Behind The Scenes:

Opposing Music Videos through Cinema

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I: Abstract

        Hypersexualized images of the women have been utilized since the inception of the motion picture camera in the late 19th century. Additionally, moving images have been used by the entertainment industry to influence thought in both intentional and unintentional ways since their beginning. The entertainment industry using the influence of sexual images to advertise products is no new trope. This trope has reached its extreme, however, in the contemporary music video. We often hear phrases like "sex sells," that normalize these problematic tropes. Music videos are advertisements for songs and like most advertisements, they rely on stereotypes to sell their product to the largest target audience. At the center of my film is a young white man who has quickly soared to fame and fortune by means of appropriating black culture through rap music and conforming to the gender norms perpetuated by rap culture. However, he is a homosexual person, generating a binary between how he represents himself publicly and who he really is on the inside. Should he continue portraying himself as hyper-masculine, aggressive, and sex-crazed towards women in order to continue his success? Or should he make music that reflects his true inner self? Other central characters are a young male director who cares for his crew more than the talent or the project itself, a middle aged male producer who abuses his authority, a female assistant director who is fully competent, skilled, and hardworking, yet still is disrespected by cast and crew members on account of her gender, a cinematographer who will take any chance he can get to look at a hot female body, and a young female dancer who is treated as nothing more than a pretty face, despite the sexual favors she exchanged for her role in the music video.

        The film will consist of a stereotypical music video as well as a meta look behind the scenes of the set of that video. This film will pay homage to films such as the *Dreamworlds: Desire, Sex, and Power in the Music Video* series, which discusses the ways in which women are continuously objectified in music videos since their onset in the 1980's. The film will be a reflection of contemporary society as a whole, as well as a reflection of the many problematic aspects of the music video industry specifically. This is not just a film about the negative cultural representations music videos maintain about women. It will also focus on the cultural appropriation of hip-hop/rap culture. Furthermore, the film will concern the mistreatment of the women in these music videos--be it cast or crew.

While many films have examined problematic representations of women in music videos (such as the *Dreamworlds* series mentioned above)*,* this film will expand upon these problematic representations by including a critique of the treatment of music video dancers during casting and production, an analysis of the racial appropriation utilized in music videos, and will question the virtual absence of male homosexuality.

        The accompanying essay will include descriptions and analyses of films that contribute to the phenomena of hypersexualizing women. It will also consist of historical examples of problematic representations of women by the entertainment industry, leading up to and including those in contemporary popular music videos. Finally, the essay will review the technical aspects of the film, and discuss how the music video sequences and the behind-the-scenes sequences depict the problematic tropes present in music videos and their production processes, and how these tropes contribute to rape culture. This essay will rely greatly on the works of feminist scholars such as Laura Mulvey and Michael Kimmel. The essay will examine these issues from historical, philosophical, and cultural lenses in order to further the conversation about the many problems with music videos, and how society might move forward to create better and more accurate representations of both women and men in these music videos.

II: Introduction

       In our society, women often feel alienated inside a structure that was designed to keep men in power and women subservient to them. This structure often misrepresents women's true identities, and doesn't give them nearly as much agency as men in all aspects of life. The entertainment industry has, and continues, to perpetuate this problematic exclusion of women. Currently, sexual assault and/or harassment scandals, such as the one around producer Harvey Weinstein, validate the existence of patriarchy and misogyny in the entertainment industry. I would like to focus on how the entertainment industry, and specifically "booty videos," a style of hip-hop/rap music video, contributes to this misrepresentation through objectification. Even before the entertainment industry, patriarchal values were the cornerstone of society. Unfortunately, this is still the case today, and the entertainment industry has a significant responsibility in perpetuating patriarchy. This is due to the entertainment industry's tremendous power to influence thought and thus shape cultural values and norms. Blockbuster films, like *Jaws* (1975) and *Star Wars Episod*e IV (1977), set a precedent for any type of product by the entertainment industry to make as large a profit as possible, relying on widely accepted and/or sought after tropes and stereotypes. They do this by showing the things people want to see. These "wants" are manufactured by cultural norms, which are often created or influenced by entertainment media itself, such as blockbuster films, advertisements, and music videos. The creators of music videos, which are often men, do just this by using music videos to broadcast their male sexual fantasies. Music videos were first aired on MTV in the 1980's following the first blockbuster films in the 1970's. With the possible exception of pornography, no type of entertainment media has been more problematic in terms of its representations of women,

