top 20 of highest frequency, only one female artist emerged: Meghan Trainor with her song “All about that bass” at number seven of the top 10 high frequency songs. In it, she has an overall count of 47 occurrences, 43 of which were appearance commentary. The

song is entirely about women's bodies; the title derives from the chorus, in which Trainor sings "I'm all about that bass" repeatedly. This is a direct reference to her having more butt than breast. This song, when analyzed, was found to be an outlier. With a frequency of 43, appearance commentary is 33 counts higher in this song than in the song with the next highest frequency. Additionally, Trainor's song featured an overall frequency of 47; the next highest overall frequency by a female artist was 19 counts of objectification.

The results from the logistical regression model, which examined the presence of different objectification types, are presented in Tables 5 and 6. As previously mentioned, the level of significant is 0.05. As shown below on Table 3, there are four significant coefficients. Their corresponding estimations are in Table 4.

Table 3: Presence Values

	Gaze	Commentary	Sex Priority	Sex Possession	Subordinate	Overall
Male	0.41	0.9722	0.183	0.5021	**0.00245	0.8007
Mixed	0.4412	0.7608	0.2352	0.5566	0.77919	0.221
Pop	0.1965	0.2842	0.9238	0.2209	**0.04686	0.4588
2013	0.6869	0.103	0.8169	0.8724	0.95221	0.7365
2014	0.5668	**0.0274	0.3886	0.1283	0.35248	**0.0325
2015	0.2597	0.0581	0.5113	0.2745	0.62877	0.5963
2016	0.2441	0.7447	0.5923	0.4066	0.79845	0.9023

Table 4: Presence Estimations

	Gaze	Commentary	Sex Priority	Sex Possession	Subordinate	Overall
Male	0.6276	-0.02184	0.9617	0.4405	**-2.04741	-0.166
Mixed	-0.9626	0.24432	1.03771	0.4854	0.22551	1.18287
Pop	0.6936	-0.46333	-0.04219	0.545	**1.02946	0.34417
2013	0.2987	1.1402	-0.16421	0.112	-0.04945	0.23038
2014	-0.4496	**1.53904	0.58456	1.024	0.7454	**1.90119
2015	-0.967	1.34822	0.45354	0.7555	0.40926	0.36694
2016	-1.0861	0.23404	-0.38914	-0.6313	-0.21141	-0.08294

The first significant coefficient to examine is the relationship between genders and the category of women bring portrayed as subordinate, with a p-value of 0.00245 and an estimate coefficient of -2.04741. These results suggest that portraying women as subordinate seems to have a highly negative correlation to male artists. This can be inferred as female artists having a larger presence of portraying women, either themselves or others, as subordinate. When examining the raw data, 12 out of 20 songs (60%) by female artists contain the portrayal of women as subordinate. In comparison, only 17 out of 78 songs (21.8%) by male artists contain this theme.

With a p-value of 0.04686, the portrayal of women as subordinate contained another significant difference when examining its presence between the genres. The estimation coefficient was 1.02946, suggesting a strong correlation with pop against the baseline of

country. Twenty-two out of 50 (44%) sampled pop songs featured a presence of this theme; it was present in only nine out of 50 (18%) country songs.

When examining the difference between each year and 2012, only 2014 seemed to hold significance. In regard to appearance commentary, the p-value was 0.0274 with an estimation coefficient of 1.53904. When examining the overall presence of objectification, the p-value was 0.0325 with an estimation of 1.90119. In both cases, 2014 appears to have a higher presence of these categories over 2012. Since no other year had significant differences from 2012, this also suggests that 2014 has a higher presence of these themes over the other years.

The following two tables examine the test results from the GLM. This examined the frequency of the objectification categories. Two of the four significant results are in the category of objectifying gaze. This is concurrent with Gervais and Eagen (2017) stating that the objectifying gaze is the most common form of objectification women experience.

