Redefining Lines: Feminist Parodies and Countering the Normalization of Rape Culture in Pop Music

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ABSTRACT: In July of 2013, Robin Thicke’s song “Blurred Lines” topped the charts and news stories with its catchy yet controversial lyrics. A handful of parody videos created by feminist organizations attempted to remake the explicit video and criticize rape culture in pop music. This study offers a discourse analysis of the problematic lyrics and themes presented in both the original and the parodies and investigates the framing techniques utilized in the parodies to mobilize resistance. I interviewed the creators of the most popular parody about the intentions behind their video. I also conducted a feminist-only focus group to discuss the parody’s resonance and any critiques. I then surveyed non-feminists, to gauge their video’s effectiveness. By viewing these parodies as a movement countering rape culture, this study’s findings will enable us to assess whether this form of protest is innovative enough to draw in sympathetic bystanders while holding onto movement constituents.
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SECTION I: THE PROBLEM & RAPE CULTURE

In July of 2013, Robin Thicke’s song “Blurred Lines” topped the charts and news stories with its catchy yet controversial lyrics. My study focuses on the backlash that came after the release of the video. Response to “Blurred Lines” was unique in the way that feminist activists took to the internet and made parodies directly contrasting the rape culture presented in Robin Thicke’s number one hit. Activists railed against the misogynist lyrics that promoted rape culture, which once again brought the issue into popular conversation and remains as an important issue among audiences that listen to this type of music. Rape culture is defined as a set of beliefs and attitudes that encourages rape because it teaches males and females that aggression in males and subordination of women is normal and natural in sexual relations (Herman 1988). Campuses and the media continue to grapple with how to deal with rape culture and even debate its existence while activists continue to work to gain some attention in order to get their messages heard (Young 2015; Svokos 2014). In this study, I examine whether these frames used by feminists are actually affective in combating the normalized rape culture in this song and if the method of parody is an effective tool for future activists to utilize. To answer these questions, I utilized mixed methodology to understand the framing used and the effectiveness using the most popular parody. In the first part of my methods I had the privilege of interviewing the creator of the most popular and controversy parody, Olivia Lubbock. I then held a focus group of feminists in which they discussed their perceptions and then used a survey to measure perceptions in a more non-feminist population. My findings revealed that the parody was effective in that it presented diagnostic framing and was a familiar medium for millennials. However, potential vilification and a lack of motivational framing meant the video was a good tool for discussion, but not for promoting further action.
SECTION II: THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

In this section I will introduce the meaning of framing in the context of social movements. First, I will explain the definition of collective action frames and the three steps that social movements must follow to ensure a frame resonates. I will also delve into different types of framing devices including frame amplification, frame vilification, and frame debunking and explore the ways the media and framing interact. Second, I will give a brief history/summary of parody as a reaction to politics. Finally, I will give an overview of sexism in music and some ways feminists have critiqued misogynist themes in pop music and videos.

Social Movement Framing

The core of framing literature begins with Erving Goffman’s 1974 work, Frame Analysis in which he defines framing as allowing users to “locate, perceive, identify and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its term” (Goffman 1974:21). This definition has paved the way for social movement researchers to study how movements interact with each other and with those bystanders they wish to recruit. There are multiple framing devices social movements can utilize to gain traction on their causes. In this section I will focus on the most relevant framing devices to this research.

Collective action framing

Benford and Snow determined that framing is the outcome of people collectively negotiating shared meaning to these occurrences, giving them the name “collective action frames.” (Benford & Snow 2000:614-15). They define one of the main characteristics of collective action frames as “constructed in part as movement adherents negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, make
attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate a set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change” (Benford & Snow 2000:615). Frames are therefore supposed to convey what the problem is, place blame, and then make a plan others should act upon to mediate the problem.

