

MEDIA EDUCATION FOUNDATION

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Dreamworlds 3

Desire, Sex & Power in Music Video

Transcript

INTRODUCTION

[SINGING] *I heard you on the wireless back in Fifty-Two; Lying awake intent at tuning in on you. If I was young it didn't stop you coming through. Oh-oh...*

SUT JHALLY: Since MTV first started operation in 1981 by playing this video from The Buggles entitled “Video Killed the Radio Star”, music videos have become a central and vital component of the music, entertainment, and media industries. No longer limited to just one channel they have spread out to the entire culture and across musical genres from pop, to rock, to metal, to rap and hip-hop, to country. They have moved from the margins of the culture and relative innocence to its very center and it’s a caldron of controversy around the nature of the sexual imagery that came to define it as a genre.

[MTV2 Promotional Video]

SUT JHALLY: In fact from the very origins music videos, like other forms of advertising, have relayed heavily on stories concerning female sexuality to fulfill their function of selling CDs and albums for record companies. This Duran Duran video from 1983 shows how sexual imagery was an important part of music video from the start, as is this one by Van Halen in 1984. The same strategy is used by Prince in 1991 and by Aerosmith in 1994. Right up to the present it is clear that women’s bodies have functioned as an important currency through which the stories of music video are told. Of course, as essentially promotional vehicles themselves, they’re closest in form and content to advertising, which has used depictions of female sexuality to draw the attention of viewers in a crowded and noisy environment. Across the whole range of our media culture the link between a woman’s identity, her body, and her sexuality is told in the most compelling of forms. But, nowhere in popular culture is the story more focused and told in such relentless fashion then in music video. Examining the stories that music videos tell us about both male and female sexuality, about what is considered normal, allows us to do more than just understand one aspect of our culture. It gives us a

way to think about how the culture in general teaches us to be men and women. It gives us a way to understand ourselves.

TECHNIQUES OF STORYTELLING

[VIDEO CLIP] LFO's Brad Fischetti: Like before the video, right, they hand us these two huge poster boards filled with Polaroids of girls in bikinis, and they're like yea, pick the one's you want.

[VIDEO CLIP] Kid Rock: Do we have enough girls? We never have enough girls...all about the girls.

SUT JHALLY: As Kid Rock notes, music videos are all about the girls and indeed, the presence of sexualized female bodies is so prevalent that the major conventions for achieving this goal are relatively easy to identify. The most obvious way is to cut in shots of women into a band performance and it seems the more bizarre, the better. In this case, not merely bikini clad, but coated in silver or in a variation, gold plated. This is common across genres. In this country music video, a whole panoply of female characters is used including a blow up female doll. Even the geriatrics of rock, the Rolling Stones, are still at it, trying to make themselves relevant by using women's bodies. But age is not the determining factor as the video from a younger band demonstrates. In fact, showing women as dancers or just around the artist is perhaps the most frequent convention used across all genres. Whether it is rock music, or country music, or pop, or hip-hop, the presence of female's bodies has become one of the easy solutions found by the creators of music videos to the problem of how to both get attention and tell a compelling story that connects the music to visually arresting images. Other strategies include introducing them as background musicians as the artist performs or, more frequently, showing them as members of the crowd at live performances, sometimes exposing themselves in the hope of getting attention. In the most obvious failure of creativity, women are also shown as simply hanging around male artists, their only function being to draw in male viewers into the fantasy created by the producers and directors of these videos. Sometimes, women play a key role in the narrative of the fantasy being told. Here, Kid Rock gets to live out one of the major fantasies of the male dream world, group sex with glamorous airline stewardesses, where he joins an exclusive and envied club. Or, in this Limp Bizkit video, an underwear clad woman turns into an alien unleashing a fierce weapon. But even beyond a single video there is a consistent story about masculinity and femininity being told by the system of music videos as a whole. Identifying these stories, where they come from, and the possible effect they could have is thus an urgent task.

