

FIFTEEN AND ALMOST FAMOUS: THE REALITIES AND MISPERCEPTIONS OF
SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Given the illegality of forced sexual acts and consensual adult-juvenile sexual relationships, as well as the harmful effects, the current study utilizes a content analysis to identify popular musicians from various genres who have committed acts of sexual violence spanning from 1957-2021. Thus, this study examines incidents of sexual violence, specifically statutory rape, committed by musicians, their use of their celebrity to engage in such behaviors, and the relationship these acts of violence have with the artists' music. While scholars have drawn attention to the ability of media platforms, including music and social media, to reinforce as well as shape existing cultural attitudes and beliefs, this is an area that warrants further systematic research as the link between the art and the artist has not been thoroughly investigated. Findings as well as implications regarding the cultivation effects of musicians who commit acts of sexual violence will be discussed.

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It should also be noted as per the request of the university to include this disclaimer as this thesis includes several statements about sexually violent crimes. These statements are true to the best of the author's knowledge and research. The statements have not been independently verified by The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Although the current climate of the #MeToo movement has begun to shift the narrative on sexual victimization, sexual violence continues to be accepted and even normalized in popular culture mediums. Many scholars have suggested that sex and violence are inextricably linked in their portrayals in popular culture mediums (Barlett & Harris, 2009; Britto et al., 2007; Bufkin & Eschholz, 2000; Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006; Eschholz et al., 2004; Greenberg & Busselle, 1996; Kunkel et al., 2005; Lowry et al., 1981). These sexualized portrayals are often filled with themes and messages that reinforce rape myths and promote victim blaming, which contribute to consumers' acceptance of sexual victimization. While instances of sexualized imagery and violence can be found in movies (Barlett & Harris, 2009; Greenberg & Busselle, 1996; Lowry et al., 1981), television (Crookston, 2020; Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006; Kunkel et al., 2005), and books (Meek, 2017), Roberts and colleagues (2009) argue that exposure to explicit sexual material is more common in music than in any other popular culture platform. Numerous studies have examined sexualized portrayals and depictions of sexual violence within music and music videos (Armstrong, 1986, 2001; Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Cougar Hall et al., 2012; Hancock et al., 2021; Hoston, 2014; McFarland, 2003; Primack et al., 2008; Rubin et al., 2001; Sommersflanagan et al., 1993; Turner, 2011; Wallis, 2011; Walser, 1993; Weitzer & Kubrin, 2009; West et al., 2000; Zhang et al., 2008). Although lyrics and imagery have been shown to influence consumers' perceptions of sex and sexual violence (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Brown et al., 2006; Chen et al.,

2006; DeTardo-Bora, 2009; Garland et al., 2018; Kistler & Lee, 2009; Knobloch-Westerwick et al., 2008; Lull, 1985; McIntyre; Pardun et al., 2005; Smith, 2005; van Oosten et al., 2015), research also suggests that musicians themselves have the ability to influence the actions and beliefs of consumers (Guo & Chan-Olmsted, 2015; Shade et al., 2015; Stein et al., 2021).

Numerous studies have examined the relationship between depictions of rape in popular culture and its possible influence on reality (Bierie & Budd, 2018; Crookston, 2020; Eschholz et al., 2004; Rodenhizer & Edwards, 2019; Soulliere, 2003); however, the academic literature has failed to examine the inextricable relationship between the medium and the artist. While imagery and lyrics are notable factors involved in shaping consumers' perceptions, popular culture mediums such as music may be an echo of actual events in which the actor cannot be separated from the art. While we often presume that art influences reality when addressing sexual violence, art may also be used as a simple confession of one's sins without consequence. The sexual exploitation of fans, especially underage girls, has been a long-recognized and often-accepted tradition within the music industry (Ridley, 2021). Lyrics have been penned and docudramas and blockbuster movies have been made to glorify sexual promiscuity and the all-too-often predation among musicians. As music is an integral part of the artist's persona, it could be argued that the art and the artist are intrinsically linked and act in tandem to influence the listener. As such, these indiscretions, including acts of sexual violence, become reality leading to the promotion and acceptance of rape myths, victim blaming, and sexual victimization. Thus, what we see is a tautological paradox in which the artist and their music affect listeners' perceptions and acceptance of sexual violence.

A 2021 global report on music found that individuals listen to an average of 18.4 hours of music per week (IFPI, 2022). Combined with numerous hours spent on social media platforms,

the need to explore music and musicians' influence on consumers' behaviors is essential. In order to examine such relationships, this thesis utilizes George Gerbner's (1998) Cultivation Theory, which maintains that heavy consumers of popular culture are more likely to perceive reality as presented in the media they consume which in turn affects their attitudes and behaviors. While the bulk of empirical literature on music and cultivation theory focuses on musical lyrics and music video content, the current literature fails to examine sexual assault in the music industry as a co-occurring phenomenon influenced by both the music one consumes and the image presented. Thus, the current study aims to add to the existing literature on music and cultivation theory by investigating musicians who have committed acts of sexual violence. More specifically, this study analyzes crimes of sexual violence committed by 52 musicians as well as the specific characteristics of the victims, details of the offense, and actions or lack thereof taken by the criminal justice system. Additionally, this study will use the location of the reported incident to address the changing nature of state laws, primarily in regard to the sexual victimization of minors, and the increasing call for justice for victims.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Sexual Violence

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022), sexual violence is defined as nonconsensual completed or attempted penetration, unwanted nonpenetrative sexual contact, or noncontact acts such as verbal harassment, being flashed, and being forced to look at sexual materials by any perpetrator. Simply, sexual violence is an all-encompassing term that includes crimes such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape, statutory rape, intimate partner violence, and child sexual abuse (Basile & Smith, 2011). Sexual violence has been identified as a serious public health concern as it can have numerous short and long-term physical, emotional, and psychological effects on its victims (Basile et al., 2022; Choudhary et al., 2012; Zinzow et al., 2012). Exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, injury, and fear of repeat victimization has been noted as immediate impacts while the long-term outcomes often involve mental health problems, financial burdens, engagement in maladaptive behaviors, and re-victimization (Basile et al., 2022). More specifically, victims of sexual violence have reported a myriad of mental health consequences including heightened levels of depression, anxiety, PTSD, suicidal ideation, and attempted suicide (Zinzow et al., 2012).

Anyone, regardless of varying demographic characteristics, may be a victim; however, those identifying as young, female, and a minority are more likely to be victims of sexual violence (Basile et al., 2022; Basile & Smith, 2011; Edwards et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2018).

While definitions of sexual violence are varied making it difficult to define and identify the relationship between victims and perpetrators, most data agree that victims and perpetrators are known to one another and often have a relationship (Basile et al., 2022; Basile & Smith, 2011; Edwards et al., 2012; Planty et al., 2013; Wegner et al., 2014; Woods & Porter, 2008). According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) (2018), more than 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have experienced sexual violence involving physical contact at some point during their lifetimes (Smith et al., 2018). Both female and male victims were most likely to report being raped by an acquaintance, an intimate partner, or a family member; approximately 13% of all men and women reported being raped by a stranger (Smith et al., 2018). Although sexual violence affects both men and women, women are more likely to experience forms of sexual violence associated with rape, sexual coercion, and unwanted sexual contact. NISVS data indicate that men are more apt to be victims than previously believed as male rape has not been clearly defined as they are more likely to be victims of being made to penetrate someone (Smith et al., 2018). Men, nevertheless, are also overwhelmingly perpetrators of sexual violence. Using NCVS data from 1993-2013, male perpetrators accounted for over 90% of sexual victimization of females between the ages of 18-24 (Sinozich & Langton, 2014). Additionally, Sinozich and Langton (2014) found that 82% of victims of sexual violence are college-age women and 90% of adult rape victims are female. Further, national prevalence data finds that racial and ethnic minority females are at a higher risk for sexual violence compared to white females (Basile et al., 2022; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). For instance, NISVS data indicates that 23.8% non-Hispanic Black, 16.8% Hispanic, 18% non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander, 32% non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native, and 39.5% non-Hispanic

multiracial women in the United States reported experiencing sexual coercion at some point in their lifetime (Basile et al., 2022).