In order to accomplish this, Benford and Snow offer the core tasks of collective action framing. Together, these should induce “consensus mobilization” or simply convincing people to actually do something about the problem (Benford & Snow 2000:614). The first part is diagnostic framing which is meant to identify the problem and what is causing it. As Della Porta and Diani state, the persons in charge of diagnostic framing are those “actors who are entitled to have opinions on it” (2006:75). Those that have the power to influence could be political parties, media, and government agencies. They create this symbolic conflict by giving legitimacy to the problems they have identified and therefore bring attention to themselves and their ability to speak in the name of the issue.

The next part is prognostic framing which not only identifies the problem but also proposes a remedy or strategy of attack. (Benford & Snow 1986:616). As Della Porta and Diani elaborate, “It involves seeking solutions, hypothesizing new social patterns, new ways of regulating relationships between groups, new articulations of consensus and of the exercise of power. There is often a strong utopian dimension present in this endeavor” (2006:77). Goals are established in this step and new areas of conflict which may normally be marginalized are opened, hence the “utopian” aspect. The focus is not necessarily on what can be achieved but what new concepts and ideas can be created (2006:77).
The last step in frame alignment is motivational framing which “provides a ‘call to arms’ or rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action, including the construction of appropriate vocabularies of motive” (Benford & Snow 2000:617.) Essentially the last part is convincing people that the cause is worthy of their efforts and gives them the tools to be able to communicate why they are mobilizing. The actors must be convinced of the rationality for the action and the movement must “link the individual sphere with that of collective experience” (Della Porta & Diani 2006:79). This part is critical to identity forming and collective solidarity.

The major issue of framing, and the issue which is the focus of this paper, is effectiveness of collective action framing in acquiring and maintaining a following in a social movement. Benford and Snow claim there are three factors that determine how much a collective action frame will resonate. The first and possibly most important one is consistency which “refers to the congruency between an SMO’s articulated beliefs, claims, and actions” (Benford & Snow 2000:620). This concept leads directly into the second piece of resonance which is credibility. Without consistency, the credibility of an SMO is lost. The final factor for resonance is salience. “Hypothetically, the more central or salient the espoused beliefs, ideas, and values of a movement to the targets of mobilization, the greater the probability of their mobilization” (Benford & Snow 2000:621). These steps are subject of my analysis of the parody videos. To what extent do movement leaders use these tools, and do they actually work on populations with very different ideas? By understanding how the videos are received, I can draw which aspects of framing were used and if they in fact worked in persuading bystanders and captivating adherents.
Frame alignment

Other scholars have delved deeper into the issues of framing including another work by Benford and Snow and their colleagues Rochford and Worden which address the issues of frame alignment. Groups must assess and reassess their reasons and ways of participating in social movements and must justify their reasons for doing and not doing certain things. This rationalization is studied through frame alignment processes. Benford & Snow et al. (2000) focus on four main types of these processes. However, in the context of my research, only one device was most prominent: frame amplification. “By frame amplification, we refer to the clarification and invigoration of an interpretive frame that bears on a particular issue, problem or set of events” (Benford & Snow et al. 1986:469). They explain that because so many events or issues seem unconnected to our lives, the frame tries to give them meaning by playing on our already held values and beliefs. In order to turn people on to the movement, frame amplification tries to make their fight about broader issues. For example, gun violence may be a topic that is unappealing to many because they do not own a gun or do not live an area where there is gun violence. Or even if they do, the issue seems political and out of their immediate interest. In order to appeal to these people, SMOs can frame it so that it becomes a family issue, because guns are killing kids or dragging them into a life of gangs and crime. By playing on already held values like family and community, people are more likely to care and feel a connection to the issue.