CONSTRUCTING FEMININITY

SUT JHALLY: Our ideas of what it means to be a socially acceptable man or woman have not been genetically encoded in our biological genes. They come from the stories the cultures tells us about what is normal and what is not and music videos make clear that the most important aspect of a woman is her sexuality. In fact, women are presented as ravenous creatures who desire sex at all times and it seems with any man who happens to be around. Sometimes this can happen in a mechanics garage where a simple sip of whiskey conges forth a fantasy image. Given the role that cars play in the lifestyles depicted in music videos it should be no surprise to seem them as the venue for some of this activity. In the same way public bathrooms are a frequent location where these figments of the male imagination, these nymphomaniacs operate. No place is out of bounds, even a therapist in her office only obsesses about one thing and as they care only about one thing the movement towards sex is quick and instant and women are presented as aggressors who won't take no for an answer.

But one of the strange aspects of the world depicted in music videos is that often women far out number men which means that many times women have to share the men. This visual strategy, multiple women draped over a man, has become one of the more enduring techniques in music videos, something that directors and artists can go to in the absence of creativity. Told over and over and over again however, this cliché helps to construct an understanding of femininity always being defined in terms of a powerful man. And sometimes, the man can be just a boy. At times, even just seeing men on TV is enough to arouse the women of music video, whether projected on large screen or even small ones, the sexual response enlisted from the females, often lounging around in lingerie on beds is powerful and unmistakable. These women are so desperate and dependent and need men so badly that when men are absent acceptable substitutes have to be found and being sex-crazed nymphomaniacs almost anything will suffice as a replacement from pieces of fruit to their own fingers to ice cream cones to hood ornaments, the affect of this cliché is to further sexualize women's behavior even without the presence of men. And when men are truly absent this becomes a really bleak world for women, they fall apart emotionally not being able to cope, disintegrating in bathrooms, moping around endlessly on beds, lamenting their loneliness and isolation until a man returns to catch a falling tear and make the world right again with his presence.

Apart from telling us that women are in a constant state of sexual arousal, dependent on men for their emotional stability, what other stories do the makers of music videos tell us about these fictional creations? For example, what activities do these women engage in? Given their perpetually aroused state in music video it should be no surprise that the women in this male dream world spend a lot of time undressing to first capture men's attention and also to make

sure that when an opportunity presents itself they are ready, stripped for action. If we ask, what is the major thing that these women do the answer does not exactly need a rocket scientist. They party, endlessly it seems in every conceivable venue, on yachts or boats, swimsuit and bikini clad women dance, sunbath, and frolic carefree. At the beach, they party enthusiastically; in hot tubs they invite men to join them. By the sides of swimming pools they sway seductively. At house parties they hang out in their underwear. In clubs they can't resist stripping down and dancing on tables. When not partying, the women in the dream world are diligent and helpful to men. They spend quite a lot of time, appropriately dressed of course, playfully washing cars and motorbikes. Sometimes the duties of airline stewardesses even extend to washing airplanes and of course for exercise there is always mud wrestling. All this energetic activity obviously takes a lot of effort because after it is all done they also spend a lot of time just relaxing by the sides of swimming pools and even more time in the shower and bath cleaning up and music videos show us these grooming activities in a great deal of detail with a camera exploring the female bodies on view. This eroticization of water in music video should surprise no one as wet female bodies are one of the corner stones of adolescent, male sexual fantasy as reflected in the wet T-shirt contest which here takes on varied forms. Whether it is Beyonce, Christina Aguilera, or Britney Spears, the fantasy is the same. When the women of this fantasy world do get around to wearing clothes the choices, given everything else we know about them, are quite predictable. Low-cut skimpy tops, stockings and lingerie of various kinds seem to be pretty standard fair.