Data indicate that juveniles and young adults are at the highest risk for victimization (Basile et al., 2022; Sinozich & Langton, 2014). The average age of sexual abuse victims ranges between 12 and 34 years old (Sinozich & Langton, 2014). Basile et al. (2022) found that “nearly 3 in 4 (73.5% or 21.6 million) female victims of sexual coercion reported that it first occurred before age 25, including 38.4% (11.3 million) who first experienced sexual coercion before turning 18” (p. 13). Further, the NISVS indicate that more than 80% of female rape victims reported that their first victimization occurred before the age of 25, 49% indicated it occurred before they were the age of 18 and 14% reported it occurred between the ages of 11-17. Similarly, approximately 25% of males reported sexual coercion between the ages of 11-17 (Basile et al., 2022). Further, more than 80% of male rape victims reported being victimized before the age of 25 with 56.6% indicating the incident(s) occurred before the age of 18 (Smith et al., 2018).

Statutory Rape

Sexual violence occurs when the victim does not consent to sexual activity or is unable to consent due to factors such as physical violence, threats of violence, or the influence of drugs or alcohol (Basile & Smith, 2011). Although what constitutes sexual violence is not always well defined due to variance in state laws, it is, perhaps, the criteria of age, which presents the most controversy when discussing one’s inability to provide consent. Age of consent laws originated to protect young females from being exploited by adults due to the assumed power differentials between juveniles and adults (Tener, 2020). Notably, the laws specify that individuals who fall

below the age of consent are legally unable to agree to sexual relations with the other party (Small, 2020). Legally, in states such as Tennessee, youths under the age of 13 do not have the ability to consent regardless of the circumstances, and as such, these violations are classified as rape of a child, a Class A felony, which carries a sentence between 15-60 years in prison, with a maximum fine of \$50,000 ("Tennessee code title 40. Criminal procedure. Tenn. Code ann. § 40-35-111 (2021),"). In contrast, statutory rape generally involves a juvenile of at least 13 years of age, with age requirements between the victim and offender varying. While a juvenile's participation in these relationships may seem voluntary or even enthusiastic, such relationships may still be prohibited under the law. As instances of statutory rape are not considered a forcible offense, these laws target sexual behavior that if committed by two consenting adults would be legal (Chaffin et al., 2016; Klein & Cooper, 2017).

As the age of consent varies by state, juveniles are subject to differing regulations regarding the appropriateness of sex. Most states allow juveniles between the ages of 16-18 to engage in sexual behavior without penalty; however, the nature and scope of these laws vary significantly (Tener, 2020). A 2004 report indicated that the majority of states (34) determined the age of consent to be 16; however, 11 states did not allow one to consent to a sexual relationship with an adult until the age of 18 (Glosser et al., 2004). States such as Tennessee have set the minimum age of consent at eighteen (18) ("Tennessee code title 39. Criminal offenses. Tenn. Code ann. § 39-13-506 (2019),"). Additionally, Glosser and colleagues (2004) found that in over half of the states, the legality of engaging in a sexual relationship with a minor is generally based on the age difference between the adult and the minor. As noted, most states, such as Tennessee (e.g., 13 years of age), have set minimum ages in which these laws apply, and

anything below that set age is classified as sexual assault of a minor. Under Tennessee state law ("Tennessee code title 39. Criminal offenses. Tenn. Code ann. § 39-13-506 (2019),"),

“statutory rape is the unlawful sexual penetration of a victim by the defendant or of the defendant by the victim when: the victim is at least thirteen but less than fifteen years of age and the defendant is at least four years but less than ten years older than the victim, or the victim is at least fifteen but less than eighteen years of age and the defendant is more than five but less than ten years older than the victim.”

Tennessee classifies statutory rape as a Class E felony which may result in a sentence between 1-6 years and a maximum fine of \$3000; however, aggravated statutory rape, which notes an age difference of 10 years or more between the victim and the offender, mandates that violators serve between 2-12 years in prison and receive a fine up to \$5000 ("Tennessee code title 40. Criminal procedure. Tenn. Code ann. § 40-35-111 (2021),"). Most states also have a close-in-age exemption or “Romeo and Juliet” law that serves to reduce or eliminate the penalty of the crime in cases where the couple’s age difference is minor (Bierie & Budd, 2018). Romeo and Juliet laws are there to prevent those close in age from unjustly being prosecuted for sex crimes when consent is given between two parties of a similar age. However, Romeo and Juliet laws do not always eliminate punishment for such acts. For instance, states such as Tennessee have a mitigated rape statute, which does not eliminate the consequences for those who have consensual sex when one party is aged 13 to 17 and the other party is less than four years older, but instead, it allows for a lesser punishment or sentence.

Statutory rape is classified as a form of sexual violence due to the power imbalance created by the age gap between offenders and victims, which is especially important as adolescents are at the highest risk of victimization. For instance, Bierie and Budd (2018) found

in their examination of the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data, the average victim of statutory rape is 13-14 years old, whereas the average offender of statutory rape is 23-24 years old. Similarly, over 90% of statutory rape victims were female, and more than 99% of the offenders of these female victims were male. The median age difference between female victims and male offenders was 6 years, and the median age difference between male victims and female offenders was 9 years (Bierie & Budd, 2018). Further, about 30% of offenders were boyfriends or girlfriends, approximately 60% were acquaintances, and under 2% of victims of statutory rape were strangers to their offenders who knew each other for less than 24 hours (Bierie & Budd, 2018; Troup-Leasure & Snyder, 2005)

While statutory rape may not be held to the same social standpoint or legal standard as other sex crimes, it is still associated with a plethora of negative physical, emotional, and interpersonal consequences for victims (Tener, 2020). Victims of statutory rape face a higher risk of teenage pregnancy, contracting STDs, drug and/or alcohol abuse, other maladaptive behaviors, and/or physical and emotional victimization later in life (Bierie & Budd, 2018; Small, 2020; Tener, 2020). Juveniles who become sexually active with an older partner are at a greater risk of teen pregnancy and/or contracting sexually transmitted diseases (Lindberg et al., 1997; (Males & Chew, 1996). This risk is only intensified for juveniles when their partner is older as older males have sex at a greater frequency and are less likely to use protection (Darroch et al., 1999; Kaestle et al., 2002). Several scholars have noted that the negative impacts of statutory rape increase as the age gap between the victim and offender increases (Bierie & Budd, 2018; Hines & Finkelhor, 2006; Males & Chew, 1996). In particular, the larger the age gap between the juvenile and the adult, the higher the chance of the relationship involving substance abuse, alcohol abuse, and other delinquency-related behaviors (Bierie & Budd, 2018). Further, sexual

assault, prostitution, and involvement in child pornography have been linked to larger age gaps between the offender and the juvenile victim (Bierie & Budd, 2018). Overall, when a juvenile engages in a sexual relationship with an adult, they often do not understand the negative effects of such behavior (Tener, 2020); however, the offenders often have the mental maturity to understand and consider the negative outcomes of the relationship.

Popular Culture and Sexual Violence/Statutory Rape

The existing literature examining sexual violence across various popular culture outlets provides a backdrop to examine how statutory rape has been depicted and endorsed in music and by musicians. Content analyses on sexually explicit material in popular culture mediums have consistently depicted sexual violence against women with variations in the extent of sexual aggression and violence they portray (Barlett & Harris, 2009; Benedict, 1992; Cuklanz, 2000; Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006; Eschholz et al., 2004; Greenberg & Busselle, 1996; Kunkel et al., 2005; Lowry et al., 1981). For instance, Benedict (1992) and Cuklanz (2000) found that coverage of sexual violence in the news media has a large presence, but coverage of these cases is selective as the cases depicting the most violence and victim stereotypes (e.g. stories that contain white victims and minority offenders or stories that result in the victim's violent death) garnered the most screen time. Barlett and Harris (2009) found that mainstream films, especially R-rated slasher movies, contain extreme violence, aggression, and sexual violence against women. Additional studies have also noted that sexual violence and aggression is increasingly becoming the primary form of sexual interaction in soap operas (Greenberg & Busselle, 1996; Lowry et al., 1981). It is, however, crime dramas that are the most "fertile" prime-time media outlets for the depiction of rape and sexual violence (Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006). Kunkel et al. (2005) found

sexual violence-related crimes accounted for 16% of all sex talk in television drama series or movies.