Other frames

McCaffery and Keys offer few other framing devices that are used specifically in the efforts of countermovements as a part of the abortion debate. The first two are mostly used
together: frame vilification and polarization. Polarization dichotomizes the movement by creating an “us versus them” mentality and then vilification then paints the “them” part with “emotionally charged” negative language in order to seem like “us” is on the right side of the issue (McCaffery & Keys 2000:50-51). Frame debunking’s main goal is to discredit the opposition and further their own ideologies. Often this is by cries of hypocrisy against the other side, having those with an identity found in the opposing group denounce them, or simply disproving “facts” presented by other side only to reveal the “truth” of what they are fighting for (McCaffery & Keys 2000:52-53)

Framing and the media

The media plays a role in relaying these frames to the greater population. Whether it is simply the news reporting it or a press conference written by leaders of SMOs, the way the media frames the issue can change participation in the movement. Conversely, SMOs can take the message from the media and use them in their own frames. Gamson defines the three ways in which we can receive these messages as sound, visual imagery, and language (Gamson et al 1992:380). The difficulty comes in how the consumers or target audiences then interpret the messages. One of the issues in consistency of framing and issues Gamson points out is hegemony. While some elites manage to defend hegemonic ideas unsuccessfully, many are successful and thus present a major obstacle to overcome when trying to gain ground on a movement (Gamson et al 1992:381). Perhaps even part of starting a movement is simply challenging the hegemony in the media to bring attention to their interests. Gamson also takes issue with framing and frame transformation. He says that while everything we must interpret is framed, we are also influencing the frame. For him, framing can be too broad or too specific and there is no agreed upon level for which is the most effective. (Gamson et al 1992:384-85). Frame
transformation remains a more logical approach for him because it allows a storyline for the issue and a way to see progress. (Gamson et al 1992:385). Finally, there is argument against fragmentation. Since the media presents headlines and information in short snippets, there is no room for frame development and therefore make it difficult to organize around. (Gamson et al 1992:386). There are creative ways to force frames into the media in way that draw people in. In fact, currently there are many very controversial issues being brought into public discussion using creative frames. One of the most current popular ways in which issues are effectively portrayed and which is the focus of this study is parody.

Politics and Parody as Protest

Parody as a form of speaking out is not a new idea. There are countless examples of parody from TV shows like Saturday Night Live and The Daily Show but there is also music, and comics, and theater, and art, and the list goes on (Hariman 2008; Baym & Jones 2012). Parody is a less serious way to comment on culture and society, and because of its humor, it can balance out the discourse (Baym & Jones 2012). When an issue is too serious like sexism, using humor to explain it can make it seem less daunting to those who may otherwise be uncomfortable talking about it. As Hariman puts it:

> Were every speaker a Pericles and every discussion a model of rational-critical debate, we would be in deep trouble. Eloquence is indeed a good thing and at times necessary and sometimes decisive, but even eloquence needs to be put it its place*or, more accurately, placed beside itself if the public audience is to reclaim their capacity for independent thought and action (Hariman 2008:249)

Parody is a creative and catchy way to engage in politics for both audience consuming the parody, and the creators trying to get a message out. It has been studied by scholars in its effects and perceptions. In particular to this study, it is critical to understand the reasons for choosing parody and its place in popular culture.
News parody is probably the most popular form, and continues to grow. There are shows that have been around for decades like *Saturday Night Live* and *The Daily Show* and the satirical newspaper *The Onion*. New parodies join the list frequently it seems with John Oliver’s *Last Week Tonight* as one of the more recent examples. These outlets use exaggeration and surrealism with humor in order to deconstruct the news and to “undermine its ideological underpinnings” (Baym & Jones 2012). Parodies are not meant to only expose the information in a new light, but also draw attention to the structure in which it is being presented. Parody in news especially plays a critical role because issues are made more accessible to people who may not otherwise care. By turning politics into something humorous like parody, it becomes a way “piggyback high-cost information onto low-cost entertainment-oriented content” that is easier to digest for passive viewers and serves as a gateway to becoming more informed about the political world” (Baum, 2003). Therefore, parody provides the opportunity to educate more people on important issues in culture. Jones gives the example of Tina Fey’s impression of Sarah Palin during the 2008 election. Even though Fey was actually repeating the exact words of Palin from interviews and speeches, it was set in a different context—a comedic one—giving viewers a new perspective (Jones 2010:4). Though humorous, sometimes the humor is what can provide a new understanding of what is important or untrue.