especially the "booty videos." "Booty videos" is a term used by many media professionals and scholars to refer to music videos that rely on sexualized images of a woman's posterior in order to sell the song. In "booty videos," women almost always lack any sort of agency and are usually used solely as sex objects, catering to the male sexual gaze. "Booty videos" also appropriate many cultural art forms, as is the case with white artists copying hip-hop culture, and with white dancers/choreographers cherry-picking and hypersexualizing certain aspects of hip-hop dances. The film I am making challenges viewers to reexamine the "booty video" by first showing a typical "booty video," then questioning problematic aspects of its production. It questions these problematic aspects through a narrative story about the cast/crew of the aforementioned video. I will explain this structure in detail as well as tropes I use on screen in my film and why I chose the imagery I did later in the essay. I will also summarize opinions of filmmakers and scholars, some who feel a white heterosexual male like myself should make a film like this, and some who feel someone like myself should not. My intention with this film is to use the influential power of moving images to question how they objectify women, and how this affects society.

III: Overview of the Entertainment and Advertising Industries' Social Influence, and the Patriarchal Culture that they Perpetuate

Moving images have an astonishing amount of power in influencing thought, and in turn creating cultural values and norms. Moving images are extremely wide reaching and exist in many different forms and across many different disciplines. They can manipulate, and often disadvantage, everyone, but women and minorities are the biggest victims. This influential power of moving images actualizes when people see themselves in one another in these films or other media, because this causes them to then police each other in public. This influence existed

well before the invention of moving images and its adoption by the entertainment industry. Michel Foucault, a French sociologist, believes that power can be achieved without the need of actual observation by another. Just the prospect of being observed is sufficient to maintain power (Foucault). In other words, the possibility of someone watching us motivates us to police our public presentation in hopes to fit in with cultural norms. When cultural norms normalize women as sex objects for the male sexual gaze, this causes both men and women to pressure women to fit in, by means of women presenting themselves as sex objects for the male sexual gaze, rather than sex subjects for the benefit of their own sexual identities. Sandra Lee Bartky, a feminist philosopher, expands on Foucault's argument in her essay, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power." Bartky states, "We are born male or female, but not masculine or feminine" (313). In other words, masculinity or femininity is socially constructed. Historically, being male meant embodying masculinity and being female meant embodying femininity. This was accepted almost comprehensively as truth, so much so that there were even laws that policed the ways in which women were to dress in public. This was because society was, and still is, patriarchal, in other words, a situation where men have authority over women. Although this is no longer legally the situation in most developed countries, we still live in a patriarchal society. In a patriarchal society, women are often viewed as object, rather than subject. Not fitting into the mold of an "ideal woman" can cause men to ridicule women, and women to ridicule each other. Bartky explains that currently, "the disciplinary power that inscribes femininity in the female body is everywhere and it is nowhere; the disciplinarian is everyone and yet no one" (Bartky 315). Just like in Foucault's model of power, the threat of being watched is enough to make men and women police women's behavior and public

presentation. This detrimental and invisible mechanism doesn't stop there; these attitudes are often vocalized by society. For example, overweight women are often encouraged to lose weight by people they don't even know (Bartky 315). Thus, women are often socially punished for not fitting into the mold of the "ideal woman" (Bartky 315).

This notion of the "ideal woman" is heavily influenced by what appears in the entertainment industry. Laura Mulvey comments on this phenomenon in her essay, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. Mulvey writes, "Woman stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, and not maker of meaning" (Mulvey 834). According to Mulvey, patriarchal-centric cinema produces, "obsessive voyeurs and Peeping Toms, whose only sexual satisfaction can come from watching, in an active controlling sense, an objectified other" (Mulvey 835). This effect on men is problematic far past men simply desiring to see attractive women perform erotic acts on screen. It becomes ingrained in their perception of women in the real world, creating situations where men feel entitled to the enjoyment of women's' bodies. This entitlement extends beyond men *visually* enjoying women's bodies. It perpetuates rape culture, where rape and other types of sexual assault are normalized. Mulvey criticizes this patriarchal "male gaze" in the context of how narrative cinema manufactures women to occupy these roles.