Many scholars have found that popular culture outlets' representations of sexual violence are extremely unrealistic and are not consistent with official data (Bufkin & Eschholz, 2000). For instance, Eschholz and colleagues (2004) found that television crime dramas and news media tend to portray crime as more violent and dangerous than it is in actuality. More specifically, Bufkin and Eschholz (2000) and Britto and colleagues (2007) found that acts of sexual violence, specifically rape, emphasize brutality often ending in serious physical injury or death. Innocent victims are unable to fight off the offender making their abuse unavoidable (Bufkin & Eschholz, 2000).

Scholars have consistently noted that portrayals of sexual violence reinforce stereotypes, objectify women, victim blame, and perpetuate rape myths (Lee et al., 2010). Linz et al. (1987) and Bufkin and Eschholz (2000) found that sexually violent scenes in television serials depict female victims as enjoying violent sex, which promotes rape myths. Not surprisingly, Brinson (1992) found that at least one rape myth was present in the average prime-time storyline on sexual violence. Overall, while the prevalence of sexually violent depictions may seem low, reports of such violence have increased in both official outlets and in popular culture due to the current climate of the #MeToo movement (Levy & Mattsson, 2022). Scholars such as Levy and Mattson (2022) noted a 7% increase in sex crime reporting in 2017 following the #MeToo movement and an increase in arrests for sex crimes overall in the years following 2017. However, regardless of the increase in reports and arrests while these portrayals are supposed to bring awareness to such topics, they remain riddled with unrealistic depictions that reinforce the acceptance of violence and the degradation of victims.

Similarly, the trope of sexual encounters between young girls and older men has been a prevalent theme repeatedly glamorized in a tangle of consent (or lack thereof), agency, and coercion throughout film, books, television, comics, and music (Crookston, 2020; Meek, 2017). Popular television shows (e.g., *Pretty Little Liars*), books (e.g., *Lolita*, *Twilight*), and movies (e.g., *Almost Famous*, *Blame it on Rio*) are bright-line examples of glorified yet inappropriate relationships between adult males and underage girls (Crookston, 2020; Meek, 2017). As such, the sexualization of young girls has been normalized as they are portrayed as willing participants in the stereotypical male fantasy (Merskin, 2004). Similarly, advertisements act as a contributing factor in the perpetuation of coercive sexual relationships that involve young females and adult males (Harper, 2001; Merskin, 2004). While fashion advertising and commercials do not blatantly display depictions of adult-juvenile relationships, they often sexualize child-like females to appeal to male desires and fantasies (Merskin, 2004). Smith and Kline, promoting the popular body mist *Love's Baby Soft* to women and young girls in the 1970s and 80s, advertised "Because innocence is sexier than you think" (Garber, 2015). Simply, females, from an early age are encouraged to perceive and present themselves as sexual objects that appeal to the opposite sex (Harper, 2001; Merskin, 2004).

Music and Sexual Violence/Statutory Rape

While the sexualization and sexual victimization of women and girls is common throughout all popular culture mediums. Roberts and colleagues (2009) noted that exposure to explicit sexual material is more common in music than in television or movies. Wallis (2011) found that a majority of lyrics in songs contain explicit sexual messages. Similarly, Primack and colleagues (2008) found that more than 1/3 of popular songs from the 2005 *Billboard* charts

contain explicit sexual content, and 2/3 of these references are sexually degrading. Armstrong (2001) found in their analysis of rap songs between 1987-1993 that 22% of the songs featured lyrics of violence against women, which included assault, rape, and murder. Studies examining intimate partner violence have noted that while sexual violence is not as prevalent in music lyrics as physical and emotional/psychological abuse, it still remains an issue (Hancock et al., 2021). Even when lyrics do not allude to sexual violence, music videos often depict a sexualized narrative that becomes linked to the song. Regardless of lyrical content, an estimated 40%-75% of music videos contain sexual imagery (Turner, 2011; Zhang et al., 2008). One study found that 31% of MTV's 30-second video segments portrayed explicit (6.4%) and implicit (24.6%) sexual violence (Sommersflanagan et al., 1993). Much of lyrical or music video depictions are riddled with portrayals of sexually explicit material, and more specifically, sexual violence.

Like other popular culture platforms, the themes promoted within lyrics and music videos victim blame, exploit women and promote rape myths and the degradation of women as there are seldom portrayals of women as independent, intelligent, or superior to men (Rubin et al., 2001). Although much of the work in the area is dated, the proliferation of stereotypical gender roles reinforces negative images of women as sex objects in music lyrics and music videos (Wallis, 2011; West et al., 2000). Walser (1993) found that the lyrics of heavy metal music are preoccupied with male dominance and female submission. Moreover, in rap and hip-hop music, McFarland (2003) identified one main theme as the endorsement of male supremacy over women as 37% of songs depicted them as simply objects of male desire and pleasure. Similarly, Weitzer and Kubrin (2009) noted 5 common themes within rap music: derogatory naming and shaming of women, sexual objectification of women, distrust of women, legitimation of violence

against women, and celebration of prostitution and pimping. While not all of these themes are inherently violent, they promote ideals and myths that are often linked to sexual violence.

Numerous scholars have noted that various genres of music perpetuate the normalization of statutory rape (Armstrong, 1986). For instance, Armstrong (1986) and Hoston (2014) found that music is largely dedicated to the discussion of sexual relationships, and among those depictions are lyrics that characterize inappropriate relationships between adults and juveniles. These lyrical depictions of statutory rape, however, are not portrayed as problematic and are performed in a way that normalizes such portrayals (Hoston, 2014). They work to support the sexualization of young females and promote the messages of sexual exploitation to satisfy male desires and normalize statutory rape within listeners (Armstrong, 1986; Aubrey & Frisby, 2011). Music videos often sexualize young females in depictions that involve older males and their desires (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Cougar Hall et al., 2012). While previous studies have addressed the phenomenon, the impact of #MeToo and examining the changing attitudes toward the acceptability of musician behaviors and lyrics have not been examined.

When Music and Reality Collide

As noted by Hogan (2022), the link between media representations and real-world events are undeniable when addressing sexual violence, especially statutory rape. Combined with sexualized lyrics, the musician's persona normalizes underage sex and instructs young females to accept behaviors of sexual violence. While the extent to which media depictions reify sexual violence is unknown, scholars have long noted that heightened exposure can lead to desensitization and increased acceptance of violence including that of a sexual nature (Hogan, 2021). As such, statutory rape is often condoned, and while consent may not legally be given, it

is implied and reinforced in popular culture. For instance, *Almost Famous* (2000), the award-winning, pseudo-biopic written and directed by Cameron Crowe has been called a “tribute to rock and roll statutory rapists” (Stewart-Panko, 2017). This coming-of-age story based loosely on Crowe’s experiences as an underage journalist working for Rolling Stone magazine blurs the lines between age and the ability to consent. Penny Lane’s, a 16-year-old band-aid, dedication to the groupie lifestyle and being there to serve the band, Stillwater, in any way needed, specifically lead guitarist Russell Hammond, is all too reminiscent of the stereotypical rock and roll lifestyle. While this is not her first rodeo, she falls for Hammond leading her to attempt suicide due to the unrequited love she has for him. While the film itself is largely a condemnation of such predatory sexual practices, it is not overt and even Hammond is redeemed in the end, which is similar to our hindsight approach to the sexual victimization of young girls by popular artists. Aside from the actual music itself, which Penny Lane would argue was what she was there to support, the popularity and glamour of music artists play a large role in perceptions of acceptable behavior.