But what do these women when they're not cavorting or frolicking at parties on the beach actually do? What roles are they shown in? Given the fantasy nature of this dream world some of these roles should come as no surprise. From the inevitable cheerleaders, airline stewardesses partying on planes, hotel maids in short skirts, repressed librarians just bursting to discover their inner sexy babe, school teachers in lust with their male students, sorority girls just having a great time pillow fighting with each other, or authority figures like police women or SNM chicks with whips or school girls in uniform in lust with anyone, these characters are drawn straight from adolescent sexual fantasy. The condensation of this is found in this video where a peep show runs us through the gamut of these stereotypical characters; a nurse, policewomen, a dominatrix, and of course a school girl. In fact, peep shows and strip clubs are the main hang out for one of the major female characters who populate the dream world; the stripper. From playing a small part in the early history of music videos, they've evolved into one of its major components, sometimes shown as lap dancers, most of the time they are wrapped in various ways around a strippers pole which now seems to be a standard prop in the dream world. The compliant stripper is of course the ultimate heterosexual male fantasy and her ubiquitous presence should tell us something about the imagination that propels this part of popular culture. And where as in the past bisexuality was sometimes hinted at, now girl on girl action is highly

visible across the landscape of music videos and there is nothing at all subtle about it. Indeed, some videos are entirely based on wild parties involving only women. But, looking closer at why so many women now appear in this way in music videos, as opposed to, for example, gay men who are literally invisible, will give an answer as to the source of the imaginations from which the cultures stories or normal masculinity and femininity are told.

THE PORNOGRAPHIC IMAGINATION

SUT JHALLY: One of the genres where girl on girl action is a stable commodity is the world of male, heterosexual pornography and rap videos and hip-hop videos especially have increasingly come to closely resemble its form and its content. However, along with the voyeurism has come hatred, disrespect, and misogamy. While in the early year of music video black women were virtually invisible, the widespread popularity of hip-hop has allowed their entry into this part of the culture. But the price of entry is very high indeed, as they have literally been reduced to one part of their bodies. This is the essence of the commercial, male, heterosexual pornographic imagination, thinking of women as being defined only through their sexuality and that sexuality to be at the service of men's desires. The video Tip Drill by Nelly achieved a great deal of notoriety because it made explicit what is implicit in much of the rest of the culture. That women's bodies are there to solely please men and be under their control, to be bought and sold like so many pieces of meat. Here a women's body is used to swipe a credit card and indeed the term "tip drill" signifies women who will allow man after man to have sex with her for money. But this is not an isolated example as a Snoop Dogg video shows.

Indeed, many hip-hop videos are full of shots where money is showered on women's bodies signally that they are regarded with a contempt reserved for prostitutes or strippers, that their bodies and sexuality can be bought and controlled by men. And while black men in mainstream rap and hip-hop videos are largely presented as violent, savage, criminal, and drunken thugs interested in molesting and insulting any female that happens to be around we have to remember that these representations do not reflect the reality of African-American masculinity but how someone has chosen to represent it at this point in history. As such, they constituted the most racist set of images found in decades in American media and resemble most closely D.W. Griffith's 1915 white supremacist film *The Birth of a Nation* where black's are portrayed as irresponsible, drunken buffoons and as out of control, lust filled rapists of white women and just as there was a powerful white man who created and controlled those images as an argument for white supremacy and the glorification of the Ku Klux Klan we have to focus our attention on these contemporary images of a threatening and out of control, black masculinity and the role played by the

largely white men who control our current media empires. We have to ask what functions do the racist and sexist images in hip-hop and rap perform for the corporations who control our media culture and why are these images of black masculinity so connected to the abuse of women and what role does the pornographic imagination play in this? In fact the link between the sexist images in hip-hop and pornography has been made quite directly by rap artists such as Snoop Dogg and his best selling DVD *The Diary of a Pimp* produced in part with Hustler and the porn entrepreneur Larry Flint. The narrative involved a female journalist spending a weekend exploring the self-described pimp lifestyle of the rap star. In the first song of the film Snoop Dogg explains exactly what this entails.

[VIDEO CLIP] Snoop Dogg: *You gotta break these hoes for Snoop, you gotta break these hoes for Snoop. I said I bend the bitch over, get the chip off her shoulder. I don't let her hit the doja 'til she prove that she's a soldier. You gotta break these hoes for Snoop, you gotta break these hoes for Snoop.*

SUT JHALLY: By the end of the film, the journalist predictably has been overcome with lust and succumbs to join his so called “hoes” and Snoop Dogg sums up the essence of the male, heterosexual, pornographic imagination.