Advertising is another realm where rape culture is maintained through the objectification of women. Penny Belknap and Wilbert M. Leonard II gathered over 1,000 print advertisements from the 1970's, the decade before the invention of music videos, from diverse sources and analyzed them in their journal article, "A Conceptual Replication and Extension of Erving

Goffman's Study of Gender Advertisements." Belknap and Leonard focus specifically on the portrayal of gender roles in these advertisements (103). They state that print media advertisements are, "slow in changing the traditional demanding roles of women they perpetuate" (104). Although both sexes are often stereotyped in advertising, women are often displayed as dependent on a man or men and depicted as sex objects (Belknap Leonard 105). Belknap and Leonard explain renowned 20th century sociologist Erving Goffman's idea that we can understand gender roles by looking at commercial advertisements because "people prefer to identify with portrayals of themselves" (105). Belknap and Leonard published the data from their findings, which included results pertaining to the ritualization of the subordination of women in advertising. They write, "The ritualization of subordination was applicable to between 44 and 87% of the ads" (111). Music videos, being a cross section of advertising and entertainment, further this problematic portrayal of women to an even greater extent.

IV: Music Videos

Music videos have been popular since their origin in the 1980's. Even then, the creators of these videos often objectified women, just as filmmakers and advertisers have and still do. Music videos are essentially stylized advertisements for a song. In the article, "From Busby Berkeley to Madonna: Music Video and Popular Dance" by Sherril Dodds, Dodds explains that, "music video and advertising enjoy a reciprocal relationship in that they trade in shared visual ideas and techniques" (249). The people with agency in the creation of music videos are: the artist(s), the director(s), and the producer(s). Sut Jhally studied the hypersexualization of women in his *Dreamworlds: Desire, Sex & Power in Music Video* series and stated that a "Duran Duran video from 1983 shows how sexual imagery was an important part of the music video from the

start" (Jhally). Rock music videos were the first to constantly use women as sex objects in their videos. Groups like Motley Crue often fragmented women's bodies in their music videos, such as in their 1987 song, 'Girls, Girls, Girls," which was primarily shot in a strip club. The objectification of women wasn't contained to just inside the strip club. The band's only scene interacting with women outside of the strip club consists of them catcalling a few women walking by, and prompting the women to join them. According to Jhally, over 90% of rock videos in the 80's and 90's were directed by men. These videos were not just sexualized, but they were primarily influenced through the lens of male sexual fantasy. This fantasy was generally constructed with men being the only rational actors in the videos and women being objects for the men to enjoy in whatever fashion they saw fit. This sometimes resulted in violent sexual advances by the men in these music videos. As Jhally puts it, "Men's violence against women takes on an erotic quality." These tropes were instantaneously adopted by hip-hop and rap music videos, and were pushed to new limits in what is now referred to as the "booty video."

The "booty video" formula is a trope in music videos primarily utilized by rappers to display their status. They display this status through the accumulation of wealth and property, of which women's buttocks are often included as signifiers of the rapper's status. Mako Fitts comments on this phenomenon in her article, "Drop It like It's Hot': Culture Industry Laborers and Their Perspectives on Rap Music Video Production." According to Fitts, "The booty video reinforces the increasing use of an urban sensibility in music, television, and films that exploits a mediated understanding of black, urban aesthetics" (211). This is extremely problematic because these tropes further the hypersexualization of women by constantly robbing them of any

subjectivity they might have had in some rock music videos because they are equated solely to material goods.

