



# Do the Depictions of Sexual Attire and Sexual Behavior in Music Videos Differ Based on Video Network and Character Gender?

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examined the sexual messages depicted in music videos aired on MTV, MTV2, BET, and GAC from August 2, 2004 to August 15, 2004. One-hour segments of music videos were taped daily for two weeks. Depictions of sexual attire and sexual behavior were analyzed via a four-page coding sheet (interrater-reliability = .93). Results indicated that there were 39,559 depictions of female sexual attire (M = 278.58 per video, SD = 626.93) and 3,032 depictions of male sexual attire (M = 21.35 per video, SD = 55.14). There were 7,291 depictions of sexual behavior for females (M = 51.35 per video, SD = 135.07) compared to 2,511 sexual behaviors for males (M = 17.68 per video, SD = 40.35). Female sexual attire and sexual behavior were displayed more frequently than male sexual attire and sexual behavior. Sexual attire and sexual behavior were displayed significantly more frequently on BET than on MTV, MTV2, or GAC. Music videos on BET scored an average of 758.88 sexual depictions per video, followed by MTV with an average of 206.75 sexual depictions per video. Potential implications of these results and recommendations for future research are offered.*

## INTRODUCTION

Premarital sexual intercourse among American adolescents represents a major public health problem. According to recent data, 47% of high school students<sup>1</sup> and 86% of undergraduate college students report having had sexual intercourse in their lifetime.<sup>2</sup> Currently, the median age of first intercourse in the United States is 16.5 years.<sup>3</sup> Although other developed countries have similar rates of premarital sexual intercourse, the United States continues to have the highest rate of teen pregnancy among developed countries.<sup>4</sup> Approximately 35% of teenage girls become pregnant at least once before they reach age 20, resulting in 850,000 pregnancies each year.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, nearly eight in 10 teen pregnancies are not intended.<sup>6</sup>

Premarital sexual intercourse carries an

increased risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection. College students are at a higher risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection than are high school students due to significantly higher rates of unprotected sexual activity. Among sexually active college students, 30% report that they or their partner used a condom during last sexual intercourse<sup>2</sup> as compared to 43% of high school students.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 25% of sexually active adolescents become infected with a sexually transmitted infection each year<sup>7</sup> and nearly half of all new HIV infections occur in people under age 25.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, people under the age of 25 account for 66% of all sexually transmitted infections in the United States.<sup>4,8</sup> Having multiple sex partners also increases the risk for contracting a sexually transmitted infection. Recent data indicates that 35% of

college students report having had 6 or more sex partners<sup>2</sup> and 14% of high school students report having had 4 or more sex partners.<sup>1</sup>

Alcohol and other drug use, peer pressure, sexual coercion, and poor parental communication are just a few of the many

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factors contributing to premarital sexual activity among youth.<sup>3</sup> More than half (51%) of 15 to 17 year olds indicate that they are personally concerned that they might do more sexually than they plan to when drinking or using drugs.<sup>9</sup> In addition, nearly half (48%) of 12- to 17-year-olds state that teenagers face “a lot” of pressure when it comes to sexual involvement in relationships, and 40% admit to feeling personally pressured about sex and relationships.<sup>10</sup>

Although premarital sexual activity is impacted by a variety of factors, the entertainment media play a significant role and perhaps represent the most easily remediable influence on young people and their sexual attitudes and beliefs.<sup>4,11</sup> American media are considered the most sexually suggestive in the Western Hemisphere.<sup>12</sup> Adolescents rank the media second after school sex education classes as the leading source of sex and sexual health information in large part due to the extensive number of hours devoted towards media use.<sup>13</sup> On average, adolescents spend greater than 38 hours per week using media.<sup>14</sup> The typical adolescent viewer is exposed to more than 14,000 sexual references each year, yet only a handful of references provide an accurate portrayal of responsible sexual behaviors or accurate information regarding birth control methods, abstinence, or the risks associated with pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.<sup>4,11</sup>

Sapolsky and Tabarlet<sup>15</sup> revealed that adolescents who regularly watch primetime television are offered a steady mix of marital infidelity, casual sex, the objectification of women, and exploitive relationships. Many music lyrics and music videos contain sexually explicit material. In one content analysis, 75% of concept videos (videos that tell a story) involved sexual imagery.<sup>4</sup> Several music television networks display such sexually suggestive imagery. The National Institute on Media and Family<sup>16</sup> and Nielsen Media Research<sup>17</sup> have asserted Music Television (MTV) is the most recognized television network among young adults aged 12 to 34. Currently, 82% of MTV viewers are 12 to 34 years in age,

39% of which are under the age of 18.