[VIDEO CLIP] Snoop Dogg: Mission accomplished: another bitch broke.

SUT JHALLY: While hip-hop has the most obvious and direct connection to pornography it is far from being the only musical video genre to have this relationship. In fact, historically rock music has lead the way as this playboy issue shows and VH1 pointed out the porn and rock connection as early as 2001.

[VIDEO CLIP] Reporter: Rankin' File, rock and porn.

SUT JHALLY: The worlds have intertwined in many ways from female porn starts appearing in music videos to directors such as Gregory Dark who switched from making films like *Hootermania* and *New Wave Hookers* to shooting videos for artists such as Britney Spears, Mandy Moore and Counting Crows. The worlds of music and pornography come most explicitly in the Matt Zane film *Backstage Sluts* where a number of prominent stars such as Mark McGrath from Sugar Ray and Fred Durst of Limp Bizkit are shown playing out their fantasies.

[VIDEO CLIP] Fred Durst: Rock and Roll is all about this. Right baby? Right. Tell 'em See she knows, I don't let her talk too much. I think we should make a porno right now, you know, since I'm a rock star.

SUT JHALLY: The film also shows how lunchmeat is a key role in how some of these bands warm up backstage for their performance

[VIDEO CLIP] Naked girl (while lunchmeat is being thrown at her): Am I going to get a free pass for this?

SUT JHALLY: It is this male, heterosexual, pornographic imagination based on the degradation and control of women that has colonized commercial culture in general, although it is more clearly articulated in music videos. Even when video makers have the freedom to experiment with other techniques such as animation, the view of women as being there solely for male pleasure and to be controlled in line with men's desires remains constant. Perhaps the ultimate expression of this is the essentially adolescent, pornographic world is to be found in the video *Stacy's Mom* by Fountains of Wayne, which features a 15-year-old boy obsessed by his friend's mother played by supermodel Rachel Hunter. While the teenage Stacy herself certainly looks like the rest of the women in music video the boy only has eyes for her mother who obligingly undresses in full view of anyone who happens to be watching, receives a public, full body massage, and of course practices her stripper moves in the dining room table and as he pleasures himself while in the bathroom watching and fantasizing about the mother, it is clear who's dreams and desires we are supposed to identify with.

It is important to be clear about the nature of this analysis. This is not a critique or dismissal of sexual images. It is not a moralistic point of view that regards all sexual representation in a negative manner. The question is not whether an image is good or bad, the question is whose story is being told? Who's eyes do we see the world through? Who's eyes do we not see the world through? Who is behind the camera? Who's visions and values guide us through the process by which we learn what it means to be a man or woman? And whose fantasies are these? Are they supposed to be ours? Given the narrow story about sexuality that is repeatedly told in mainstream culture the real issue is not that there is too much discussion of sex but that there is not enough. That is, there is simply not enough diversity in the stories of sexuality that circulate in the culture because the commercial, male, heterosexual. Pornographic imagination monopolizes virtually all of our media terrain.

WAYS OF LOOKING

SUT JHALLY: The stories of the dream world are told in many ways. The explicit images of what men and women are shown doing is just one way. There is also a story told by the visual techniques and forms that are used by the makers of music videos. That is, there is a story of the camera itself, which tells us that femininity is connected to sexuality and the body and that women find their own identities in terms of how pleasing and desirous they are to men. The most obvious strategy to communicate this is by actually showing them posing before a

camera, inviting the viewer to gaze at them. Even when there are no cameras directly present in the scene, the women invite the look from the viewer behind the camera that is filming them. They are presented as wanting to be watched, inviting it, desiring the look, enjoying being on display. This is not the mere invitation but literally open and willing for whatever men want to do to them.