There are some less damaging ways to use the "booty video" formula in music videos. Amy Lam argues that Nicki Minaj's use of the "booty video" formula in the music video for *Anaconda* is acceptable in her article, "Nicki Minaj's Unapologetic Sexuality is Not a Crisis." Lam explains the contrast in reception of Minaj's video by quoting two people who have significantly differing opinions: "A writer called it the 'fiercest take on female sexuality of the year,' while others felt Minaj's hypersexualization was a 'letdown.'" Overall, Minaj's use of suggestive dance moves and partial nudity is less problematic because she has agency to decide how to represent herself, unlike the backup dancers in most music videos (including in her own video) that lack this agency. Still, she is promoting the idea that women are sex objects and some may conclude from her putting herself in that position that she wants to be seen as a sex subject. If this is the case she shouldn't fear any sort of backlash for displaying her sexual subjectivity. However, the *Anaconda* music video contains images of sexual objectivity because the backup dancers do not have agency in choosing how they wish to display themselves. Other pop stars like Miley Cyrus have also utilized tropes from the "booty video" formula, and I find this problematic for all the reasons previously stated, but also because she is appropriating a culture for her own financial gain.

V: Appropriation of Rap/Hip-hop Culture

Appropriation is no recent trend in the music business. Appropriation, in terms of art, is the practice of reworking someone's, or a culture's, art or artistic style as one's own, without giving proper acknowledgement to the artist and/or culture in which it originated. Elvis Presley

is one of the earliest and most successful white artists to use black music to heighten his position in society and become prosperous while simultaneously denying acknowledgement to those who clearly influenced him. He went to an all-white school and did not have a cultural connection to the music style he became notorious for (Wilson). The fact that Presley did not have direct access to black culture while growing up is not the problem. Complications emanate when one does not award acknowledgment to the culture whose art form they engage in, especially when they become exceptionally recognized and influential for doing so. Elvis, when once asked, "Who do you sound like?" replied, "I don't sound like nobody" (Wilson). This, however, is not true. He sounded like what was then called "race music," music made by people of color in the United States. He was not necessarily better than any alternative artists making "race music," but this was during a time where segregation was law and not attributing his style and technique to people of color allowed him to market himself to white youth, and thus make millions of dollars. This tendency continued with white musical artists appropriating blues and rock n' roll from musicians of color, and ultimately led to white rappers appropriating hip-hop and rap from musicians of color. Eminem, undoubtedly the most famous white rapper, even has a lyric commenting on this in reference to Elvis' appropriation. In the song "Without Me," Eminem raps, "I am the worst thing since Elvis Presley to do black music so selfishly/And use it to get myself wealthy." Eminem, although white, grew up in a predominantly black part of Detroit and created this song with producer Dr. Dre, a person of color. Considering his history, acknowledgement of the genre created by musicians of color that he participates in, and his producer being a person of color, I conclude his use of rap is not appropriation. However, Eminem's music videos, such as the one for his song, "Ass Like That," contribute to problematic

representations of women by fragmenting their bodies and using them in the video as sex objects, as well as appropriating hip hop dance styles. Appropriation is not the victimless crime it can appear to be. It is collective intellectual theft and all artists are morally obligated to make a considerable effort to not appropriate, just as writers make a considerable effort not to plagiarize.

VI: Challenging the Entertainment Industry

In a broad sense, I find the entertainment industry disappointing, as both a filmmaker and a general member of society. At the heart of all art, including products by the entertainment industry, there should be some veracity or profound reflection that can best be communicated through only this medium. Regrettably, with a majority of the entertainment industry, this is not the situation, especially since the upsurge of television in the mid-20th century, blockbuster films in the 70's, and finally, the internet in the late 20th century. As these forms of media became commonplace in our homes and our culture, they became more formulaic and often resembled advertisements more than artwork.