Research suggests that even modest viewing of MTV and other music networks that air music videos results in significant exposure to glamorized depictions of sexuality.<sup>16</sup> A review of the literature revealed two published studies that had examined MTV viewing and sexual attitudes. Greeson and Williams<sup>18</sup> found that seventh and ninth graders were more likely to approve of premarital sex after watching MTV for less than one hour. Similarly, Calfin, Carroll, and Shmidt<sup>19</sup> found that college students who were assigned to watch MTV for a period of time developed more permissive attitudes toward premarital sex than their peers who did not watch MTV during the study.

A comprehensive review of the literature failed to reveal any published study that had comparatively examined the depiction of sexuality in music videos on different networks. The four major television/cable networks showing music videos are Black Entertainment Television (BET), Music Television (MTV), Music Television 2 (MTV2) and Great American Country (GAC). BET predominantly shows rap and hip-hop music videos as well as some gospel music videos. MTV and MTV2 predominantly show hip-hop, rock, pop, and soul/R&B music videos. GAC is dedicated to showing country music videos. The following research questions were examined: 1) How frequently are sexual messages and themes displayed in music videos? 2) What are the most common types of sexual attire and sexual behaviors depicted in music videos? 3) Do the depictions of sexual attire and sexual behaviors differ based on television network? 4) Do the depictions of sexual attire and sexual behaviors differ based on gender of music video characters?

## METHODS

### *Units of Analysis*

The units of analysis for this study were music videos that were aired on MTV, MTV2, BET, and GAC from August 2, 2004 to August 15, 2004. These network programs were selected because they represent the four major television/cable networks

showing music videos, they collectively air a diverse array of musical genres, and they each are predominantly viewed by youth. One-hour segments of music videos were videotaped daily from shows designated primarily for music video viewing, and included “Music Videos” on Music Television (MTV), “Hits Countdown” on Music Television 2 (MTV2), “BET Now” on Black Entertainment Television (BET), and “More Country Music Videos” on Great American Country (GAC). Genres of music videos sampled included rock, alternative, hip hop, rhythm & blues (R&B), rap, pop, and country.

### *Instrument Development*

After a comprehensive review of the literature, discussions with experts in sexual health and communication, and pilot viewing of music videos on television, a four-page coding sheet was developed to assess the depiction of sexuality in music videos. Prior to the development of this coding sheet, the authors viewed several current music videos on all of the four networks to identify the key themes and depictions of sexuality. These pre-study viewings revealed that most sexual depictions comprised two major categories: sexual attire and sexual behavior. Items observed were subsequently noted and then placed into their appropriate categories. These observations revealed that certain sexual attire items were gender-specific on the videos, meaning that some items were most relevant for females (i.e., cleavage, bikini, skirt, breast size) while other items were most relevant for males (i.e., exposed chest with shirt off, partially open shirt with two to three buttons open, boxer shorts). The coding sheet was therefore designed to appropriately account for these issues and measure male and female sexual attire and sexual behavior depictions. No previously published study in the professional literature was found which addressed the depiction of sexual attire and sexual behavior in music videos on different networks in such a detailed manner.

Descriptive information included artist/group name, song title, date that the music video was aired, total number of times the music video was aired during the two-week



period, length of the music video, music genre, number and type of character(s) (lead versus background), and gender of character(s). Sexual depictions were categorized into sexual attire and sexual behaviors. More specifically, the sexual attire subscale consisted of 25 items for female characters and 13 items for male characters. Operational definitions of specific items in the attire subscale were provided on the coding sheet and included various types of clothing, apparel and bodily exposure. The number of times each sexual attire item was shown in the music video was tallied to determine overall frequency of sexual attire. If the music video “scene-jumped” (jumped quickly back and forth between scenes), the item was coded each time that it was depicted. All attire items were totaled for females and males. A sexual attire subscale score was calculated by summing the scores for females and males.