Given the recent attention to sexual violence as a result of the #MeToo movement, musicians linked to sexual violence have received some backlash. Accounts of celebrity cases of sexual violence have been highly publicized, but this is not new as such stories have had a historical presence in popular culture (Istvandity et al., 2019). Numerous musicians, across various genres of music, have been accused of sexual violence including R. Kelley, David Bowie, Snoop Dogg, and Tommy Lee (Murray, 2023; Oliver, 2018; Powers, 2015; White, 2020). While not all of these have resulted in criminal charges or convictions, the fact remains that sexual exploitation of fans has remained a common practice, especially among musicians’ fanbases. During the mid-1990s, The Rolling Stones went as far to flaunt their underage sexual

exploits on band merchandise during the Voodoo Lounge Tour (Young, 2017). Even though these exploits are not as seemingly acceptable as a result of the #MeToo movement, they continue to be highlighted in tell-all books by artists including Anthony Kiedis, Nikki Sixx, and Steven Tyler, which are less than apologetic (Kiedis, 2018; Lee et al., 2002; Tyler & Dalton, 2012). Today, the practice is still supported and justified based on the past behaviors of legendary artists. For instance, Machine Gun Kelly in an interview with FuseTV, discussing an underage Kendall Jenner, reinforced the acceptability of statutory rape (Keeley, 2022).

“I'm not waiting till she's 18! I'll go now. I'm 23, dog. I'm not, like, a creepy age, like, you know what I'm saying? I'm 23, bro, but if she's 17 and she's like a celebrity like, there's no—there is no limits right there... Robert Plant was one of the greatest lead singers ever. For all y'all who don't know, he's from Led Zeppelin. Dated a girl that was 14. Axl Rose was one of the biggest badasses ever—dated a girl that was 16 and wrote a song on his first album about the girl that was 16. I don't care. Say what you want man. If Kendall Jenner is in your bedroom, naked, and you're 50? You're going...”

However, it does not stop with musicians like Machine Gun Kelly; the music industry is known for predatory behaviors as allegations of sexual violence have not only been levied against artists but those in charge of the industry. Recently, a wave of accusations has occurred against music executives and producers including Dr. Luke, Russell Simmons, Charlie Walk, and Antonio Reid indicating it is an industry problem (Sanchez, 2018). Regardless of these accusations, such executives have still remained favorable in the public eye. Especially with Dr. Luke and Russell Simmons, many musicians, including female artists, have continued to publicly support these individuals denouncing victim claims, allowing them to continue their work in the industry and build their notoriety and fame. For instance, according to Istvandity and colleagues (2019), we

have too often seen musicians with sexual violence charges or allegations getting glossed over very quickly in the media or by the criminal justice system, not leaving much accountability for the offender. Therefore, the lack of accountability for famous offenders within popular culture allows for society to accept such violence and mitigate the damage that occurred to the victim, which has the possibility to influence their own actions. Overall, due to musicians' status and their idolization, criminal behavior is dismissed not only by consumers but by the system as popular culture and their art portray sexual violence as acceptable.

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory, one of the most cited media effects theories, posits that long-term exposure to media shapes how consumers perceive reality and conduct their actions and behaviors (Gerbner, 1969, 1998; Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Kahlor & Morrison, 2007). George Gerbner introduced cultivation theory to examine the influence of television on its viewers. Gerbner (1969) found that individuals who are regularly exposed to television for long periods are more likely to perceive reality as presented by the media they consume, which then affects their attitudes and behaviors. Further, Gerbner (1969) explains that those who are exposed to more violent media content are more likely to perceive this “mean and scary world” as dangerous. Subsequent research on the influence of television programming has found that consumers, in particular youth, are more likely to base their understanding of reality on the images and messages presented (DeTardo-Bora, 2009). As society heavily relies on various forms of media and popular culture for entertainment and education, the common outlooks that are cultivated by the media become the dominant or mainstream culture of society (Stacks et al., 2015). This process is often referred to as the process of “mainstreaming” in which media

consumption can reduce or override differences in perspectives and behavior that stem from other social, cultural, and demographic influences (Signorielli, 2004; Stacks et al., 2015). And, the more one watches, the more likely these beliefs are ingrained and become the accepted reality (DeTardo-Bora, 2009; Surette, 2007).

Cultivation research has identified relationships between media consumption and crime and violence, media consumption and perceptions of gender roles, marriage, aging, nutrition, and the environment, and scholars such as Kahlor and Morrison (2007) find that cultivation effects surface regardless of audience race or gender (Armstrong & Neuendorf, 1992; Kahlor & Morrison, 2007; Shanahan et al., 1997; Signorielli, 1989; Signorielli, 2004; Signorielli & Lears, 1992). Overall, cultivation theory is based on the study of the relationship between institutional processes, message systems, and the effects on society and explains how repeated exposure to prominent themes in the symbolic mass media causes people to overestimate the potency and probability of such themes in the real world (Levine, 2012; Merskin, 2020). Despite the rapidly changing media environment since Gerbner's initial hypothesis, cultivation researchers argue for the importance of exploring the cultivation effects of different media other than television.

Extant literature supports that music, like other platforms of popular culture, plays a large role in the development of personal and collective identities by influencing listeners' attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions. Many scholars agree that listeners are more likely to make decisions and behave similarly to the content contained in the music they are exposed to (Knobloch-Westerwick et al., 2008). For instance, Lull's (1985) findings indicate that lyrics and musical characteristics have the ability to affect listeners' attitudes and perceptions due to their ability to amplify the experience of music consumption through their various forms of consumption and availability, which allow for socio-cultural norms and beliefs to be communicated through lyrics

or music videos. McIntyre found that music has a significant impact on youth's beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and morals towards a specific subject and more specifically has a large impact on how youth view and treat women and sex throughout their lives. Pardun et al. (2005) and Brown et al. (2006) found a significant association between sexual activity in adolescents and exposure to music, meaning that heavy exposure to sexualized music increased the likelihood that listeners engaged in intercourse. Chen and colleagues (2006) find that music, specifically rap, and hip-hop, have strong effects on a listener's risky sexual behaviors. Teenagers and college-aged individuals who listen to hip-hop are more accepting and desensitized to relationship violence and sexual aggression, specifically toward women (Smith, 2005). Other studies revealed that adolescents' consumption of sexual music videos increases misogynistic and sexually aggressive beliefs (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Kistler & Lee, 2009; van Oosten et al., 2015). Thus, such findings support cultivation theory's hypothesis that the messages that music and the music industry promote foster the development of individual perceptions, behaviors, and actions.

Overall, cultivation theory has garnered much empirical support as many scholars study the effects of various popular culture platforms on individual beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions. When specifically focusing on music consumption, scholars find that this can lead listeners' actions and beliefs to mimic the content they have consumed (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Brown et al., 2006; Chen et al., 2006; Knobloch-Westerwick et al., 2008; McIntyre; Pardun et al., 2005; Smith, 2005; van Oosten et al., 2015). Further, when the content is filled with violence and aggression, it can cause the listener to act more aggressively (Anderson et al., 2003). Therefore, as we see that the music industry is riddled with notions of sexual violence, violence against women, and ideals and attitudes that promote the degradation of women, rape myths, and victim blame, it can be assumed that listeners' attitudes will reflect such content they have consumed.

However, while much research has focused on the cultivation effects of music lyrics and music videos on the actions of consumers, there is a gap in the literature on the cultivation effects of musicians themselves on consumers.

For instance, research has indicated that celebrities or entertainers have long been role models or examples for society, and this relationship is only intensified by the accessibility of such individuals through mass media or more recently through social media platforms (Guo & Chan-Olmsted, 2015; Kurtin et al., 2018; Kurtin et al., 2019; Shade et al., 2015; Stein et al., 2021). Since the creation of mass media, scholars have shown that individuals develop one-sided or parasocial relationships with characters in the media such as radio personalities (Rubin & Step, 2000; Savage & Spence, 2014), television actors or characters (Koenig & Lessan, 1985); (Dibble & Rosaen, 2011; Hoffner, 1996; Rubin & McHugh, 1987), athletes (Earnhardt & Haridakis, 2009), film characters or movie stars (Wohlfeil & Whelan, 2012), and even characters in books (Schmid & Klimmt, 2011), where consumers feel that they personally know and share a connection with these individuals who are unaware of their existence. More recently, research has shown that social media has acted as a tool to intensify parasocial or one-sided relationships with celebrities, musicians, entertainers, and influencers (Baek et al., 2013; Frederick et al., 2014; Frederick et al., 2012; Kurtin et al., 2018; Kurtin et al., 2019). Further, Kurtin et al. (2019) explain that through the affordances of interactive social media through sharing tools and comment sections, audiences are permitted unprecedented access to their favorite entertainers, and the roles they play only intensifying parasocial relationships.