*Feminism and parody*

Parody could be particularly useful for feminism because it can be so easy. As Martha Nussbaum observes, “All that we can hope to do is to find spaces within the structures of power in which to parody them, to poke fun at them, to transgress them in speech” (1999:1). In other words, as an oppressed population, sometimes it’s all women can do to start a conversation. “Blurred Lines” parodies have it easy in this sense, since Thicke’s video puts so much emphasis
on gender roles, particularly the dominant male and objectified female. To this Nussbaum says, “by carrying out these performances in a slightly different manner, a parodic manner, we can perhaps unmake them just a little” (1999:5). Turning the tables subverts the system a little and causes destabilization. There is no one best way necessarily in subversion, and parody can be good when used to draw attention to justice. In a time when there seems to be a lack of commitment or cohesion, especially in feminism, parody can serve as a beginning to an outlet, attracting people of all interests and particularly the younger populations (Baym & Jones 2012). In addition to parody, music can also be tool because of its ability to create solidarity, however it also is the subject of much criticism for its own harmful themes in pop culture.

Feminist Critique of Music

Women’s subordinate role is enforced and visually presented in music and especially music videos. From men sexualizing, even abusing women like in many Eminem videos and most of Robin Thicke’s, to women sexualizing themselves like Beyoncé and Nicki Minaj, to women being simply accessories remaining in the background. These contradicting portrayals can be problematic, as looked at by Alexander (1999). In her study of 123 music videos across all genres from 1995, about half of the videos placed women at the forefront of the story, while the rest simply kept women in the background. Her findings led her to conclude there are three ways to frame women: the conventional woman, the self-reliant woman and the internal paradox. Among these types, women must find which they most identify with, allowing it to influence her own gender identity. The first type, the conventional woman, Alexander defines as the background character. Passive, with no will of her own, she is a prop there to “simply to satisfy the desires of the man” (Alexander 1999:53). Most often, the women is merely accompanying a man or dancing sexually in the background. Other ways she is seen is also the object of affection
in a love ballad. Either way, the conventional woman is one who is performing her gender role well and waiting for their man and doing whatever she can to please him. The second type of woman, self-reliant, could be found in only about 18 percent of the videos Alexander studied. They are dominant and aggressive when it comes to their own sexual desires (1999:55). Current examples that come to mind would be Nicki Minaj whose entire reputation comes from being a strong, aggressively sexual woman. Beyoncé is also lauded as a woman who takes control of her sexuality instead of allowing it to be exploited. The final type of woman presented by Alexander is the internal paradox. Like the title suggests, these women are presented as managing conflicting gender roles. This can be seen as juxtaposition between the woman’s portrayed public image and her private thoughts. The most uncommon type of woman merely accounted for about five percent of the videos Alexander analyzed (1999:59). In Thicke’s video for “Blurred Lines” we see only the first type of woman, the “conventional woman”. Sexually passive and staged as an object to be draped on a man or dancing in the background. The women are also naked while the men are not leaving them in a more vulnerable state. Therefore this image of women perpetuated by Thicke creates the problematic nature and controversy behind the song.

In a 1985 analysis of music videos and the effect of MTV on youth, Baxter states that the problem with music videos not only lies in their interfering with our own internal image of the music, but the fact that it is mostly young people watching these videos meaning that “music video has the potential for contributing to the central norms of a relatively impressionable audience” (Baxter et al 1985:334). The popularity of music videos normalizes this violence against women and defines an area of pop culture that most people are familiar with, therefore perpetuating and sanctifying rape culture, misogyny, sexism, racism and every other kind of hate that one can write about. A more current study by Wallis (2011) that was conducted similarly to
Baxter et al’s, reinforces the ideas set out by Baxter et al. According to her research, music videos have been a frequent topic of discussion among scholars because of the themes they present regarding race, sexuality, violence. With current technology, the problematic videos are more accessible than ever thanks to YouTube and Vemo. Now adolescents can access the same content adults can from more websites on more devices than ever (2011:161). Her content analysis of pop music videos demonstrates that women are more likely to be presented with more sexual behavior in music videos while men were generally associated with more aggressive behavior (2011:168). She concludes saying her research,