Early blockbusters like Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) and George Lucas's *Star Wars Episode IV* (1977) were extremely lucrative. The success of these films created blockbuster fever in the industry. Studios spent gargantuan amounts of money producing and advertising these films and less and less on more complex and controversial films because, after all, filmmaking is a business. Audiences prefer laser guns and giant sharks to more prudent films with profound messages. Yes, some films are made exclusively as products and not art, but if the trend continues, someday there will be almost no one investing in unique, novel, and artistic films, and that fact is particularly upsetting to a filmmaker like myself. Also, wanting films to appeal to a vast majority of the public leads to films that establish and reinforce cultural problems. *Star*

Wars: Episode IV (1977) was written/directed and produced by two men born in the 1940's. *Jaws* (1975) was directed and written by men born in the 1940's and late 1930's, and it was produced by men born in the 1910's and 1930's. They grew up in a more overtly forceful patriarchal culture than we live in today. Men were the head of the household and women were subservient to them, or at least that was the general expectation due to cultural values and norms at the time. It's no wonder that their films grew out of their upbringing and therefore augmented patriarchy by primarily utilizing women as helpless victims, sex objects, and other disparaging roles while the men in the films were the only ones capable of having autonomy or being the heroes. Since these films were exceedingly more financially successful than any films previous, they created a model for movie studios and all other entertainment industry producers to follow. Disastrously, that model included using actresses as means but hardly ever ends. It's no wonder the music video industry embraced this degradation and propelled it to new heights, considering it started less than a decade after these first blockbusters set the tone in terms of how to make money with a film.

Practically every subsection of the entertainment industry has problematic tropes within them, but I choose to make a film about music videos because I believe they are the most problematic "artistic" type of media produced by the entertainment industry. I say artistic because, although advertisements and pornography are created solely to sell a product or satisfy sexual cravings, music videos have a much greater potential to experiment artistically and make social observations and criticisms than advertisements or pornography, and yet they seldom do. Also, besides pornography, music videos are the most degrading and despicable in terms of their representations of women, especially when adhering to the "booty video" formula. The general

public isn't usually interested in watching short films or experimental films. Feature films and television shows are increasingly in demand. Music videos are one way in which "short films" become accessible to a mass audience. There are no prevailing guidelines like the three-act structure in music videos, like there are in feature films. Therefore, there is an opportunity within music videos to exhibit meaningful messages and/or artistic cinema to the mass public. However, with the majority of music videos and especially rap/hip-hop music videos, they scarcely ever explore visual styles or take chances with profound messages, and often methodically abide by the "booty video" formula. The producers and record label owners will not alter this formula because music videos are essentially advertisements of a song, and these almost pornographic images are consistently lucrative in making them their money. Therefore, it is up to filmmakers to actualize a clashing narrative, pushing against this unimaginative magnitude of "booty videos."

My film is a remonstration to the "booty video." "Booty videos" showcase a world in which women have one role: sex object. Sexuality is a part of everyone's identity and enjoying a sexual image is not in itself wrong. The problem arises when a type of media almost exclusively depicts a gender as nothing more than a sex object. This deprives women of many contradistinctive identities - including but not limited to their sexuality - by only showing them as sexual beings, thus perpetuating the idea that women are only good for one thing, sex. It also subversively conditions men to regard women solely as sex objects and even sex-crazed, thus sustaining the patriarchy and rape culture. My film will begin as a typical "booty video" for a rap song. It consists of many different smooth and cinematic shots, connected by both the fast cuts, and the rap song itself. Then the viewers will hear "Cut!" and see the inner workings of the set

between takes. This will be achieved by using a film within a film trope. This film within the "booty video" will have a much looser and almost documentary feel to it, in order to contrast with the "booty video" itself. The dialogue and action in this section will demonstrate the hindrances women face on set thanks to its patriarchal environment, and more broadly establish the unsound ways in which these women are treated, and the appropriation of rap/hip-hop culture in terms of societal influence and perception. These ideas will be communicated through representative dialogue and emotional reactions by the characters. Finally, we will see the same rap verse shot again, this time very static with occasional audible direction from the director in order to release the viewers from any unabridged attention they may have had when watching the stylized music video shown at the beginning of my film. In doing so, the viewers will have time to consider the information presented in the film within the "booty video" and by contextualizing the film within and the "booty video" together, they will hopefully understand why the "booty video" shown at the beginning of my film, and many others like it, are so problematic.