Table 5: Frequency Values

	Gaze	Commentary	Sex Priority	Sex Possession	Subordinate	Overall
Male	0.1193	0.592	0.123	0.076	0.53	0.34194
Mixed	0.5938	0.805	0.116	0.8974	0.686	0.43894
Pop	**0.0258	0.251	0.502	**0.0285	**0.013	0.05581
2013	0.2069	0.403	0.784	0.2796	0.954	0.7541
2014	0.0535	0.629	0.713	0.4348	0.626	0.82819
2015	0.0235	0.902	0.456	0.2981	0.548	0.98213
2016	0.079	0.622	0.997	0.7758	0.171	0.75497

Table 6: Frequency Estimations

	Gaze	Commentary	Sex Priority	Sex Possession	Subordinate	Overall
Male	1.1023	0.28324	1.8575	1.4303	-0.37831	0.44557
Mixed	-0.6664	0.16382	1.996757	-0.1499	0.25628	0.43271
Pop	**1.1242	-0.3793	0.2679	**0.972	**1.52547	0.59635
2013	-0.7129	0.41008	-0.196577	-0.7034	0.04286	-0.15483
2014	-1.3987	0.24495	0.244942	-0.4917	-0.39521	0.10128
2015	-1.796	-0.06717	0.473668	-0.6574	-0.55679	-0.01089
2016	-1.3649	-0.28218	0.002532	-0.1729	0.85082	0.14464

Differences in genre, in which pop was tested against country, contains three significant values. These values signify a difference between the genres for objectifying gaze, women portrayed as a sexual possession, and women portrayed as subordinate. In regard to the objectifying gaze, the p-value was 0.0258, with the correlating estimation equaling 1.1242. The p-value for portraying women as sexual possessions was 0.285, with a 0.972 estimation. The final objectification theme, women portrayed as subordinate, held a p-value of 0.013 and an estimation coefficient of 1.52547. It seems that pop tends to hold a higher frequency of three objectifying themes than country.

When examining the data, objectifying gaze in pop music occurs 31 times in the sample of 50 songs; conversely, in country it occurs 18 times. The portrayal of women as sexual possessions occurs in pop 168 times, but there are only 82 counts of it in country. Pop features the portrayal of women as subordinate 207 times. Country, however, has a frequency of 37.

The objectifying gaze seems to be much less frequent in both genres, while portraying women as subordinate occurs at an alarming rate in pop.

When examining appearance commentary, 2014 contained a significant difference from 2012. The p-value is significant at 0.0463. The estimation coefficient of 1.17521 suggests that music from 2014 is more likely to contain appearance commentary than songs from 2012. The results from 2015 are the opposite; while the p-value for objectifying gaze is lower at 0.0235, the estimation is a negative integer. At -1.796, it suggests that 2012 held a higher frequency of lyrics containing objectifying gaze than 2015. This implies that, since no other year contained a significant figure, 2015 held the lowest frequency of objectifying gaze out of the 5-year period.

In general, despite the over-representation of men and the majority of music containing objectifying content, the results from this sample suggest that female artists objectify women more than men. As examined above, female artists have a higher presence of portraying women as subordinate. Other researchers have found that women often self-objectify and send the message that they are neither inherently valuable, nor deserving of respect. It seems women contain a notion that they, and other women, do not have intrinsic worth. This is concurrent with findings in other studies, such as in *A feminist analysis of popular music: Power over, objectification of, and violence against women* (Bretthauer, Zimmerman, & Banning, 2006). In the aforementioned study, the researchers found that women were frequently portrayed as in need of a man to have purpose and fulfillment. Indeed, they wrote:

> Many females sang of not being able to live without a man. They mentioned doing anything and everything to be with a man and, in some cases, would give up their lives. Some female artists sang of needing to be saved and about life lacking all

> that is good if they were to live without the presence of a male… female artists communicated messages that they were not inherently valuable and did not deserve respect.

Additionally, Bretthauer et al. (2006) found that women did not value themselves; this theme derived from women using their sexuality to attract men, and remaining in relationships despite hurt or problems. They found that only three songs in their sample of 120 featured female artists contained themes of women taking care of themselves. Similarly, only four songs out of 100 were by female artists, held no objectifying themes, and were about something other than relationships or sex. Of those, only two were "girl power" songs about women empowering themselves.

When considering songs empowering women, should songs in which a woman self-objectifies or is sexualized be considered empowering? Oware (2009) examined in *A "man's woman": Contradictory messages in the songs of female rappers, 1992-2000* female artists self-objectifying in an effort to liberate themselves. Additionally, Oware found that female artists would portray other women negatively, using derogatory terms and insults to tear them down. Multiple researchers have shown that sexualization and objectification begin young, and it teaches girls that they are only as worthy as men find them. Oware asks whether self-sexualization and objectification is hypocritical. In addition to considering the hypocrisy, should role models in the music industry, such as Rihanna and Taylor Swift, be pioneering songs about empowered, intelligent, and kind women?