To communicate in even more explicit terms that it is okay to watch and to desire another common technique shows women softly touching themselves while men look on. The filmic invitation is clear; women are nothing but sexualized bodies who live for male attention. In the absence of a man or a camera, women turn the gaze inward and watch themselves in mirrors, strengthening the idea that they are legitimate objects of desire. It is okay to look. It is okay to desire what you're gazing at because she is looking at herself the same way. Even walking away, looking back over her shoulder, the object of the gaze explicitly invites the desire. She wants to be possessed by the gaze of the watcher. Far from objecting when men look at them in sexual ways, the women of dream world revel in the attention. They want to be looked at by men. They deliberately position themselves for maximum visual affect but the images we see in music video are never innocent; they are never accidental. These ways of looking have been directly chosen by writers and directors and editors. Understanding them can tell us a great deal about how the person or thing being watched is regarded by the viewer. In music video, the person being watched is regarded as a passive thing. A common filming technique that reflects this view of the woman is a passive thing to be consumed by watching males involves the camera panning the willing and exposed bodies of these women. The camera roams over it, scanning up and down at will, exploring it in detail. The assumption behind this way of looking at someone is that it is perfectly legitimate to watch in this fashion. Women's bodies are surveyed, looked at, analyzed in the same way that one might examine a landscape or an object. Their function in the video is to be examined, gazed at, and desired by men. The camera angles that are used to shoot women reinforces this view. For example, the shot from above looks down into a female cleavage cannot help but emphasize one part of a woman's body as being central to her identity. A variation of this has women bending over in front of the camera. Similarly, when the camera looks from below as in the manner of looking up a dress it is reminiscent of a forbidden and taboo kind of watching, standard fair in a certain kind of male, adolescent fantasy.

Another conventional technique that illustrates this is the shot between the legs of a woman, her legs framing the action on the other side. These ways of visually representing femininity seem to lead almost naturally to focus the gaze on only one part of women's bodies. The women of the dream world are fragmented and presented as a number of simple and disconnected body parts. This is a common filming technique. It is a way to present women as an object of fair gaze. Just as from the viewpoint of content, we can say that it reflects the pornographic

imagination, the filming techniques that accompany it are a reflection of what we call the pornographic gaze. The point here is that the way in which women are filmed, not simply what they are doing or wearing, communicates messages and ideas about them. Specifically, focusing on only one aspect of people, women in this case, detracts about thinking about them as real people with feelings, emotions, thoughts, intellect, their own dreams and desires. Instead, they are just legs in high heels. When you think of someone only as a body part you deny them subjectivity and what makes them unique individuals. In this case, these ways of filming reduce women to one part of their bodies and only to the sexual part of their multifaceted characters. There is nothing inherently wrong with any of these techniques in and of themselves it is not that it is always negative as always ready to be watched and wanting to be watched. We all, men and women, present ourselves to be watched and gazed at. We all, men and women, watch attractive strangers with sexual desire. To treat another as an object of our desires is part of what it means to be human. The problem in music video and the culture in general is that women are presented as nothing else. If the story told about femininity could be widened beyond sexual objectification to include many other qualities of individuals: intellectual, emotional, spiritual and religious; creative, athletic, familial, political, occupational, the desire for autonomy and independence, for pleasure and deeper meaning then there would be no problem with a little bit of objectification as a sexual aspect of femininity would be balanced out and integrated with many other human qualities. The problem is that in our contemporary culture this complexity gets crowded out by a one dimensional definition of femininity based on a single story of the body of objectification of a passive sexuality whose only goal is to please men being told over and over again so it becomes the only way in which femininity is thought of. In that way, a lot of objectification is extremely damaging as it narrows how we think of femininity emptying out all of the complexity of human existence. Women become nothing but shadows or silhouettes, merely outlines; just empty shapes that men can fill with their own desires. There is nothing important and unique inside, nothing that makes them human. They are merely shadows of real people.

What, then, does it mean to grow up in a world where stories of femininity are defined and told in such narrow ways. For girls and women, this way of understand themselves and their bodies traps them inside a sexual imaginary, not of their own making where they are positioned only as sexual beings whose main function is to be pleasing to men. The video series *Girls Gone Wild* is one indication of the internalization of the story. Young women, with very little persuasion willingly reveal themselves to males and the camera. This is a full embrace of identity with a fantasy figure that prowls the pornographic imagination. The hyper-sexualized woman whose body is there to satisfy men's desires.