…reveals the institutionalized sexism that persists in media representations. Overall, the findings regarding gender display in music videos communicate, once again, a distorted message as to females’ “proper” role in society—as sexual and subordinate—and, to a lesser degree, males’ “proper” role as well—as aggressive. Solely in terms of who is shown, the difficulty in obtaining an equal number of videos by male and female lead performers reveals the dominance of males on music television to a much larger degree than in previous content analyses of MTV (65 male videos compared to 17 female videos in 40 hr. of videotaping) (Wallis 2011:170).

The roles she is describing—the aggressive male and subordinate female—are exactly the definition of rape culture. The problem is emphasized even further by the sheer disproportion of males being portrayed this way in the leading role almost four times more often than women are given any sort of leading role.

Women’s role in music videos and performance continues to be problematic because of the way they are portrayed as having agency over their sexuality when in reality, they are still merely objects. Levande (2008) talks about the male-gaze and how everything, including girl-on-girl action which has slowly become more popular, is not empowering but degrading. She categorizes the things women do in music as mostly porn due to the false belief that women musicians are being respected for their sexuality when in reality they are exploited. Levande
gives the example of a cover of Entertainment Weekly in which the Dixie Chicks were naked but covered in “revolutionary” words written on their bodies. Or Christina Aguilera who posed as a sexualized boxer in one of her music videos in an attempt to be “masculine” in order to be seen as equal but in reality is perpetuating forced sexuality. She concludes that in order to be successful, women have to “whore” themselves, or become hyper sexualized in order to be successful. And no matter how often the women can emphasize they are being sexual because of their own agency, it remains ignored as that continues not to be the way they are perceived.

Feminists have long found aspects of pop music to be oppressive and perpetuating very harmful ideas. Music has the ability to speak to us and to the issues of society. The amount of music trying to address social issues or say something meaningful is endless. Because of the communicative abilities, it has been well-critiqued. And as proven, feminists have every right to be concerned as the music we listen to and popularize can have damaging effects on our ideas surrounding women in society and actually affect our behavior and attitudes.

Measuring the impact of sexist music

Wilkinson studied two-hundred of the most popular songs between 1954 and 1968 and found that over 87% of the most popular hits were love songs and was not surprised that most perpetuated certain gender stereotypes (Wilkinson 1976: 161). However, years later we still love this music despite its inherent sexism and instead turn our attention to a more blatant and violent music issue: misogyny and violence in rap and hip/hop music.

Rap is one of the younger genres of music, only coming to popularity in the early 80s. In 2007 Cobb and Boettcher did a study on whether or not listening to Eminem increased sexist beliefs. Eminem’s music, laced with hateful lyrics about his wife and former business partner is
violently sexist and racist. They claim, “The genre of ‘gangsta rap’ in particular is blamed for normalizing misogynistic attitudes by celebrating the physical abuse of women…Consequently, one explosive if unsubstantiated objection to rap is that ‘rape and rap just go together a little too well’” (Cobb & Boettcher 2007:3025). Their study looked at undergrad students, the majority of which were male. They had three groups listen to no music, nonmisogynistic rap or misogynist rap. The second part of the experiment presented more significant results, showing with a survey to determine sexism; it was found that there was a slight increase in sexism in boys after listening to the non-misogynist rap which was troubling to the researchers as the lyrics to the rap song of choice had no mention of sexist content. In the first part of the experiment, after being exposed to Eminem specifically, boys’ sexism increased while the girls decreased.