Between the genres, pop, indeed, often contained more degrading and objectifying messages and themes when examined by other researchers. Bretthauer et al. (2006), Flynn,

Craig, Anderson, and Holody (2016), and others found in their studies that objectification appeared in pop more often and/or frequently than other genres tested, including country.

In regard to year, the line graphs below depicts the changes over the 5-year sample. Figure 1 shows the trend of presence, while Figure 2 depicts the frequency. The numbers used were taken directly from the data. The significant values should reflect the changes.

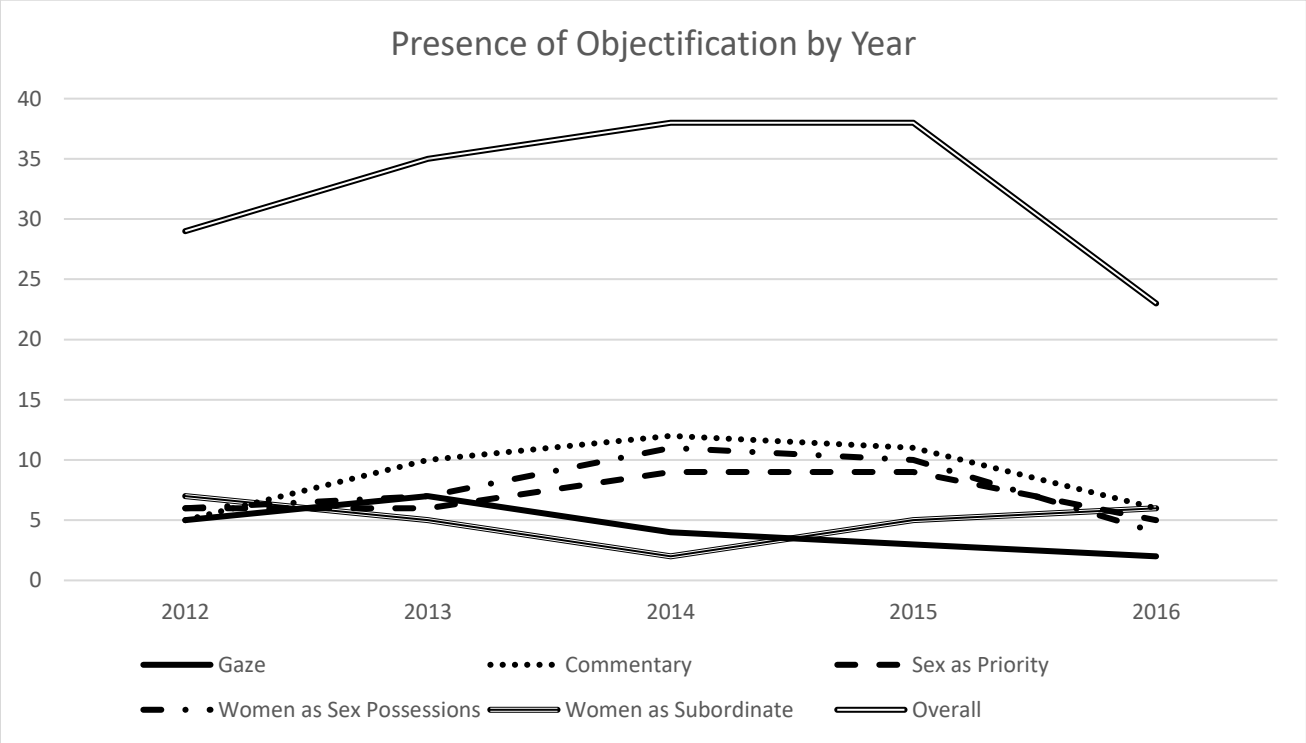

Figure 1: Presence of Objectification by Year

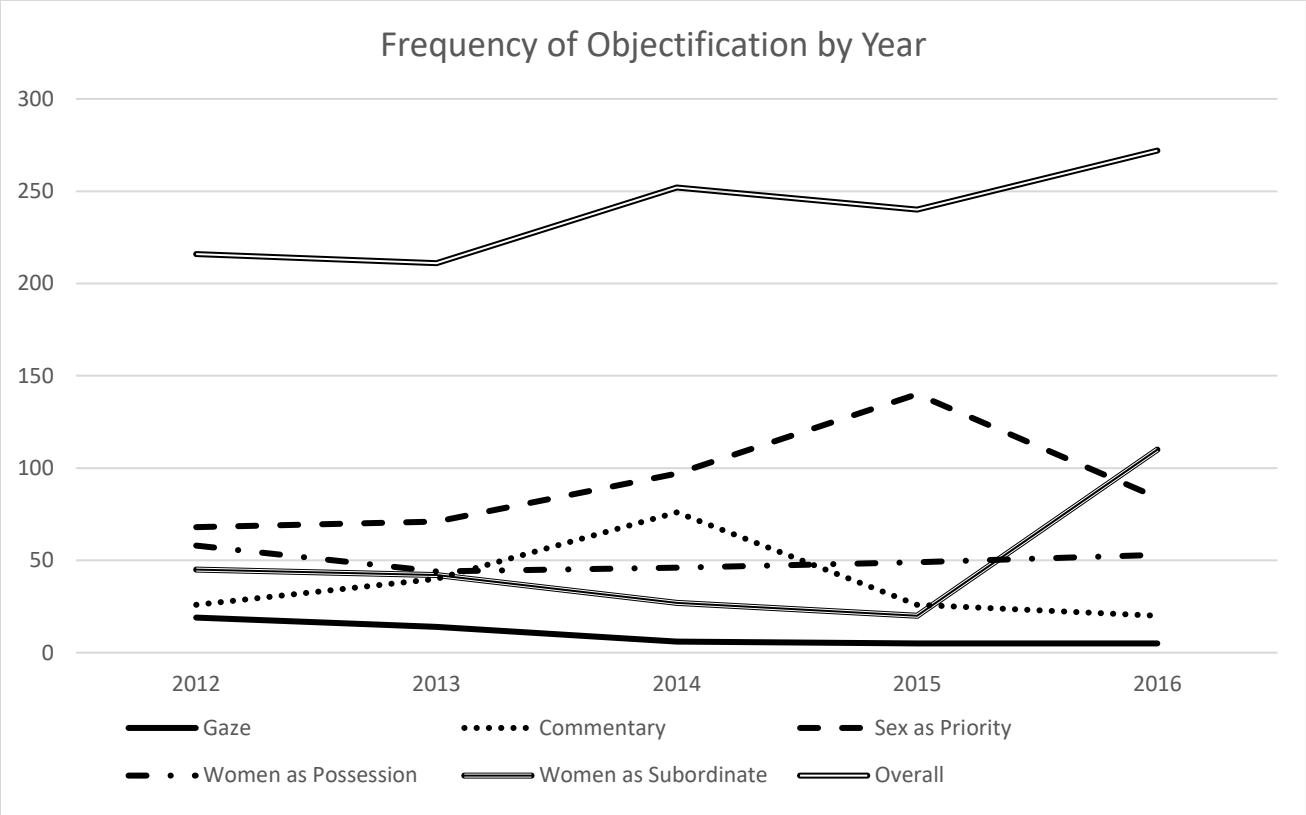

Figure 2: Frequency of Objectification by Year

As discussed previously, 2014 has the highest presence of appearance commentary and overall objectification. Figure 1 shows that appearance commentary peaks in 2014; it had been rising from 2012 and began to decrease from 2015. Additionally, the graph depicts a similar shape for overall objectification. When examining frequency, 2015 had the only significant result, implying 2015 held the lowest count of objectifying gaze. The graph depicts a downward trend since 2012, with the low being reached in 2015. According to the graph, 2016 maintained that low, but the GLM did not reveal any significance.

Additionally, these graphs show a decrease in overall presence but an increase in overall frequency, suggesting that fewer artist are objectifying; however, those who are seem to

objectify at a high rate. Indeed, when examining the data, 80 out of 100 songs have less than 20 counts of objectification.

Limitations

One of the prevailing limitations of this study was the sample size. One hundred songs across 5 years is infinitesimal in comparison to the hundreds that reach the Billboard charts each year, and the thousands that exist in obscurity. While there were significant findings, they are still based on a small sample of a massive population. Another limitation was that in an effort to analyze the content thoroughly, a large number of tests were conducted. As such, significant results were bound to appear.