Much of the empirical literature on the cultivation of parasocial relationships has failed to name musicians apart from other celebrities and entertainers; however, Derrick et al. (2008) found that when asked, approximately 20% of study participants select musicians as their

favorite celebrity, highlighting the need for examination of musicians apart from other entertainers. As music has changed from physical CDs to streaming services, music audiences have increasingly moved online. Due to audiences and consumers of music moving online, musicians utilize social media platforms and similar mass media platforms to open up their lives to give “all access” or allow listeners behind the scenes of their music (Kurtin et al., 2019). Thus, it is easier for musicians’ behaviors and attitudes to be assimilated into the everyday lives of consumers due to social media. Therefore, the parasocial relationships between consumers and musicians is important to understand especially as scholars such as Guo and Chan-Olmsted (2015) and Shade et al. (2015) find that as consumers perceive a stronger relationship with performers, the more likely they are to mimic the behavior of the entertainers, which means that as consumers of music and musician’s content perceive a stronger relationships, the more likely they are to share the same values as musicians and mimic their behavior.

CHAPTER III

CURRENT STUDY

Extant literature has illustrated that popular culture influences crimes such as sexual violence (Bierie & Budd, 2018; Crookston, 2020; Eschholz et al., 2004; Rodenhizer & Edwards, 2019; Soulliere, 2003), but there is a lack of literature examining the relationship between music, musicians, and sexual violence. As individuals spend an average of 18 hours a week listening to music, combined with the growing use of social media platforms and their use of music, the need to better understand music and musicians' influence on consumers is vital (Bayley, 2021). Previous literature has shown that music and musicians can play a key role in an individual's collective identity (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Brown et al., 2006; Chen et al., 2006; DeTardo-Bora, 2009; Hancock et al., 2021; Kistler & Lee, 2009; Knobloch-Westerwick et al., 2008; Lull, 1985; McIntyre; Pardun et al., 2005; Smith, 2005; van Oosten et al., 2015); however, the literature fails to examine sexual assault in the music industry as a co-occurring phenomenon influenced by the music consumed and the image presented by the musician. Therefore, the current study aims to address the gap in the literature on the relationship between music and sexual violence by examining musicians who have committed acts of sexual violence, their lyrical content, the specific characteristics of the victims, details of the offense, and actions or lack thereof taken by the criminal justice system.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Data and Sample

In this study, content analysis was conducted to examine online news articles focused on musicians who were alleged to have committed or were convicted of committing some form of sexual violence between the years of 1957-2021. The purpose of this study is to examine not only the crimes perpetrated by artists but if and how artists used lyrical content to boast about their real-life exploits. Content analysis has been proven to be an unobtrusive measure as it allows for the identification, organization, description, and quantification of text, images, and music lyrics (Berg, 2001; Biber et al., 2006; Garland et al., 2019; Hancock et al., 2021; Kraska et al., 2020). Both manifest and latent analysis was utilized to examine cases of musicians' sexual violence. Manifest content refers to the elements that are physically present and countable such as charges and allegations of statutory rape while latent refers to an interpretive reading of the symbolism underlying the physically presented data, such as the underlying meanings conveyed in their music and actions that infer underage sexual abuse and degradation to victims, of such incidents (Garland et al., 2019). The latent content analysis in this study requires the analyst to infer the meaning from the material while manifest content analysis is readily visible to the reader thus requiring minimal interpretation from the analyst (Maxfield & Babbie, 2014).

Data was collected using a convenience sample of popular musicians identified as being accused of committing a sexual act against an adult, teen, or child by force, the threat of force, or

coercion. Using an inductive search process, numerous internet lists, wikis, and listservs were utilized to identify incidents of sexual violence perpetrated by modern, mainstream artists. Cases included those accused, charged, and/or convicted of sexual violence. A total of 56 cases were identified between 1957-2021. Cases that occurred prior to 1957 were excluded from the analysis. Cases involving intimate partner violence, child abuse, and other forms of interpersonal violence were excluded if there were no allegations of sexual misconduct. Based on data from Statistica (2021, January 18), the sample was drawn from the major popular music genres in the United States and verified using Wiki: rock, pop, country/folk, rap/hip-hop, and R&B. Musicians who were not considered popular or primarily represented genres of an international or religious nature and did not receive mainstream radio play were excluded from consideration.

Coding and Instruments

Using an inductive approach, the authors established criteria for what variables would be included in the analysis. Once the variables were established, cases were coded based on the history and facts of the case. Manifest content was the primary focus as demographic information and outcomes such as accusations, charges, and convictions were included. Demographic characteristics of both offender and victims were included in the analysis: sex (male = 0; female = 1), race (white = 0; nonwhite = 1), and age (in years). Time (date in years) and place (country, state) in which the crime took place were also recorded. Victimization variables included if a minor was involved (no = 0; yes = 1) and type of sexual violence (solicitation of a minor = 1; statutory rape = 2; sexual assault = 3; rape = 4; other = 5). Additional Victims (no = 0; yes = 1) were also included to determine if there were individuals victimized after the noted incident or any who came forward once accusations were made public.

Legal System Outcomes included if the event was confirmed (no = 0, yes = 1) by witnesses, confession, book, or conviction and if there were criminal and/or civil outcomes. Criminal Justice Outcomes noted if there was a legal consequence (no = 0, yes = 1) and the type of criminal outcome (arrested only = 1; found not guilty = 2; convicted of non-sexual charge = 3; convicted of sexual charge = 4). Civil Outcomes (no = 0; yes = 1) were measured to determine if a civil lawsuit was filed (no= 0; yes = 1) by the victim or the victim's parent/guardian. Further analysis examined current laws to determine the present law and punishments with focus on coercive measures (e.g., statutory rape) that were once ignored or deemed appropriate. Other variables focused on music-specific variables and included the artist's primary genre (rock = 1; pop = 2; country/folk = 3; rap/hip-hop = 4; R&B/soul = 5; other = 6) and if they had recorded a song promoting sexual violence (no = 0; yes = 1). Additionally, song lyrics were included for further analysis to examine the tautological relationship between reality and popular culture.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

The sample was composed of 52 musicians who were alleged or convicted of committing some form of sexual violence between the years 1957-2021. The results for offender/musician demographics are listed in Table 1. As shown, the majority of the sample is male (96.2%) and non-white (51.9%). The musician/offender's age at the time of the offense ranges from ages 18-46, with a mean age of 30.24, and a standard deviation of 9.901.

Table 1 Characteristics of Offenders/Musicians

	n	%	\bar{x}	s	Range
Sex					
Female	2	3.8	--	--	--
Male	50	96.2	--	--	--
Race					
White	25	48.1	--	--	--
Non-white	27	51.9	--	--	--
Age	--	--	30.24	9.901	50

The results for victim demographics are listed in Table 2. As shown, the majority of victims are female (96.0%) and white (72.7%). Victims' age at the time of the offense ranges from 9-40 years old, with a mean age of 17.76, a standard deviation of 6.431, and the most frequent age of the victim occurring in the sample is 15 years old.