Despite Cobb and Boettcher’s emphasis on the violence being perpetuated in these misogynistic lyrics, most scholars would agree that it is the misogyny itself that is absorbed by listeners. “Sexism” alone is an incredible understatement. There has been criticism of these ideals presented in music for years, despite its seemingly normalization in pop culture. Rap music remains at the forefront of the controversy as Weitzer and Kurbin state, the winner of the 2007 Academy Award for Best Original Song in a Feature Film was “It’s Hard Out Here For a Pimp” by Three 6 Mafia (Weitzer & Kurbin 2009:3). The win sparked outrage after the group’s Oscar performance and was condemned for “glorifying the exploitation of women (Weitzer & Kurbin 2009:3). Years earlier, the authors state, the magazine Essence launched an exhaustive campaign lamenting the way Black women are presented in rap music and protesting the misogyny relayed in the lyrics. Unlike other campaigns, the magazine also offered ways to challenge these notions. Since perhaps printed magazines are less popular currently, groups fighting against the violence in music are going to new levels to protest, such as the parodies I
am analyzing for Robin Thicke’s “Blurred Lines.” A recent example aimed at discrediting modern beauty standards is comedienne Amy Schumer’s “Girl You Don’t Need Makeup.” She parodied popular boy bands like One Direction and their messages about girls being beautiful the way they are and how they should have more confidence, but juxtaposed these themes against what society deems is beautiful. So by the end of this parody, she reveals herself without makeup which changes the whole song from “Girl, you don’t need makeup” to “Girl, you need more makeup.” Schumer and the feminist groups against “Blurred Lines” are only parts of a greater effort to critique music. Weitzer and Kurbin continue with their analysis saying that feminist groups and anti-hate groups are pushing for “greater diversity, more complexity, and dramatically mixed messages about the individual female persona and women’s roles in society” and that these messages have increased over time. However they also state that that women remain marginalized and depicted as inferior to men more often than not (Weitzer & Kurbin 2009:4).

*Functions of music: to start a discourse*

Music is a tool. It can have multiple uses for multiple groups and even portray multiple messages at once. First and most importantly, music is a way of communication. It can express ideas and feelings and motivate us to become groups. Second, this form of communication gives us a medium to respond to other groups which brings me to the third point: music can create solidarity. And finally, when all is said and done, this solidarity, medium for sending messages and groups come together, music can be an important tool for social movement.
Music as communication

Music is a cultural-universal. It can be found in all ethnicities, groups, and languages. It is another form of communication. As Loersch and Arbuckle point out, with current technology it is normal to find people surrounded by music constantly thanks to the radio, headphones and iPods (Loersch & Arbuckle 2013:777). Music has the ability to move us and historically has been a tool for social movements and bringing groups together like during the Civil Rights Movement in the 50s and then the anti-war movement in the 60s and 70s. Fundamentally, music is a way to communicate. It defines groups with its different genres and expresses the way that group feels not only with lyrics but with sound—and in this day and age, video. Loersch and Arbuckle say, “Music can, for example, help move the group toward a common goal by communicating social information about the group’s proper mental state…This can be observed in modern society when aggressive music is played during sporting events, helping to create the emotion and energy necessary to confront a rival group” (2013:778). Groups can use music to express their current state whether its despair, happiness, celebration or mourning. Music moves us to feel and share in these sentiments.

Music as a way to respond

Music also gives us the ability to respond to groups. The idea of music as discourse has been widely researched and all have concluded that music has the potential to be very powerful medium to society (Leone 2012; Graakjaer 2012; McKerrell; 2012; Attali 1985). Music is inherently social: in its creation, in actually listening to it. And because of its social aspect, it creates solidarity, a power nucleus, and the ability to be subversive (van Leeuwen 2012, Attali 1985). Making music involves communication between musicians; listening to music can be a
group process like at a club or simply having the radio on in the car. When a group making the music or listening to the music gives the song meaning, then it can become a powerful and uniting force.