In being reflexive and showing conventions which I deem problematic, then analyzing the problem through a documentary style narrative, and finally showing the problem with less flair as a moment to reflect on the latter two sections, my motive is that the viewers will enjoy the visual spectacle of the first section initially, become conscious of issues with "booty videos" in the second section, and finally, reflect during the last section. If my execution of the film is successful, then the majority of viewers will understand my film's message. However, the situation becomes problematic if the viewer does not understand my message. I will refine/re-edit sequences based on feedback from my honors committee members as well as trusted professors and filmmakers if necessary before submitting this film to festivals, or I will

not submit it at all if it does not accomplish its purpose. In doing this I will make sure I am not just another white man showing hypersexualized images of women and appropriating rap/hip-hop culture. This film is not an attempt to have the final word on any or all of the problems I have previously discussed. I am making it so that others can respond to it through film, written word, or even just with their own internal thoughts. Still, there are many academics and filmmakers who would have a problem with my reflexive look at "booty videos," regardless of the success of the film's message.

VII: Reasons a White Heterosexual Filmmaker Shouldn't Make a Film Like This

Should a person like myself make a film exploring the problems I previously explained that exist within the music video industry? There are many filmmakers and academics that conclude that it is not my place to do so because I am a white heterosexual man. Jill Soloway, the director of the Amazon series *Transparent*, is one filmmaker who doesn't consider it appropriate for someone like myself to produce a film like this. In an interview for Refinery29 by Michael Hafford, Soloway speaks about male filmmakers including the rape of female characters in their films. Soloway maintains that men should not make films containing rape, but if women want to, this is acceptable (Hafford). Her claim could easily be applied to my situation, a white heterosexual man making a film criticizing, and yet incorporating, the hypersexualization of women and appropriation of black culture in music videos. Soloway believes that men making films about rape will create fear in women and add unnecessary trauma to victims. Hafford believes that rape is repeatedly used inappropriately as a "cheap plot-advancing device," and he states, "Obviously, there is a difference between depiction and endorsement." Hafford later explains that those who live through traumatic events such as rape should be the ones making

films about it, if they so choose. Applied to my film, both individuals would likely believe that those who have been disadvantaged, degraded, or appropriated by the music video industry should be the ones making films against it, especially if using the tropes of "booty videos."

There are many people like myself with unearned and undeserved privilege due to the circumstances of their birth. They might be good people, and may attempt to help those less privileged than themselves. Art can be a great way to do so. However, in attempting to help through art, they sometimes do the opposite, and thus only further their privilege. Heather McLean writes about an example of this in her article, "Digging into the Creative City: A Feminist Critique". She explains how a group called Dupont Improvement Group (DIGIN) worked with the Toronto Free Gallery in an attempt to revitalize Bloordale, a struggling neighborhood in Toronto. However, their revitalization excluded certain members of the community; including the homeless, drug users, and sex workers (McLean 669). Without input from the whole community, this project, according to McLean, was "complicit in cultivating spaces of white privilege and heteronormativity" (670). McLean later points out that this revitalization project supported white male artists and almost entirely excluded female artists, especially queer female artists (682). McLean describes these types of projects as "the increasing gentrification of low-income downtown neighborhoods by the home-owning white settler population and the pushing out of low-income racialized communities to the city's inner suburban neighborhoods" (683). Her article demonstrates that helping those less privileged through art, or any other means, is only successful when those less fortunate are included in the process. If excluded, this type of "philanthropy" can further the privilege of the "philanthropists," while subsequently harming those whom they attempted to help.

I wouldn't say my film is an attempt to help those less privileged. Instead it is an attempt to use my knowledge of society and filmmaking to analyze societal problems that affect those who are less privileged than myself. Still, Mclean would probably believe that my film has good intentions behind it, but like the revitalization of Bloordale, it could end up making the problems worse rather than working towards a solution through dialogue. Unlike the Bloordale project, I have talked to many people affected by the problems that the music video industry helps to perpetuate. However, due to the timeframe and scope of this endeavor, I did not have time to include as many opinions by those disadvantaged by music videos as I would have liked to. Only the film in its final version will tell if I was inclusive enough.