Table 2 Characteristics of Victims

	n	%	\bar{x}	s	Range
Sex					
Female	48	96	--	--	--
Male	2	4	--	--	--
Race					
White	24	72.7	--	--	--
Non-white	9	27.3	--	--	--
Age	--	--	17.76	6.431	31

The results for the incident and victim characteristics are listed in Table 3. Of the sampled cases indicating an alleged violation, 38.5% of musicians/offenders committed rape, 34.6% committed statutory rape, 15.4% committed sexual assault, 9.6% committed solicitation of a minor, and 1.9% committed an act classified as other. For instance, the act that was classified as other is the case of Boosie Badazz, a 40-year-old rapper, who hired sex workers to perform sexual acts on his sons and nephews who ranged from 12-14 years old. Boosie then took to Twitter to share a clip of him explaining the incident where he stated:

“Hell yeah, I got my f**king son d**k sucked...I’m training them boys right...Ask any of my nephews, ask any of them, ask my son...Yeah when they was 12, 13 they got [oral sex] ...That’s how it’s supposed to be”

Further, of the total cases including both allegations and convictions, 53.8% of the sample committed a form of sexual violence against a minor. As noted, statutory rape was the most common offense committed against a minor. Notable offenders who have committed statutory rape include Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, Mick Jagger, Steven Tyler, Anthony Kiedis, and R. Kelly.

Additionally, as shown in Table 3, other than the original victim documented, half (50%) of the offenders/musicians had additional victims. Arguably one of the most notable examples of a musician with multiple victims is singer/rapper R. Kelly who has been convicted in New York of nine counts of predicate acts which include, illegal sex with minors, sexual exploitation of minors, bribery, coercion, and forced labor. During his trial, eleven accusers, nine women, and two males took the stand to describe their victimization at the hand of Kelly. However, not included in these charges, is Kelly's famous relationship with late singer Aaliyah whom he married when she was 15 and he was 27, during their relationship the two wrote and produced Aaliyah's debut hit, *Age Ain't Nothing but a Number*, which debuted on the Billboard charts and earned nominations at the American Music Awards.

Further as shown in Table 3, 90.2% of the sample did not marry the victim, but 9.8% did marry their victim. Aside from R. Kelly, mainstream artists such as Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, and The Rolling Stone's Bill Wyman married their victims. Moreover, instead of marriage, rock musicians such as Ted Nugent and Steven Tyler were able to secure guardianship from the victim's parents to ensure they could take their victims across state lines without fear of prosecution.

Table 3 Incident and Victim Characteristics

	n	%
Sexual Violence Against a Minor		
Yes	28	53.8
No	24	46.2
Sexual Violence Type		
Solicitation of a minor	5	9.6
Statutory Rape	18	34.6
Sexual Assault	8	15.4
Rape	20	38.5
Other	1.9	1.9
Additional Victims		
Yes	26	50.0
No	26	50.0
Married Victim		
Yes	5	9.8
No	46	90.2

In terms of the location of the offense, as shown in Table 4, the majority of cases occurred in the US (94.2%) followed by the UK (3.8%) and then Canada (1.9%). Offenses occurred in 16 out of the 50 states in the US with most cases occurring in California (40.4%), followed by New York (15.4%), then Florida (5.8%), and Louisiana (5.8%).

Laws and policies relating to sexual violence range between each country and each state, which is why it is important to consider their location. For instance, the age of consent, which is the legal age at which an individual is considered legally mature enough to consent to sexual acts varies between the United Kingdom (UK), Canada, and the United States (US). In the UK and Canada, the age of consent is 16 years old whereas the age of consent in the US varies by state and is between the ages of 16-18. In 11 states, Wisconsin, Virginia, Utah, Tennessee, Oregon, North Dakota, Idaho, Florida, Delaware, California, and Arizona, the age of consent is 18 years

old. In 6 states, Texas, New York, Missouri, Louisiana, Illinois, and Colorado, the age of consent is 17. Therefore, the remaining 33 states' age of consent is 16 years old.

Further, within the United States, many states have close-in-age exemptions or Romeo and Juliet laws, which are used to prevent the prosecution or reduce the consequences of underage couples who engage in consensual sex when both parties are close-in-age and are one or both below the age of consent. Currently, half or 25 states in the US have a close-in-age exemption which ranges from 2-5 years. These exemptions vary greatly by each state, for instance, California, Texas, and New York are examples of some states from the sample that do not have a close-in-age exemption.

As the findings indicate, in the state with the most offenses, California, the age of consent is 18 years old and there is no close age exemption/Romeo and Juliet law. In the state of California, any individual above the age of 18 having sexual relations with an individual under the age of 18 to whom they are not married is committing a crime. Further, New York, the state in our sample with the second most cases, has an age of consent of 17 years old and no close in age exemption/Romeo and Juliet law. So, in the state of New York, an individual over the age of 18 is guilty of statutory rape when they have sexual relations with an individual under the age of 17 to whom they are not married. However, as both California and New York have varying ages of consent, they both share the same provision that if the perpetrator and victim are married then they are not guilty of a crime regardless of age, which is something seen in this sample of perpetrators as a way to avoid criminal or civil consequences or prosecution.

Table 4 Location of Offense

	n	%
Country		
US	49	94.2
UK	2	3.8
Canada	1	1.9
US State		
Alabama	1	1.9
Arizona	1	1.9
California	21	40.4
Florida	3	5.8
Hawaii	1	1.9
Louisiana	3	5.8
Massachusetts	1	1.9
Mississippi	1	1.9
Missouri	1	1.9
New York	8	15.4
Oregon	1	1.9
South Carolina	1	1.9
Tennessee	1	1.9
Texas	1	1.9
Washington	1	1.9
Wyoming	1	1.9

Due to changes in society such as perception and laws regarding sexual violence, it is vital to account for the time period offenses occurred. As shown in Table 5, offenses ranged over 64 years, between 1957-2021, with the greatest number of offenses occurring in the 2010s. More specifically, the greatest number of cases occurred in 1985 and 2017, with 3 cases occurring in each of these years.

While the 1970s and 1980s were considered the prime age of the groupie, the 2000s-2010s have the greatest number of reported cases of sexual violence. This change in numbers may be attributed to increased reporting of non-consensual and previously considered consensual

acts than in previous decades. Coupled with evolving legal statutes, public attitudes have redefined how society responds to sexual violence (Planty et al., 2013; Taylor, 2006). Thus, as societal perceptions change to define adult-juvenile relationships as taboo reporting of such acts increase (Planty et al., 2013; Taylor, 2006). This is particularly true for acts committed against minors. Although California has defined the age of consent to be 18 since the early 1900s, it was not until the last few decades that the acceptability of adult-juvenile relationships was viewed with concern. Thus, the normalization of sex with underage girls was not only illegal but became unacceptable for mainstream consumers in the 2000s as definitions transformed and reporting increased even amongst celebrities.

Table 5 Decade of the Offense

	n	%
Decade the offense occurred		
1950s	3	6.0
1960s	2	4.0
1970s	8	16.0
1980s	6	12.0
1990s	6	12.0
2000s	11	22.0
2010s	11	22.0
2020s	3	6.0

The results for the outcomes such as the confirmation of the case, civil consequences, or criminal consequences of each case are listed in Table 6. As shown, a majority of the cases were confirmed at 80.8%, whereas 19.2% of cases were alleged or dismissed. Just over 32% of the confirmed cases resulted in some form of criminal consequence, but 67.3% did not. Further, of those that resulted in a criminal consequence, 41.2% were arrested, prosecuted, and convicted of a non-sexual offense, 29.4% were arrested, prosecuted, and convicted of a sexual offense, 23.5%

were arrested, and 5.9% were arrested and found not guilty. While most cases did not result in a criminal justice system response, criminal convictions were often dismissed or reclassified. Criminal convictions were often reduced to non-sexual crimes that resulted in a fine, probation, and/or limited incarceration sentences.

For instance, Don Henley, of The Eagles, hired two underage sex workers of which one of the sex workers overdosed while attending a party in his home. Henley's defense argued that he did not know the girls were underage nor did they engage in sexual activity. Rather than being charged with statutory rape, Henley pled guilty to contributing to the delinquency of a minor resulting in probation and a \$2,000 fine. Further, while few musicians in the sample actually served time for the crimes they committed, on the other hand, one example of a musician who did receive prison time is Chuck Berry who served 3 years in prison for transporting a 14-year-old girl across state lines for the purpose of having sexual intercourse. Another more modern example of an artist serving time for sexual violence is South Park Mexican, a 31-year-old rapper, and co-founder of Dope House Records, who is serving 45 years in prison for sexually assaulting a 9-year-old girl. Also, it should be noted that all arrests do not indicate guilt, and in a few cases such as DMX, evidence determined his innocence, and as a result, charges were dropped.