A further limitation encountered was the sex/gender of the song writer. The writer may not be the same as the artist. This study only examined the artist sex, and the presence and frequency of objectification.

Beyond limitations, one interesting, but unexplored observation is that while there was only one song by a female artist in the top 20 songs with the highest overall frequency of objectification, number five was “Don’t let me down” by the Chainsmokers featuring Daya. However, Daya is the only one singing the song. Additionally, the only type of objectification in the song was the portrayal of women as subordinate. For this study, the song was placed into the primarily male sex group because the primary qualifying feature for sex was the lead artist. Similarly, “We Found Love” by Rihanna featuring Calvin Harris has only Rihanna singing. Calvin Harris is a DJ, and only contributed to the background track. In future studies, it may be interesting to examine the relationship between featured and primary artists, and how that relationship impacts lyrical decisions.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Women face objectification almost daily (Gervais & Eagan, 2017), and experience it from childhood and throughout their lives (Schick, 2014; Starr & Ferguson, 2012). In addition to experiencing objectification regularly throughout life, women face it incessantly through media. In addition to mainstream media, such as television and music, sexting apps like Tinder, Snapchat, and Grindr place an increased emphasis on physical appearance, as well the concept that women exist for the sexual consumption of men (Gervais & Eagan, 2017). When examining MTV, it became apparent that women were used as objects of sexual advances by men (Bretthauer et al., 2006).

This study, along with others by Cooper (1985), Bretthauer and colleagues (2006), and Flynn, Craig, Anderson, and Holody (2016), shows that female objectification exists in music lyrics. Objectification had a presence in a majority of songs, with only 32 out of 100 songs lacking objectifying themes. What is even more sinister, however, is the results examining the differences between the demographic categories of genre, sex, and charting year.

It is apparent, through the significant differences found, that female artists have a higher presence of the portrayal of women as subordinate. This may be due to the cycle formed, in which women accustomed to other-objectification begin to self-objectify (Gervais & Eagan, 207). It can be inferred that after a lifetime of being seen as objects, women begin to see themselves as such. Additionally, young girls are taught to accept being treated as lesser compared to boys. Schick (2014) found that in a middle school drama program, the girls were sexualized, paired with boys older than them by a year or more, and expected to accept "acting" that fringed on physical abuse.

Additionally, women continue to face a glass ceiling. Over the past 5 years, male artists have made up 70% of the top 10 artists for pop, and 86% of the top 10 artists for country. Music has the potential to help create equality. Through adequate representation, and non-objectifying lyrics, music can become a platform in which media stop abusing women.

References

Amber Rose Slutwalk. Retrieved from http://amberroseslutwalk.com/

American Psychological Association, Task Force on Sexualization of Girls. (2007). *Report of the APA Task Force on the sexualization of girls.* Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report-full.pdf

Bretthauer, B., Zimmerman, T. S., & Banning, J. H. (2006). A Feminist Analysis of Popular Music: Power Over, Objectification of, and Violence Against Women. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, *18*(4), 29-51.

Cooper, V. W. (1985). Women in popular music: A quantitative analysis of feminine images over time. *Sex Roles*, *13*(9/10), 499-506. doi:10.1007/BF00287756

Cordea- Rado, A. (2017, Oct. 6). #MeToo floods social media with stories of harassment and assault. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/16/technology/metoo-twitter-facebook.html

Coscarelli, J. (2017, Aug. 9). Kesha, even with a liberated new album, remains tied to Dr. Luke. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/09/arts/music/kesha-rainbow-dr-luke-lawsuits.html

Cougar Hall, P., West, J., & Hill, S. (2012). Sexualization in Lyrics of Popular Music from 1959 to 2009: Implications for Sexuality Educators. Sexuality & Culture, 16(2), 103-117. doi:10.1007/s12119-011-9103-4

Evans, E. (2016). What Makes a (Third) Wave? *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, *18*(3), 409-428. doi:10.1080/14616742.2015.1027627

Ferguson, K. E. (2017). Feminist Theory Today. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *20*(1), 269-286. doi:10.1146/annurev-polisci-052715-111648

Fischer, P., & Greitemeyer, T. (2006). Music and aggression: The impact of sexual-aggressive song lyrics on aggression-related thoughts, emotions, and behavior toward the same and the opposite sex. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, (9), 1165.