[VIDEO CLIP Girls Gone Wild] Reporter: Okay we need 5 seconds. Ready. 1, 2, ... (girls showing their breasts and screaming)

SUT JHALLY: In this way, these images and stories have worked their way into the inner identities of young women who view their own sexuality through the eyes of the male authors of that culture.

FEMALE ARTISTS: TRAPPED IN THE PORNOGRAPHIC GAZE

SUT JHALLY: To gain entrance into this world, female artists have to fit into the existing set of stories and use the visual language that has already been established as the norm. Musical ability is only one of the talents that is needed to establish a presence in the dream world and it is clear that many female artists thoroughly understand the requirements of the pornographic imagination. To navigate the barriers that this way of looking at the world erects, female artists are compelled to use the only visual language the culture allows, the central aspect of which is that women have to present themselves as primarily sexual beings. So predominant has this image of the female artist become this it is difficult to even imagine what an alternative might look like. The challenge of female artists is to try and stay true to their own vision of themselves but the pressures to conform are relentless and the conventional techniques that are adopted are easy to identify no matter the genre. Female performers must take on the fantasy roles that the pornographic imagination dictates. They perform for the camera and the male gaze, presenting themselves invitingly. They touch themselves suggestively, undress for the watching audience, allowing the camera to pan up and down their bodies, looking at them from above as well as from below. Like all women in the dream world their bodies are fragmented and they become defined through their various body parts. Even artists such as Madonna, who want to present themselves as assertive, independent and powerful have do it from within the conventions of the dream world when it comes to highlighting their sexuality and as the codes of female sexuality define it as passive and submissive, they find themselves in a strange paradox.

In more recent years Gwen Stefani reveals the same contradiction. On the one hand independent, energetic, in control, but always at the same time soft and safe within the conventions of the pornographic imagination. These pressures to conform can also be seen if we look at the representation of some artists over time. For example, the singer/song writer Jewel had for many years carved out an image of herself as a serious and authentic artist who made headlines with her video Intuition where she very knowingly and skillfully, perhaps “tongue in cheek” recreated many of the conventions of the dream world knowing what is necessary for survival.

[VOICEOVER] Jewel: This video is really over the top. I'm doing things in this video I never thought I'd do like, you know, I'm dancing, sprayed down with fire hoses (laughing) It's silly, you know, it's silly and completely over the top and something you would absolutely see in a music video, you know, (laughing) it's just an insane thing.

SUT JHALLY: And once you've entered this world it is difficult to change direction. Jewel's subsequent video was based on a song dealing with serious social issues including poverty and violence...

[VIDEO CLIP] Jewels Stand video.

SUT JHALLY: But, halfway through the video the pornographic imagination kicks in and Jewel is shown writhing on a bed in a variety of suggestive poses, getting undressed with the camera utilizing one of the usual conventions, and, of course, taking a shower. There seems to be no escape from male music video directors wedded to the pornographic imagination. But the pattern can be detected in the career of many female stars. It is instructive to remember that Mariah Carey's original image was much more innocent before it seems she threw herself wholeheartedly into the stories that the culture seems to demand from female artists to ensure success. Early in her career Christina Aguilera, too, was marketed in a gentile manner to young girls. That changed dramatically with the video that marked her full-scale immersion into the adult dream world of music video. Similarly, Jessica Simpson went from tamed pop star to mega publicity and heavy rotation with a video that presented her in quite explicit sexual terms. All these cases make clear that the price of female entry into what is considered the mainstream of the culture is to accept the vision of the pornographic imagination; that the only things of value about women are their bodies and their sexuality and their willingness and desire to act out male fantasies.