Additionally, of those cases confirmed, 13.5% resulted in civil consequences, whereas, 86.5% did not result in any known civil consequences. Most of those who settled civilly did not disclose the terms of the agreement; however, some cases noted significant payouts for sexual violations. For instance, Sean Kingston settled a 5 million lawsuit with the alleged victim, Carissa Capeloto, who claimed she was a teenager when she was forced to have sex with Sean, his bodyguard, and a member of his band. It should also be noted that a number of those

confirmed to have committed acts of sexual violence were not criminally and/or civilly prosecuted due to the statute of limitations expiring.

Table 6 Outcomes

	n	%
Was the case confirmed?		
Confirmed	42	80.8
Alleged/Dismissed	10	19.2
Criminal Consequences		
Yes	17	32.7
No	35	67.3
Type of Criminal Consequence		
Arrested	4	23.5
Arrested & prosecuted (not guilty)	1	5.9
Arrested & prosecuted (non-sexual offense)	7	41.2
Arrested & prosecuted (sexual offense)	5	29.4
Civil Consequences		
Yes	7	13.5
No	45	86.5

Music-related results are listed in Table 7. Just over 40% of the artists/offenders were categorized as rock artists, 28.8% were categorized as rap/hip-hop artists, 13.5 were categorized as R&B/soul, 9.6% were categorized as pop, 3.8% were categorized as country/folk, and 3.8% were categorized as other. Overall, in a majority of the sample, 60.8% did not have a song that referenced some form of sexual violence in their lyrics, but 39.2% did have a song that had some lyrical reference or mention of sexual violence. Offenses in these lyrics ranged from instances of Romeo & Juliet violations, solicitation of a minor, statutory rape, pedophilia, and rape. Examples of musicians in the sample that have songs including some form of sexual violence are The Rolling Stones, Kiss, R. Kelly, Tupac, Ted Nugent, Aerosmith, Iggy Pop, Big Sean, 50 Cent, Led Zeplin, and Tyga.

More specific examples of these songs that have some lyrical reference or mention of sexual violence include JailBait by Ted Nugent, which states, “...Well I don't care if you're just thirteen you look too good to be true I just know that you're probably clean there's one lil' thing I got do to you jailbait you look so good to me.” Stray Cat Blues by the Rolling Stones states, “I can see that you're fifteen years old no, I don't want your I.D and I can see that you're so far from home but that's no hanging matter it's no capital crime.” Another example is Sweet Sixteen by Chuck Berry, who served time in prison for transporting a minor for the purpose of sexual acts, which states, “...Sweet Little Sixteen she's got the grown-up blues tight dresses and lipstick she's sportin' high heel shoes, but tomorrow morning she'll have to change her trend and be sweet sixteen and back in class again.” Lastly, another example of a song from a musician in our sample that mentions sexual violence is Look Away by Iggy Pop, “...I slept with Sable when she was 13 her parents were too rich to do anything she rocked her way around LA ‘til a New York Doll carried her away.”

Table 7 Music

	n	%
Offender's Music Genre		
Rock	21	40.4
Pop	5	9.6
Country/folk	2	3.8
Rap/hip-hop	15	28.8
R&B/soul	7	13.5
Other	2	3.8
Song with Sexual Violence		
Yes	20	60.8
No	31	39.2

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

Cultivation Theory

Prior research has determined that music and celebrities like musicians are instrumental in shaping society's attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs, specifically regarding sexual violence; however, the academic literature has failed to examine the inextricable relationship between the medium and the artist. Therefore, the current study analyzed cases of sexual violence by famous musicians to determine which musicians have been accused or charged with committing statutory rape between 1957-2021 and examined the influences these acts have on consumers of music and the music industry.

Overall, the study found partial support linking musicians to sexual violence. Most of the artists in the sample did not have a song that mentioned or insinuated sexual violence in some way, but 39.2% of the sample did. While art may influence reality when addressing sexual violence, it also can be used as an outlet for a confession to one's crimes without consequences, which is demonstrated in over 1/3 of the cases in the sample. As listeners consume such music with lyrics that reference incidents of Romeo & Juliet, solicitation of a minor, statutory rape, pedophilia, rape, and other sexual violence, such acts become normalized for them and can lead to the promotion and acceptance of sexual violence, rape myths, and victim blaming. Based on the principles of cultivation theory, it can be assumed that the more one consumes music that

normalizes and glorifies sexual violence, the more accepting of such acts they become and their reality begins to mimic that of the music they consume.

Further, while this study was concerned with overall sexual violence, there was also a focus on statutory rape, which we found partial support for, as 34.6% of the sample has been alleged or convicted of statutory rape. Again, while this is only partial support for the purpose of the study over half of the sample had committed a sexual act against a minor. Thus, those who consume music that normalizes and glorifies statutory rape, the more likely they are to perceive this as reality, meaning that their actions, behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs will also normalize instances of statutory rape and other forms of sexual violence against minors.

Representation of Victims and Offenders

Similar to real-world reports on sexual victimization, the current findings indicate that males are overwhelmingly perpetrators of sexual violence (96.2%) including statutory rape. Additionally, females represent the majority of victims (96%). These findings are consistent with the extant literature on sexual victimization as women are more likely to experience sexual violence at the hands of male offenders (Basile et al., 2022; Sinozich & Langton, 2014; Smith et al., 2018). Although the empirical research indicates that minority females are at the greatest risk for sexual violence (Basile et al., 2022; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000), the current study noted that white victims were more likely to be victims of sexual violence at 72.7%, whereas, non-white victims only represented 27.3% of victims known in the sample. This finding can be attributed to a multitude of factors such as a lack of data in the study or varying perceptions and cultures of reporting such crimes. For instance, as the race of the victim was unknown in 39.2% of cases, victim names and characteristics were sealed due to their age or rape shield we were unable to

code for the victim's race or ethnicity, which could attribute to our findings varying from official data and empirical research

Moreover, as young adults, which include individuals under 18, are at the highest risk for sexual violence victimization, information on the victims that fall under 18 years of age is often sealed from the public due to their age (Basile et al., 2022; Sinozich & Langton, 2014). Rape shield laws also affect the availability of victim information. For instance, rape shield laws have been passed by state legislatures and the Federal Government, to ensure that victims of sexual violence receive a fair trial without the media and general public knowing personal information and intimate details about their lives and the offense at hand (Reidy, 2004). Some of these statutes include provisions that prohibit the media from publishing the identity of the victims. Thus, as information on the victims is unavailable to the media, it was not coded for in this study, which can attribute to our data straying away from the bulk of literature that finds minority females are at the highest risk for victimization.

However, some scholars attribute the lack of reporting from victims that are racial and ethnic minorities due to social and cultural circumstances (Leung & Williams, 2019; Tillman et al., 2010). Tillman and colleagues (2010) find that minorities, specifically black females are the least likely to report their victimization or seek help after the crime. Research shows that society is more accepting of accounts of sexual victimization for white females as society's sex-based norms and expectations are based largely on white values (Leung & Williams, 2019). Thus, ethnic and racial minorities may be afraid to report their victimization due to society's mistreatment of them and their offenders compared to their white counterparts. Such an idea has recently been demonstrated through the #MeToo movement as sexual victimization has been at

the forefront of the media and continues to dominate headlines, ethnic and racial minorities have been essentially invisible in this movement (Leung & Williams, 2019).