Music helps create solidarity

Most of the time, this discourse in music is simultaneous and Van Leeuwen (2012) focuses on three ways simultaneous discourse can shape interaction. The first is social unison in which all participants “play the same notes” or agree as a whole. It enforces solidarity in which no single voice is more important or louder than the others, and consensus and conformity is key. Social unison can provide a sense of belonging to a group and a unified identity. Van Leeuwen gives the examples of singing in church, music at a sports game, or in the military (van Leeuwen 2012:322). While individuals, singing music at these places together creates the sense of solidarity and belonging. The second impact of simultaneous discourse is social pluralism. This is described as everyone speaking at once, yet fitting together in a kind of harmony. While individuality is valued, no one person is more important than the other. The final impact is social domination. In this case one voice is louder than the others and the others work in harmony accordingly. The ideas are only meaningful in relation to the whole by supporting it. This may be more of a leading role but can also cause tension (van Leeuwen 2012:323). Overall, music has the power to affect the masses with simultaneous conversation.

Music as a tool for protest

Leone (2012) studied the effects of music discourse specifically on protest. Using the case study of the 2009 presidential elections in Iran and noted some important trends in the way music played a role in the citizen-government relationship. He explains a ban on music and ways
of producing music in 1979 was put in place because revolutionary leaders saw music as a drug and a threat to the country and their youth. This piece of history was then reflected in the musical protests of 2009 in which young people sang and chanted. He claims this strategy proved to be especially effective because it was so paradoxical. The very youth they were worried about were doing exactly what they were afraid of 30 years later (Leone 2012:348). As individuals, musicians have long believed they could change the world with their compositions from classical composers of years ago to today (Attali 1985:11-12). Change through music while has not necessarily played a central role in American culture, however perhaps it is innovative enough now to become a useful tool.

**Music, Parody and Framing**

While music is a creative medium to express grievances of a social movement, framing using parody is going to be what determines if it is effective or not. Because of women’s persistence role as sexualized objects, parodying music with that theme risks vilifying men. However, using videos to continue ideas presented in the lyrics further amplify the message that is being expressed. For those who may not be familiar with issues, as stated earlier, parody makes understanding them easier to digest. When presented in a catchy and familiar tune, it is more easily relatable for bystander publics. Humor in this case is also particularly important. While the presenters use movement-savvy language and real ideas to explain serious issues, humor makes the issues more accessible. The more understandable and accessible the problem is, the more likely mobilization will take place.
PART III: METHODOLOGY

While music is a creative medium to express grievances of a social movement, framing using parody is going to be what determines if it is effective or not. So with feminists responding to “Blurred Lines” we have to determine what frames they are using and if they are relatable enough to resonate with different audiences. Because of some of the subject matter revolving around gender roles, we have to ask if they could be vilifying men. Is the message accessible for non-feminist audiences? Does humor amplify their message or harm it? And most importantly, is parody an effective tool for combating rape culture in pop music? In order to answer these questions, I conducted a multi-method study. First, I completed an analysis of the controversy in the media behind both the original video and the parodies and did a content analysis of the problematic themes of the original song. Second, in order to get a better understanding of the intent of the parodies compared to what they accomplished, I interviewed Olivia Lubbock who was a leader in creating the Auckland Law Revue Girls’ parody “Defined Lines.” Third, I conducted a focus group of feminists around the ways in which the parody resonated with them. Finally, using some of the themes from the focus group I created a survey for a wider mixed audience to measure how the general public might receive the parody.

Media Study

It is important to understand that controversy behind “Blurred Lines” was not immediate. Therefore I conducted a brief study of how the song’s portrayal in the media changed as well as how the parodies were presented in the media as well. I did a simple Google search of the parodies and original song and manually counted 25 pages of articles from each month to see when popularity spiked for each. This also gave me the groundwork to create a timeline
including when each parody came out. Then I analyzed randomly selected articles for language surrounding each version to compare when controversy began and how it was portrayed to the public, and especially how the parodies were received by the media.