Flynn, M., Craig, C., Anderson, C., & Holody, K. (2016). Objectification in Popular Music Lyrics: An Examination of Gender and Genre Differences. *Sex Roles*, *75*(3/4), 164-176. doi:10.1007/s11199-016-0592-3

Gervais, S. J., & Eagan, S. (2017). Sexual objectification: The common thread connecting the myriad forms of sexual violence against women. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 87(3),* 226-232. doi:10.1037/ort0000257

Greitemeyer, T., Hollingdale, J., & Traut-Mattausch, E. (2015). Changing the track in music and misogyny: Listening to music with pro-equality lyrics improves attitudes and behavior toward women. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture, 4*(1), 56-67. doi:10.1037/a0030689

Hewitt, N. A. (2012). Feminist Frequencies: Regenerating the Wave Metaphor. *Feminist Studies*, *38(3)*, 658-680.

Intersectionality. (n.d.). In *Oxford Living Dictionaries.* Retrieved from https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/intersectionality

Loughnan, S., Hasiam, N., Munane, T., Vaes, J., Reynolds, C., & Suitner, C. (2010). Objectification leads to depersonalization: The denial of mind and moral concern to objectified others. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 40(5),* 709-717.

Me Too. Retrieved from https://metoomvmt.org/

Munro, E. (2013). Feminism: A Fourth Wave? *Political Insight, 4(2),* 22-25. doi:10.1111/2041-9066.12021

Odyssey. Retrieved from https://www.theodesseyonline.com

Oware, M. (2009). A "Man's Woman"? Contradictory Messages in the Songs of Female Rappers, 1992-2000. Journal of Black Studies, 39(5), 786.

Salam, M. (2017, Dec. 2). Brock Turner is appealing his sexual assault conviction. *The New York Times.* Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/02/us/brock-turner-appeal.html

Schick, L. (2014). 'Hit Me Baby': From Britney Spears to the Socialization of Sexual Objectification of Girls in a Middle School Drama Program. *Sexuality & Culture, 18*(1), 39-55. doi:10.1007/s12119-013-9172-7

Sprankle, E. L., End, C. M., & Bretz, M. N. (2012). Sexually degrading music videos and lyrics: Their effects on males' aggression and endorsement of rape myths and sexual stereotypes. *Journal of Media Psychology: Theories, Methods, And Applications*, *24*(1), 31-39. doi:10.1027/1864-1105/a000060

Snyder, R. C. (2008). What is third-wave feminism? A new directions essay. *Signs,* (1), 175. doi:10.1086/588436

St. Lawrence, J. S., & Joyner, D. J. (1991). The effects of sexually violent rock music on males' acceptance of violence against women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *15*, 49-63.

Starr, C. R., & Ferguson, G. M. (2012). Sexy dolls, sexy grade-schoolers? Media & maternal influences on young girls' self-sexualization. *Sex Roles*, *67,* 463-476.

Time's Up. Retrieved from https://www.timesupnow.com/

Treat, T., Farris, C., Viken, R., & Smith, J. (2014). Influence of Sexually Degrading Music on Men's Perceptions of Women's Dating-Relevant Cues. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, *29*(1), 135-141.

Veerkamp, H. (2014). Feminist frequencies: Why Radio Needs Feminism. *Journal of Radio & Audio Media*, *21*(2), 307-315. doi:10.1080/19376529.2014.950154

Volgman, M. E. (2013). *More than music to my ears: Music lyrics and self-objectification.* Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations.

Winch, A. (2014). Feminism, generation and intersectionality: Generational differences within feminism are also opportunities for dialogue. *Soundings,* (58), 8.