During the #MeToo movement when victims who are ethnic or racial minorities come forward, their treatment is not comparable to white victims (Leung & Williams, 2019). Although, while the support of victims who have come forward with claims against any celebrity or musician during the #MeToo movement has not been strong, Leung and Williams (2019) note that the Black female victims who came forward against R. Kelly were villainized by the media and society, whereas, white females who brought claims against celebrities like Harvey Weinstein received more support for sharing their victimization by the media and society. Therefore, showing that while support for all victims of sexual violence may be lacking, victims that are racial and ethnic minorities experience more barriers in the media and from society when choosing to share their victimization. Thus, meaning that cultural and social circumstances have been a factor in discouraging victims of sexual violence to not report, which could contribute to why our data shows fewer ethnic and racial minority victims than white victims.

Further, to focus on the offenders/musicians, the current findings of this study reinforce what we know about perpetrators of sexual violence as only 3.8% of offenders were female. Data and empirical literature reinforce these findings as perpetrators of sexual violence and more specifically statutory rape are less likely to be female as the offenders are overwhelmingly male and victims are often female (Basile et al., 2022; Bieri & Budd, 2018; Sinozich & Langton, 2014; Smith et al., 2018). However, the lack of female offenders in official data can be attributed to the lack of reporting against female perpetrators (Bornstein et al., 2007; Denov, 2003; Hetherington & Beardsall, 1998; Rogers & Davies, 2007; Stein et al., 2021). For instance, the sex of the perpetrator is a strong predictor of perceptions of statutory rape as male offenders are

consistently judged more negatively than female offenders, which could discourage those who are victimized by a female from coming forward (Bornstein et al., 2007; Denov, 2003; Hetherington & Beardsall, 1998; Rogers & Davies, 2007; Stein et al., 2021). Moreover, in all cases in the study that involved women perpetrators, there was no difference in outcomes as neither musician was convicted or charged with a crime, which is consistent with the literature on sexual violence. Tenzer (2019) notes that male offenders of statutory rape are prosecuted at a rate four times greater than their female counterparts, which creates disproportionality in the sentencing of statutory rape. Thus, the data of this study follows empirical data and literature that finds gendered differences in official outcomes of cases and perceptions of society when females are the perpetrators of a sex crimes.

However, in terms of the race of the offender, the current findings of this study determined that 51.9% of offenders were non-white and 48.1% of offenders were white, which does not align with empirical data and research. For instance, there is a historic empirical pattern that the majority of perpetrators of sexual violence are white males (Sinozich & Langton, 2014). Due to social circumstances and societal perceptions, minority individuals may be more likely to be reported as an offender of sexual violence or statutory rape, especially when their victim is white. This can be attributed to societal perceptions of minority perpetrators as the media and popular culture overrepresent minority offenders as violent predators especially if there is a white female victim, meaning that society believes minority perpetrators are more violent and more harmful and deserve to be punished more harshly than their white counterparts (Bjornstrom et al., 2010; Britto et al., 2007).

Further, this finding could also be attributed to the type of music the perpetrator performs/writes. For instance, in the sample, we see more minority men as perpetrators and more

minorities receiving criminal or civil outcomes after the case than white musicians in the sample. Thus, it can be argued that the type of music the perpetrator performs as well as their race or ethnicity affects societal perceptions. Racial or ethnic minorities that perform in genres with songs that talk about women in their lyrics in a demeaning and degrading way can allow society to view them as more guilty or likely to be a perpetrator of sexual violence than their white counterparts or musicians in other genres that do not portray such lyrics, which is reflected in the current results.

Criminal Justice Intervention and the Law

In terms of criminal justice intervention, the current findings of the study indicate a vast majority of cases resulted in no official outcome criminally or civilly, which is in accordance with research on sexual violence. Sexual violence, more specifically statutory rape, is severely underreported due to the nature of the victim-offender relationship and these cases are further under-punished or lack the appropriate consequence due to various reasons (Troup-Leasure & Snyder, 2005). In this study, the data indicates that 80% of cases in the sample were confirmed in some way, but only 32% of all cases had some form of criminal consequence. Additionally, even when a conviction occurs, it is often reduced to that of a non-sexual crime.

The statute of limitations for sexual violence plays a big role in the lack of criminal justice interventions and consequences within the sample. The statute of limitations for sexual violence state that if charges are not filed within a certain time frame then the charges are dismissed, but the time frame varies in each state in the US. One case recently that has been confirmed, but cannot be prosecuted due to being outside the statute of limitations is the case of Steven Tyler and Julia (Holcomb) Misely. Misley alleged that Tyler convinced her mother to

grant him legal guardianship over her when she was 16 years old so he could engage in a sexual relationship. Tyler has not denied such allegations as he went on to admit his guilt as he depicts in his 2011 memoir the story of when he took a “teen bride” so he would not be held legally accountable for his sexual relations with her (Millman, 2022). Regardless of his admission of guilt, no charges can be brought forward against Tyler due to the statute of limitations in California. Thus, given the influx of victims coming forward against their perpetrator due to the #MeToo movement, even if their perpetrator admits or corroborates the allegations, if it is outside the statute of limitations no criminal charges can be made, meaning no official justice can be given to the victim. Therefore, in this study, the statute of limitations can be used to explain the lack of criminal justice intervention found within our sample, as well as the lack of criminal justice outcomes found in official data on sexual victimization.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

As noted previously, music may be used as an artist's outlet for confessing their crimes without consequences, which this study supports as approximately 32% had some form of criminal consequence. Not only does the consumption of music affect listeners, but so does their consumption of musician's content outside of their music (Baek et al., 2013; Frederick et al., 2014; Frederick et al., 2012; Guo & Chan-Olmsted, 2015; Kurtin et al., 2018; Kurtin et al., 2019; Shade et al., 2015; Stein et al., 2021). While consumers are privy to the sexual misconduct of musicians and are often aware of the issues surrounding such behaviors, the lack of criminal consequences creates a view that unless egregious, the behavior is acceptable. Thus, consumers' beliefs and behaviors surrounding sexual violence may mirror this constructed perception.

However, despite this study's contribution to the gap in the literature on musicians and sexual violence, it is not without its limitations. While content analysis allows for a systematic exploration of popular culture mediums, the data collected is often subjective, which calls for interpretation by the researchers (Garland et al., 2018). Although inter-coder reliability was implemented to reduce issues of validity and reliability, such analysis may be biased as the data is based on the researcher's interpretations (Kraska et al., 2020). Thus, this methodological technique leaves ample room for research error when identifying and analyzing data.

Another limitation is that the study was drawn from a convenience sample based on media coverage that was often reflected in news stories, blogs, and wikis. As noted, this study

used online news articles and databases to establish the sample for the study, which also relied on parameters that established within the search criteria what is included/excluded from the sample. Thus, the research team was unable to control for any musicians that did not receive media attention or was inadvertently omitted. Another limitation related to the inclusion/exclusion criteria of the study is that the determination of confirmed cases came from online news articles and not actual court documents. While confirmation was garnered from “reputable” news sources, the data collected is not consistent with the standards required in a court of law. Therefore, confirmation is based not only on legal outcomes but the court of public opinion.

Further, this study primarily focused on mainstream music, due to this selection having the greatest reach and possible impact on consumers. As such, the sample may not be representative of genres outside of the selection criteria such as Christian or Bluegrass. Similarly, another limitation is that this study focuses only on musicians and their music and not on other types of celebrities and their art/work; thus, the results cannot be generalized to other celebrities such as movie stars, TV stars, writers, etc, and their work. Therefore, future research could benefit from expanding other less mainstream genres of music and even expanding to examine other types of celebrities and their artistry.

Moreover, content analysis cannot prove causality, thus the true impact of the study on societal perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors is unknown (Berg, 2001; Kraska et al., 2020). Therefore, in order to prove causality future research must be conducted on human subjects. Future research on this topic should utilize interviews and surveys on music consumers to see how the musician’s acts and lyrics shape their attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions toward sexual violence. Further, as the study notes partial support for art imitating reality, future

research on such topics could expand by exploring female musicians and their lyrics as outlets to report their victimization within the industry. Some examples would focus on Demi Lovato, Taylor Swift, and Billie Eilish, as they have used their artistry to depict and reclaim their traumatic experiences of sexual violence such as grooming within the music industry.

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VITA

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