MASCULINITY AND CONTROL

SUT JHALLY: Another female artist who reflects this sexual imperative is Janet Jackson who in the 1990s went from relative obscurity to superstardom when she abandoned her somewhat tame image for a hyper sexualized one that met the requirements of the pornographic imagination more fully. This journey to objectification was completed in the 2004 Super Bowl Halftime show where she literally became defined to the world by one part of her body. However, Janet Jackson was just half the story of that event and almost no mention was made of the moments leading up to it where she plays the role of a tease and Justin Timberlake plays the role of a man who wants to control her and her body...

[VIDEO CLIP] Justin Timberlake (singing): *See I've been watching you, and I like the way you move, so go 'head, girl, just do it, that ass-shaking thing you do... No disrespect, I don't mean no harm, I can't wait to have you in my arms, hurry up 'cause you're takin' too long, bet I'll have you naked by the end of this song.*

SUT JHALLY: The dramatic conclusion of the incident is in a microcosm the essence of the dream world played out in front of the whole world. She (Janet Jackson) has become nothing more than a body part and he has demonstrated his sexual control over her. In fact, Justin Timberlake had already explored this theme in a previous video based on the end of his real life relationship with Britney Spears, which shows him breaking into her house and surreptitiously watching as she undresses and takes a shower. This behavior of glamorizing this instance mimics precisely the structures of real life stalking and domestic abuse where a man who cannot accept a woman's rejection of him and attempts to assert control over her life.

In fact, just as music video tells us a story of female passivity, it tells an equally powerful story of masculinity being tied to power, intimidation and force. And in this story of powerful and out of control masculinity women play a key role. They are shown repeatedly in cages, exhibiting themselves for watching males. They are shown tied up and writhing seductively on beds waiting for a man's attention. Chased and pursued by men, they are carried away and handled like children, their bodies explored and used as men please. This sense of male entitlement has an unmistakable aggressive edge. Women are pushed aside, slammed against walls, and held on the floor, spanked and slapped, water and alcohol poured over them and on them and finally, spread out on a pool table. In the pornographic imagination even a woman's apparent refusal to make ill advances ends in their acquiescence to his desire. Even when men unexpectedly attack them, women's arousal wins out over fear. In the dream world women never say no and passionately welcome masculine aggression. They even enjoy being forcefully kidnapped in a dark garage, blindfolded and made to perform for their attacker. In these ways, men's violence against women takes on an erotic quality. Perhaps the clearest and more aggressive articulation of this sense of male control of female bodies is reflected in this video with Fred Durst of Limp Bizkit kidnaps a woman he's obsessed with and forces her to watch as he both expresses his anger to her for rejecting his advances and demonstrates his ability to control her in line with his desires.

[VIDEO CLIP] Fred Durst (singing): *Hey you, Mrs. Too-good-to-look-my-way and that's cool you want nothing at all to do with me but I want you and ain't nothing wrong with wanting you 'cause I'm a man and I can think what the hell I want, you got that straight?*

No doubt I'd love to sniff on them panties now...I'd eat you alive! I'd eat you alive.

SUT JHALLY: As these ideas of male entitlement and power have become glamorized and normalized in the culture, we have to ask, what affect do they have on real life behavior of men and women?

[VIDEO CLIP] From the documentary War Zone

Man: (makes a kissing noise as she walks by)

Maggie Hadleigh-West: Who did that?

Man: What? (makes the noise again)

Maggie Hadleigh-West: Did you do that? Do you always do that?

Man: Oh I do it all the time; I do it to all the pretty girls on the street

SUT JHALLY: The documentary film War Zone is a real life demonstration of this sense of male entitlement and shows the harassment and verbal abuse that many women experience simply walking around their communities.

[VIDEO CLIP] War Zone

Man: I said good morning, baby, I like your style.

Man: I said have a nice day, you're very attractive

Man: Do you mind if I walk with you?

Man: Say, yo, baby.

Man: Happy mothers day, happy mothers day, happy mothers day, happy mothers day

Man: I said you're good, that's all.

Man: You're looking old

Man: She got big legs

Man: She needs to get laid

Man: You ain't got it like that

Man: Ah, forget it, forget it.