The sexual behavior subscale consisted of 19 items for female characters and 16 items for male characters. An additional item was included in the behavior subscale indicating whether or not safe sex/condom usage was depicted in the music video. Operational definitions of specific dance movements and behaviors were provided on the coding sheet and included various types of sexual behaviors (i.e., kissing, hugging, caressing, etc.). To determine the frequency of the depiction of sexual behavior, the number of times each item was depicted in the music video was tallied. All sexual behavior items were totaled for females and males resulting in an overall sexual behavior subscale score.

#### **Instrument Testing**

Face and content validity of the coding form was established by distributing the coding sheet to a panel of experts in human sexuality, health education, and media research. Experts’ recommended revisions were incorporated into the final coding sheet.

To establish interrater-reliability, training sessions were held prior to the study implementation. A total of three raters were provided a sample of music videos ran-

Characteristic	N	%
<b>Music Videos Coded by Network*</b>		
MTV	102	24.8
MTV2	92	22.4
BET	126	30.7
GAC	91	22.1
<b>Music Videos Unique to Network**</b>		
Viewed only on MTV	12	8.5
Viewed only on MTV2	33	23.2
Viewed only on BET	17	12.0
Viewed only on GAC	53	37.3
Viewed on more than 1 network	27	19.0
Notes: * N = 411 = (number of videos aired) x (number of times video aired per network in a 2-week period)		
** N = 142 videos airing only once during the 2-week period (A total of 269 videos were viewed more than once)		

domly selected from the networks. These videos were then analyzed and coded during the training sessions. Verbal and written descriptions for each of the categories (i.e., attire, dance/movement, behaviors/actions) were reviewed. Regarding female sexual attire, one item is of note: breast size. To assist raters in accurately and consistently recording breast size (size C or smaller vs. size D or larger), raters were provided with a sample picture of size D breasts and a sample picture of size C breasts. All raters received the same pictures. During the training sessions, the three reviewers simultaneously rated the same videos and then compared their ratings. The reviewers offered justification for their ratings, which led to further discussions and refinement of the coding sheet. After the training sessions were completed, raters took home and coded five music videos. Each rater observed the same five videos and recorded results onto the final coding sheet. Coding sheets were then returned to the primary investigator and assessed for interrater-reliability. Overall, interrater-reliability was established at .93.

#### **PROCEDURES**

Following the establishment of coding validity and interrater-reliability, a total of 411 music videos were observed. Observations were conducted based on a sample of music videos taped during the two-week period of August 2, 2004 to August 15, 2004 aired on MTV, MTV2, BET, and GAC. Music videos to be observed and coded were randomly and equally divided among the raters. Each time a music video was aired, the video was coded on the coding sheet. In addition, the frequency in which a music video appeared was also recorded on the coding sheet.

All data were analyzed using the Statistical Software Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies, means, standard deviations, and ranges of scores) were used to describe demographic and background information of music videos. One-way analyses of variance were computed to assess whether sexual attire and sexual dance/behaviors differed based on music video network. Post-hoc Tukey tests were conducted for significant ANOVAs to determine which specific networks differed significantly. An alpha level