VIII: Reasons a White Heterosexual Filmmaker Should Make a Film Like This

In the previous section, I explained Soloway's opinion that people should not make films containing problematic imagery that they don't have personal experience with. I understand where she is coming from, but I have to disagree. Of course filmmakers should not use traumatic imagery for sheer spectacle. However, we shouldn't whitewash problems within society, and sometimes showing those problems can be the best way to prompt a dialogue about them. More people portraying problems in a respectful way will create more conversations, and more conversations will lead to public attention, and thus eventually social change, regardless of who starts the conversation. Michael S. Kimmel wrote a chapter in Tom Digby's book, "Men Doing Feminism," entitled, "Who's Afraid of Men Doing Feminism?" In this chapter, Kimmel asks the questions: "Can men do feminism? Ought men do it?" (57). He explains that he gives many lectures on feminism in which the majority of the audience members are women. He believes that it is crucial to bring men into these conversations (57). In Kimmel's lectures, he talks about

subjects such as sexual harassment and rape with ideas about reform (59). Kimmel writes, "I suggest that men should want to support feminist reforms: not only because men will live happier and healthier lives, with better relations with the women, men, and children in their lives if they do." Kimmel believes this helps open a non-exclusive dialogue about feminist issues. I agree with Kimmel, and I am making my film for similar reasons to those that he gives in his lectures, that is, to further a feminist dialogue. Kimmel would most likely disagree with Soloway's view of excluding those not victimized by something from portraying it because this type of thought excludes everyone but those affected from contributing to conversations about important social issues.

Soloway expands on the concept of the "male gaze" in a talk she gave at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). In her talk, she modifies Mulvey's term, "male gaze" with her updated term, "the female gaze." Her term stems from the need for entertainment media to give more women roles as rational actors, and protagonists, and to reduce the use of women in films as objects for the male sexual gaze. As I have previously explained, the entertainment industry disproportionately uses women as objects and men as rational actors. But utilizing "the female gaze" in films is not exclusive to female filmmakers, as Soloway suggests. Male filmmakers need to work towards Soloway's solution as well. There will be women in my film portrayed as sex objects through their dancing in the music video section. However, the majority of screen time for female actors in my film will be made up of roles with subjectivity for the characters. One example of this is a female dancer character illustrating the problems with the music video industry through dialogue with the producer. Another female character with subjectivity is a capable and intelligent female assistant director beautifully running a chaotic set. Furthermore,

the male actors who represent patriarchy will be insensitive towards women on set, but this insensitivity will be condemned through the film's content rather than glorified. In doing all of this, I believe I am wholeheartedly participating in Soloway's "female gaze."

In an attempt to make this film as respectable as possible and not have it end up like the Bloordale revitalization project, I have worked with many women to make sure this film is, in fact, feminist. For one, I have had conversations with every girl dancing in my film about the content and their roles. It goes without saying that all the dancers in my film are aligned with my message, otherwise they would surely not be willing to spend significant time on set with no compensation. I also told them that although showing a realistic portrayal of a "booty video" is important to my film's message, they do not have to do anything they are uncomfortable with on set, in terms of suggestive dancing and acting. The last thing I want to do is become like a "booty video" director by not respecting the women dancing in my film. If there is ever a moment where they are uncomfortable, I have tasked them to tell me at once and I will make things right. Also, I will constantly make sure every one of my directions is acceptable to them. I also wrote this screenplay with a woman in order to make sure it was not solely a male perspective on "booty videos." Because of this collaboration, the film changed in many ways, all of which made it stronger and empowering.