SUT JHALLY: And sometimes, this verbal abuse very quickly transforms into physical abuse. [Video from Central Park, NYC June 11, 2000] During the 2000 Puerto Rican day pride parade in New York City, the public space of central park turned into a literal war zone for scores of women who were doused, sexually assaulted, and stripped of their clothes by groups of men who felt they had an entitlement to act their desires on any female body. This footage, used by the police to identify and prosecute the assailants shocked and outraged the country when it was broadcast. When virtually identical images have been played out over and over again on our television screens with virtually no comment, why should we be shocked? In fact, what was most striking about these images was how familiar they were.

[VIDEO CLIP] Montage of women in music videos and police video being sprayed with water.

SUT JHALLY: While there are chilling similarities between the popular culture image and the real life attacks in Central Park, there is a major difference. The women in the real world were not enjoying it. They weren't smiling. This wasn't their dream world. It was someone else's, which had turned into their nightmare. A similar sexual assault took place during the 2001 Mardi Gras festival in Seattle captured in this award-winning photograph where a mob of men violently stripped and indecently assaulted a woman in full public view. One of the interesting questions to ask is what is going on in the minds of these normal looking men that they think that they have an entitlement to in act their desires on any female body that happens to be around even when it is clearly against their will. What stories from the culture are they drawing upon to legitimate their assault...

[VIDEO CLIP] Rapper (singing): *Gimme that pussy, girl gimme that, girl gimme that, girl gimme that pussy, girl gimme that, girl gimme that.*

SUT JHALLY: There are always two sides to the sexual objectification of the female body. On one hand admiration and desire , on the loathing and contempt, which is reflected in the language that some men use to describe women and sexuality.

[VIDEO CLIP] From the documentary *Keeping Score*

Man: If you see a woman or you know a woman, a bunch of guys know a female who they perceive to be what you'd call a bitch. What they'd say is that she needs a good fuck to put her in line, like fuck her, straighten her out, it'll be punishment for her or tame her like some type of wild horse or something, like a good fuck would just tame her.

Man: You'll see a group of guys in bars and a real pretty little girl who has her nose in the air a little bit and she'll trot by and someone will say 'man, she needs a dick in the ass' or 'someone should fuck her and leave her' or something like that. 'She really needs to be left in the cold.'

Man: I don't know if you've ever heard of "hate-fucking" but you're out and a girl will walk in with this big attitude and you're like 'I'd just like to fuck the hell out of her, I'd pound her, I'd nail her to the wall' or something like that. Or like on campus there might be a girl that you know in a class or something like that and she just gets the reputation of being what you'd consider a bitch or something like that and you're just like 'Man, I'd just like to fuck her.'

Man: This one guy we used to know, we used to call him HTB; it stood for “Hurt the Bitch” cause every time he got one he’d say he hurt the bitch so we called him HTB; you know just thrashing a woman, doing her ‘til she’s sore, that’s something that’s bragged about all the time. The day after a guy goes to bed with a woman he’ll come back and say ‘Man, I thrashed her, man, I did it ‘til she was crying.’

SUT JHALLY: What these attitudes reveal is that the danger and violence is inside our relationships and not outside and that when you objectify women and use them for props of male power and prestige then violent language and violence itself will not be far behind. While this embodied and fragmented images of women cannot directly cause sexual and violent assault they do rob women of their humanity and create an environment where a tax against them is not treated seriously. They cultivate attitudes and values that legitimate and justify the assaults as self deserving and provoked by the victims. If your understanding of female sexuality is mediated by the stories of music video then these are precisely the types of attitudes that one would expect that dream world to cultivate in it’s male watchers. Further, all behavior is based upon certain assumptions, attitudes and values. These stories of the pornographic imagination, then, do not directly cause sexual assault but they create understandings in a cultural environment that might encourage certain violent behaviors, influenced by many other things, of course, by some men towards women. Fantasies are fun but sometimes the line between fantasy and reality is blurred and the images of the dream world in that respect are not innocent, they are not just images. The stories they tell are firmly implicated in the gender and power relations in our society.

[END]