**Table 2. Depiction of Sexual Attire in Music Videos**

Female Sexual Attire	Range	N	M	SD
Tight Shirt	0-1310	10397	73.22	180.11
Exposed Stomach	0-820	7575	53.35	135.81
Cleavage	0-650	6815	47.99	107.48
Short Skirt	0-770	3991	28.11	88.15
Bikini	0-632	2537	17.87	78.04
Short Shorts	0-558	2296	16.17	65.28
Breast Size (D or larger)	0-261	1345	9.47	31.18
Tight Dress	0-286	1309	9.22	35.69
Tight Pants	0-420	1222	8.67	42.76
Short Dress	0-224	1091	7.68	27.58
Lingerie	0-65	260	1.83	7.96
Slits in Dress or Skirt	0-60	174	1.23	7.11
See through Material	0-32	148	1.04	4.49
Erect Nipples	0-99	99	.70	8.31
Piercing	0-30	74	.52	2.94
Exposed Breasts (Side Shot)	0-36	51	.36	3.15
Bath/Beach Towel Only	0-44	44	.31	3.69
One-piece Swimsuit	0-22	41	.29	2.15
Tattoo	0-15	28	.20	1.36
Tight Jumpsuit	0-15	27	.19	1.44
Suggestive Word/Phrase on Clothing	0-5	5	.04	.42
Exposed Thong Underwear	0-0	0	.00	.00
Full Frontal Nudity	0-0	0	.00	.00
Nude Buttocks	0-0	0	.00	.00
<b>Female Sexual Attire Score</b>	<b>0-4260</b>	<b>39559</b>	<b>278.58</b>	<b>626.93</b>
Male Sexual Attire	Range	N	M	SD
Partially Open Shirt (2-3 Buttons)	0-184	1346	9.48	27.38
Exposed Chest (Shirt Off)	0-414	824	5.80	35.89
Tight Shirt	0-247	715	5.04	26.92
Exposed Chest (Shirt On)	0-38	87	.61	3.71
Nude Back	0-12	30	.21	1.20
Tight Pants	0-16	26	.18	1.45
Full Frontal Nudity	0-1	2	.01	.12
Nude Buttocks	0-2	2	.01	.17
Bath/Beach Towel Only	0-0	0	.00	.00
Boxer Shorts/Underwear Only	0-0	0	.00	.00
See Through Material	0-0	0	.00	.00
Suggestive Word/Phrase on Clothing	0-0	0	.00	.00
Tattoo	0-0	0	.00	.00
<b>Male Sexual Attire Score</b>	<b>0-414</b>	<b>3032</b>	<b>21.35</b>	<b>55.14</b>

Means refer to average number of depictions per video aired.

of .05 was utilized for all data analyses.

## RESULTS

Results showed that there was a fairly even distribution between the number of

music videos coded on MTV (24.8%), MTV2 (22.3%), and GAC (22.0%), with BET being slightly higher (30.7%) (Table 1). Greater than one-third of videos aired were viewed only on GAC (37.3%), followed

by MTV2 (23.2%). BET (12.0%) and MTV (8.5%) had the fewest number of videos that were unique to their networks. One in five (19.0%) music videos was viewed on more than one music video network. A total of 142 videos were aired only once during the two-week period whereas 269 videos were aired more than once during the two week period.

### Sexual Attire

Results found a total of 39,559 depictions of female sexual attire ( $M = 278.58$  per video,  $SD = 626.93$ ) and 3,032 depictions of male sexual attire ( $M = 21.35$  per video,  $SD = 55.14$ ) (Table 2). The types of sexual attire most commonly displayed for females were a tight shirt ( $M = 73.22$ ,  $SD = 180.11$ ), exposed stomach ( $M = 53.35$ ,  $SD = 135.81$ ), and cleavage ( $M = 47.99$ ,  $SD = 107.48$ ). The type of sexual attire most commonly displayed for males were a partially opened shirt ( $M = 9.48$ ,  $SD = 27.38$ ), exposed chest with shirt off ( $M = 5.80$ ,  $SD = 35.89$ ), and a tight shirt ( $M = 5.04$ ,  $SD = 26.92$ ).

A series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted to examine whether the depiction of sexual attire differed based on network. Results found that characters in music videos on BET ( $M = 645.76$ ,  $SD = 724.12$ ) were significantly more sexually explicit attire than characters in music videos on MTV ( $M = 138.83$ ,  $SD = 141.52$ ), MTV2 ( $M = 102.15$ ,  $SD = 167.49$ ), or GAC ( $M = 99.02$ ,  $SD = 195.00$ ),  $F(3, 111) = 13.70$ ,  $p = .000$ . Female characters in music videos on BET ( $M = 639.71$ ,  $SD = 716.38$ ) wore significantly more sexually explicit attire than female characters on MTV ( $M = 124.83$ ,  $SD = 141.09$ ), MTV2 ( $M = 95.42$ ,  $SD = 168.73$ ), or GAC ( $M = 75.36$ ,  $SD = 194.19$ ),  $F(3, 111) = 14.51$ ,  $p = .000$ . Frequency of male sexual attire did not differ significantly based on network.