Women's March. Retrieved from https://womensmarch.com

Appendix A: Pop Music

2012

Somebody That I Used to Know	Gotye ft. Kimbra
Call Me Maybe	Carly Rae Jepsen
We are Young	fun. ft. Jannele Monáe
Payphone	Maroon 5 ft. Wiz Khalifa
Lights	Ellie Goulding
Glad You Came	The Wanted
Stronger (What Doesn't Kill You)	Kelly Clarkson
We Found Love	Rihanna ft. Calvin Harris
Starships	Nicki Minaj
What Makes You Beautiful	One Direction

2013

Thrift Shop	Mackelmore and Ryan Lewis ft. Wanz
Blurred Lines	Robin Thick ft. T.I and Pharrell
Radioactive	Imagine Dragons
Harlem Shake	Baauer
Can't Hold Us	Mackelmore and Ryan Lewis ft. Ray Dalton
Mirrors	Justin Timberlake
Just Give Me a Reason	P!nk ft. Nate Ruess
When I Was Your Man	Bruno Mars
Cruise	Florida Georgia Line
Roar	Katy Perry

2014

Happy	Pharrell Williams
Dark Horse	Katy Perry ft. Juicy J
All of Me	John Legend
Fancy	Iggy Azalea ft. Charlie XCX
Counting Stars	OneRepublic
Talk Dirty	Jason Derulo ft. 2 Chainz
Rude	MAGIC!
All About That Bass	Meghan Trainor
Problem	Ariana Grande ft. Iggy Azalea
Stay with Me	Sam Smith

2015

Uptown Funk	Mark Ronson ft. Bruno Mars
Thinking Out Loud	Ed Sheeran
See You Again	Wiz Khalifa ft. Charlie Puth
Trap Queen	Fetty Wap
Sugar	Maroon 5
Shut Up and Dance	Walk the moon
Blank Space	Taylor Swift
Watch Me	Silentó
Earned It	The Weeknd
The Hills	The Weeknd

2016

Love Yourself	Justin Bieber
Sorry	Justin Bieber
One Dance	Drake ft. Wizkid and Kyla
Work	Rihanna ft. Drake
Stressed Out	twenty one pilots
Panda	Desiigner
Hello	Adele
Don’t Let Me Down	The Chainsmokers ft. Daya
Can’t Stop the Feeling!	Justin Timberlake
Closer	The Chainsmokers ft. Halsey

Appendix B: Country Music

2012

Time Is Love	Josh Turner
You Don't Know Her Like I Do	Brantley Gilbert
Why Ya Wanna	Jana Kramer
Cowboys and Angels	Dustin Lynch
(Kissed you) Good Night	Gloriana
Better Than I Used to Be	Tim McGraw
Even If It Breaks Your Hbeart	Eli Young Band
Lovin' You Is Fun	Easton Corbin
Springsteen	Eric Church
Drunk on You	Luke Bryan

2013

Cruise	Florida Georgia Line
Wagon Wheel	Darius Rucker
Boys 'Round Here	Blake Shelton ft. Pistol Annies and Friends
Crash My Party	Luke Bryan
I Want Crazy	Hunter Hayes
Highway Don't Care	Tim McGraw ft. Taylor Swift and Keith Urban
Get Your Shine On	Florida Georgia Line
Mama's Broken Heart	Miranda Lambert
Sure Be Cool If You Did	Blake Shelton
Runnin' Outta Moonlight	Randy Houser

2014

This Is How We Roll	Florida Georgia Line
Burnin' It Down	Jason Aldean
Dirt	Florida Georgia Line
Bottoms Up	Brantley Gilbert
Play It Again	Luke Bryan
American Kids	Kenny Chesney
Bartender	Lady Antebellum
Drunk on a Plane	Dierks Bentley
Leave the Night On	Sam Hunt
Somethin' Bad	Miranda Lambert and Carrie Underwood

2015

Take Your Time	Sam Hunt
Girl Crush	Little Big Town
House Party	Sam Hunt
Kick the Dust Up	Luke Bryan
Crash and Burn	Thomas Rhett
Sangria	Bake Shelton
Homegrown	Zac Brown Band
Buy Me a Boat	Chris Janson
John Cougar, John Deer, John 3:16	Keith Urban
Like a Wrecking Ball	Eric Church

2016

H.O.L.Y.	Florida Georgia Line
Die a Happy Man	Thomas Rhett
Humble and Kind	Tim McGraw
Somewhere On a Beach	Dierks Bentley
Head Over Boots	Jon Pardi
You Should Be Here	Cole Swindell
Break Up In a Small Town	Sam Hunt
My Church	Maren Morris
Come Here to Forget	Blake Shelton
Peter Pan	Kelsey Ballerini