IX: Imagery Within the Film

In the music video section of my film, there will be multiple tropes that are typical to "booty videos," yet all have a metaphorical meaning. Money will often be displayed in the same frame as female dancers and the rapper, thus equating the women to a status symbol for the rapper just like the money is. However, this meaning created by their on-screen juxtaposition

will later be rejected when the viewers find out that the rapper is homosexual and thus the dancer-and-money relationship in this film is actually a facade. Being homosexual, being surrounded by sexy men - not women - would actually reinforce his sexual prowess. The posse members, who are both men, will wear blank masks to symbolize that no one specific man is responsible for patriarchy. Patriarchy can be, and is, perpetrated by men and women alike. One of the dancers in my film will wear a Donald Trump mask. Yes, this is humorous and will be visually interesting, but it has meaning far beyond that. Since Trump's election, patriarchy, and the problems that come with it, are not taken as seriously as they should be. Our "leader" is supposed to represent us, but with comments such as "grab em by the pussy," Americans, both men and women, often excuse this behavior, which is a giant step back from progress. The rapper will be costumed in ridiculous attire such as a laurel crown, sitting on a pool chair, and surrounded by ludicrous amounts of drugs and alcohol as a metaphor for how ridiculous the "booty video" formula is. Some of these tropes will be obvious to the viewers during the music video portion of the film, but if successful, their irony will become apparent after the behind-the-scenes section of the film.

The media, whether that's news, novels, motion pictures, or any other form, often uses emotional appeal to persuade their viewers. When nonfiction media like the news uses emotional appeal this can be problematic. When reporting facts, it is important to be as objective as possible, even when attempting to start a dialogue about some issue. In sexual assault cases, there are often negative effects from emotional reporting. Reporters often victim blame and state what a shame it is that the perpetrator ruined their life. This has no place in any sort of non-fiction media. However, fiction based media relies on emotional appeal, even when the

situations presented are representative of real world problems. This is why I think it is appropriate to show what I deem to be such problematic imagery in order to later question the use of such imagery. I anticipate that some viewers of my film will enjoy the sexualized imagery, which is only natural when presented with it. If they enjoy it, then the arguments against that imagery presented after the music video section will hopefully get them thinking about their enjoyment of the imagery and possibly make them reconsider watching music videos with that type of imagery in the future. Other viewers will see the music video imagery as problematic right away. In that case, this will further a conversation that they have probably already had, even if just internally. Either way, my film has the potential to influence all viewers in a positive manner through emotional appeal. That is why I chose to make this film fiction rather than a documentary. Also, many documentaries have been made about this subject but there are seldom short fiction films that do so. Art can be one of the greatest weapons we have, and for me, film is that weapon.

X: Conclusion

With the endless onslaught of problematic representations of women propagated by music videos, and more broadly by the entertainment and advertising industries, there is seemingly no hope. I cannot accept this as truth. Women have been becoming more and more involved with media production. As women become more involved in these fields that help shape our culture, there will be a more equitable picture painted about women in our collective consciousness. This involvement includes advertisements and films that are made by women and/or containing overall balanced representations of women, and a proportional number of women in politics. As a male citizen, I can do my part by supporting films that are either made

by women or adhere to feminist ideals, supporting companies that use fair representations of women in their advertisements, and by using my vote to support politicians who are allies to the feminist cause. This is all very important for individuals like myself to do, but still only a drop in the bucket on an individual scale. However, that is not to say we all shouldn't do so because with enough drops we can erode, and eventually wash away, problematic foundations of our society such as patriarchy. As a filmmaker, I believe I can do more to help than the average individual. I understand the extensive impact films have on society. I have the potential to make films that make a difference. Have I made a difference with a film I made thus far? Probably not, at least not a significant one. Will this film make a difference? Possibly, but still probably not too significant of one. Then why did I make it considering the incredible amount of effort it took to do so, and the fact that it may only make a small difference or not make one at all? I made it because practice makes perfect. The more films I make with feminist ideals and the more practice I have producing, writing, directing, and editing films, the more likely I am to make significant and influential films. If I achieve that, then my films will make a difference because they will be viewed by a vast cross section of society. Everyone has a different story and we can learn so much from each other, but so many stories, such as realistic depictions of women, are significantly underrepresented. This underrepresentation harms those underrepresented, but it also robs people like myself of different views and ideals that would benefit our growth towards being the best people we can be. I hope to always look back at my life with knowledge that I am a better person than I was, and with warmth in my heart sparked by being a part of the solution rather than a continuation of the problem. Inclusion and proper representation of as many groups with distinctive ideals is paramount to humanity's, and my own, moral development.

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