### Sexual Behavior

Results found a total of 7,291 depictions of sexual behavior for females ( $M = 51.35$  per video,  $SD = 135.07$ ) compared to 2,511 sexual behaviors for males ( $M = 17.68$  per video,  $SD = 40.35$ ) (Table 3). The sexual



behaviors most commonly displayed for females were dance ( $M = 25.85, SD = 84.51$ ), flirting ( $M = 7.10, SD = 21.29$ ), and caressing/stroking of themselves ( $M = 5.49, SD = 19.49$ ). The sexual behaviors most commonly displayed for males were hugging/embracing ( $M = 6.49, SD = 14.71$ ), dance ( $M = 3.30, SD = 20.49$ ), and groping of one's own genital area ( $M = 2.18, SD = 8.80$ ). Female characters in music videos on BET ( $M = 85.47, SD = 132.29$ ) engaged in significantly more sexual behaviors than female characters on MTV2 ( $M = 15.42, SD = 25.50$ ) or GAC ( $M = 11.62, SD = 16.90$ ),  $F(3, 111) = 7.79, p = .000$ . Male characters in music videos on BET ( $M = 27.65, SD = 53.71$ ) engaged in significantly more sexual behaviors than male characters on MTV2 ( $M = 5.42, SD = 12.90$ ),  $F(3, 111) = 2.932, p = .037$ . No significant differences were found regarding sexual behaviors by male characters on BET and sexual behaviors by male characters on MTV or GAC.

#### Total Extent of Sexual Depictions

The total extent of sexual depictions was calculated summing female and male sexual attire and sexual behavior scores. Results indicated that a total of 52,393 sexual depictions were viewed during the two-week period (Table 4). On average, 320.97 ( $SD = 687.22$ ) total depictions of sexual attire and sexual behavior were observed per video. Approximately eight out of every ten (81.3%) sexual depictions involved sexual attire. Videos aired only on BET had significantly more sexual depictions ( $M = 758.88, SD = 880.53$ ) than videos aired only on MTV ( $M = 206.75, SD = 228.08$ ), MTV2 ( $M = 123.00, SD = 186.74$ ), or GAC ( $M = 119.34, SD = 202.15$ ),  $F(3, 111) = 13.196, p = .000$  (Table 5).

#### DISCUSSION

The present study found a total of 52,393 depictions of sexual behavior and sexual attire viewed in music videos ( $N = 411$ ) during a two-week period. On average, 320.97 total depictions of sexual attire and sexual behavior were observed per video. It should be noted that this was only a sample of videos during the two-week period and

**Table 3. Depiction of Sexual Behavior in Music Videos**

Female Sexual Behavior	Range	N	M	SD
Dance	0-640	3671	25.85	84.51
Flirting	0-120	1008	7.10	21.29
Caressing/Stroking of Self	0-170	779	5.49	19.49
Hugging/Embracing	0-91	693	4.88	11.95
Caressing/Stroking of Another	0-160	625	4.40	17.22
Handholding	0-27	147	1.04	3.87
"Pop" Kissing (Peck on Lips)	0-25	104	.73	2.94
Non-dance Movement/Gestures	0-40	85	.60	3.98
Removal of Own Clothing	0-30	54	.38	2.65
Kissing with Tongue	0-25	50	.35	2.29
Kiss/Peck on Cheek	0-6	25	.18	.70
Groping of Own Breasts	0-18	19	.13	1.51
Crawling/Sliding on Floor	0-15	16	.11	1.26
Straddles Male	0-4	11	.08	.45
Groping of Own Genital Area	0-4	4	.03	.34
Groping of Male Genital Area	0-0	0	.00	.00
Removal of Males' Clothing	0-0	0	.00	.00
Straddles Female	0-0	0	.00	.00
Use of Musical Instrument	0-0	0	.00	.00
Use of Condom/Safe Sex	0-0	0	.00	.00
Female Sexual Behavior Score	0-1110	7291	51.35	135.07
<b>Male Sexual Behavior Score</b>				
Hugging/Embracing	0-105	921	6.49	14.71
Dance	0-204	468	3.30	20.49
Groping of Own Genital Area	0-77	309	2.18	8.80
Caressing/Stroking of Another	0-60	247	1.74	7.22
Handholding	0-33	148	1.04	4.01
Kiss/Peck on Cheek	0-88	140	.99	7.54
"Pop" Kissing (Peck on Lips)	0-25	98	.69	2.92
Flirting	0-16	51	.36	1.84
Kissing with Tongue	0-25	48	.34	2.28
Non-dance Movement/Gestures	0-16	45	.32	1.71
Groping of Female Breasts	0-16	16	.11	1.34
Removal of Own Clothing	0-7	11	.08	.62
Removal of Female Clothing	0-5	5	.04	.42
Caressing/Stroking of Self	0-2	4	.03	.20
Groping of Female Genital Area	0-0	0	.00	.00
Use of Musical Instrument	0-0	0	.00	.00
Use of Condom/Safe Sex	0-0	0	.00	.00
Male Behavior Score	0-242	2511	17.68	40.35
Means refer to average number of depictions per video aired.				

therefore the overall extent of viewing exposure to sexual images and sexual messages is far greater. Such findings tend to support the claims of the National Institute on Media and the Family<sup>16</sup> reporting that even modest viewing of music videos on music

television networks results in significant exposure to glamorized depictions of sexuality. An abundance of sexual images and themes were observed.

The present study found that nearly nine out of every ten (89.4%) sexual depictions

**Table 4. Total Sexual Depiction Score**

Characteristic	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Network</b>			
Viewed only on MTV	12	206.75	224.05
Viewed only on MTV2	33	123.00	228.08
Viewed only on BET	17	758.88	186.74
Viewed only on GAC	53	119.34	880.53
Total	115	202.15	439.33
<b>Overall Sex Score*</b>			
Attire Total Subscale Score	42591	251.94	536.38
Behavior Total Subscale Score	9802	69.03	163.36
Total Sex Score	52,393	320.97	687.22

\*Notes: N = (total number of female attire depictions) + (total number of male attire depictions)  
N = (total number of female behavior depictions) + (total number of male behavior depictions)

**Table 5. Sexual Depiction in Music Videos Based on Network**

Sexual Depiction Subscale	BET M (SD)	MTV M (SD)	MTV2 M (SD)	GAC M (SD)
Total Sexual Attire*	645.76 (724.12)	138.83 (141.52)	102.15 (167.49)	99.02 (195.00)
Female Sexual Attire*	639.71 (716.38)	124.83 (141.09)	95.42 (168.73)	75.36 (194.19)
Male Sexual Attire	6.06 (14.75)	14.00 (42.08)	6.73 (15.38)	23.66 (44.06)
Total Sexual Behavior*	113.12 (170.47)	67.92 (126.54)	20.85 (34.33)	20.32 (27.75)
Female Sexual Behavior*	85.47 (132.29)	45.75 (74.54)	15.42 (25.50)	11.62 (16.90)
Male Sexual Behavior*	27.65 (53.71)	22.17 (55.08)	5.42 (12.90)	8.70 (12.89)

\*p ≤ .05

were sexual depictions of female characters. Sommers-Flanagan, Sommers-Flanagan, and Davis<sup>20</sup> similarly found that females engaged in significantly more implicitly sexual and subservient behavior in music videos and that they were more frequently the objects of explicit, implicit, and aggressive sexual advances. The results of the present study offer further evidence showing female characters in music videos being sexually depicted at a much higher rate

than male characters. The overall effect of this on adolescent females and males is of concern and additional research should be conducted to examine the effect of such sexual exposure of females to youth.

The present study further substantiated the efforts of previous researchers in revealing 39,559 depictions of female sexually explicit attire compared to 3,032 depictions for male characters, equating to 93% of all coded depictions of sexual attire being

depicted of female characters. Sherman and Dominick<sup>21</sup> reported that half of all women who appeared in the music videos dressed provocatively, compared to one in ten men. Seidman<sup>22</sup> conducted a follow-up study and corroborated the findings and indicated that female characters wore revealing clothing much more frequently than did male characters, with one-third of all females wearing brief attire compared to 7% of males.

Numerous studies confirm that music video networks stress sexual content. Research conducted by Baxter and colleagues<sup>23</sup> indicated that music video sexual content rely on innuendo through clothing, suggestiveness, and light physical contact rather than more overt behaviors. In fact, occurrences of sexual portrayals most often included provocative clothing, embracing or other physical contact, and dance movements of a sexually suggestive nature. Similarly, the present study found no occurrences of explicit sexual activity. Rather, the sexual messages relied more on innuendo, attire, suggestiveness, and behaviors.

Interestingly, the present study found that BET, a network largely established for the African American population, had significantly higher frequencies of sexual depictions than other networks studied. Risky sexual behaviors and an increase in the incidence of sexually transmitted infections among African American female adolescents has been linked to high exposure to rap music videos in one study conducted by Wingood and colleagues.<sup>24</sup> Data indicated that adolescents who frequently watched rap videos were twice as likely to have multiple sex partners and more than 1.5 times as likely to acquire a sexually transmitted infection during the 12-month study. The question of why BET has significantly more sexual depictions than other music television networks studied remains unanswered. One theory could suggest that the answer lies in cultural differences among viewers of each network. Music videos may be selected for airing by music television networks to cater to cultural desires. Another theory is that the difference does not



exist between cultures; rather the difference exists between network ownership. A network management faction may have more liberal views regarding sexuality than another management faction and choose to air more sexually explicit music videos. Future research is needed to examine the differences in sexual depictions between music television networks and viewers' preferences regarding sexual depictions based on race, culture, and ethnicity.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study found that female characters were more commonly depicted wearing sexual attire and engaging in sexual behaviors than male characters. Regarding differences among the networks, depictions of sexual attire and sexual behaviors were most frequently viewed on BET. These findings lend themselves to some potentially serious implications regarding the effect that music viewing may have on youth engagement in sexual behaviors. However, more research is clearly needed. Future research studies should examine the following questions: 1) To what extent does the disparate sexual depiction of females in music videos affect youth attitudes towards female sexuality and female involvement in sexual behavior? 2) What messages regarding sexuality do youth receive based on these depictions? 3) Are youth who watch networks showing more sexual depictions (BET in the present study) at increased risk for early sexual involvement? 4) Does youth viewing of sexual behaviors in music videos translate into engagement in sexual behavior? Determining whether there is a clear relationship between viewing of music video messages and behavioral outcomes will greatly strengthen current and future advocacy efforts in the area of responsible video music content and visual imagery.

Additional research also needs to be conducted on the content, words and verbal messages of music videos. More specifically, are the lyrics and verbal messages used in songs of music videos associated with youth involvement in sexual behaviors? Future

research in this area is clearly warranted. By conducting such research, health educators can more fully understand the possible connections between sexual imagery and messages in music videos and youth sexual attitudes and behaviors. The role of parents in monitoring youth viewing of music videos also needs to be examined. A controlled study could be conducted to examine parents' role on the influence of music video images and content among teen viewers. The role of the music industry in its display of accurate and healthy messages on topics such as responsible sexual behaviors and risks of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections should also be explored.

Finally, limitations of this study should be noted. This study utilized a sample of music videos that were videotaped daily on four networks during one hour segments from shows designated primarily for music video viewing (N=56 hours, N=411 music videos). While the sample consisted of a wide array of music videos, genres, and characters types, using a larger sample size may have improved this study. It is evident that more research needs to be conducted regarding this issue. Future media research should focus on the influence of music video viewing on adolescent development and behavior. For instance, studies that focus on the effect of music video viewing on adolescent attitudes may reveal a more accurate understanding of whether consistent viewing of music videos contributes to increased permissive attitudes towards premarital sexual activity. Effects of music video viewing should also be examined across various cultures to identify potential demographic differences and needs. Researchers' knowledge of the relationship between media and sexuality continue to improve. However, it is imperative that the mode of communication between researchers, health educators, governmental agencies, and ultimately, the general public, see the same improvement. Many strategies need to be utilized to effectively convey healthy and accurate sexuality messages to the adolescent community, in addition to making the music industry accountable.

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