*Interview with Parody Creators*

In order to understand the effectiveness of the frames used in the feminist parodies of “Blurred Lines,” I reached out to the Auckland Law Revue Girls: the creators of the most viewed and therefore most popular with the media video, “Defined Lines.” With close to five million views, it was more popular than all the other videos combined. My contact and one of the directors of the video Zoe Ellwood directed me to her co-director Olivia Lubbock. Per their request, our interview took place over email since they live in New Zealand and decided the time difference made a phone interview too complicated (see transcript in Appendix A). My questions focused on how the idea of making the video manifested, the intentions of the video, and their feelings regarding how it was received by the public and the media.

*Feminist Focus Group*

In order to understand how the parody resonated with feminists, I conducted a focus group of self-identifying feminists (see transcript in Appendix B). The goal was to discuss how movement adherents respond to the parody and to speculate about what bystanders may feel about the parody as compared to the original. Comparing Ms. Lubbock’s interview about their intentions and ideas to the feminist group could paint a picture of whether or not their intentions were expressed well and if the frames they used were effective. The discussion that took place in the focus group therefore was a guide for designing a survey for non-feminists about their reactions which I will discuss the results of later.
Recruitment for the focus group began through personal knowledge of students that either identified as feminist or were active in the Gender and Women Studies (GWS) Department. I emailed several students I knew from GWS classes we shared and then asked other GWS professors for recommendations of students to contact who might want to participate. In addition, I put an ad on my Facebook page to solicit volunteers. The ads mentioned the purpose of the group and that pizza would be served to any participants. I received RSVPs from several students resulting in a focus group consisting of seven students: six women and one man. Four students had responded to emails from professor recommendations and three to the Facebook ad. While this method for recruiting was effective, about half of the participants turned out to be students I knew fairly well which seemed to help the level of comfort and honesty during the discussion. However, at times there seemed to be too much comfort as the conversation went off topic frequently. This level of acquaintance also may have enabled a level a bias in the participants I knew. Many of them know my personal philosophy and have history (though not extensive) so often they would direct comments to me without regard for other participants that might not know of our past personal conversations. Being a small school however, this may have been difficult to avoid. There was a wide variety of backgrounds, though. Despite my knowledge of most of the participants, only two knew each other so there was great room for debate and learning from each other and conversations before we actually began the session.

After filling out a brief questionnaire about participant backgrounds, the entire discussion lasted about 45 minutes. We began with an introduction of the participants and my goal for the study which explained that I was looking for their reactions to the video in order to construct a survey for non-feminists that focused on the themes and opinions they discussed. Next we viewed the parody video “Defined Lines” by the Auckland Revue Girls. Following the video I
led a semi-structured discussion that was recorded. I also recorded a few written notes with consent from participants. All names used are pseudonyms to protect identities.

As stated, a total of seven participants were present: six women and one man from a convenience sample. The purpose was exploratory in order to understand their reactions and critiques to the parody. All were seniors from varying disciplines. Two of the women had majors in the sciences, one in psychology, one in art, and the male student and another female were active students in GWS. While all identified as feminists, only the latter two students were versed in feminist academia. As one student noted in our introductions, the other five were “hobby feminists” meaning they were up to date on terminology, ideology, and current events but received their information from other sources: mostly the internet. During introductions, I asked everyone to share a part of feminism or feminist they feel particularly strongly about. Four students cited feminism in the media as the part of feminism that most interests them. Others cited trans-rights, work place rights for women, feminism and Christianity, and gender stereotypes. One participant, Marie, identified as rather new to including “feminist” in her identity, but was particularly eager to learn from the others and get involved. This variety proved to make for an interesting and rich discussion about the parody video and the possibilities behind it. Some limitations were present however; considering all but one of the participants were female there was a lack of diverse male perspective. The fact that only two of the students were active in GWS also may have limited discussion to avoid any kind of feminist theory or social movement theory.
**Survey**

The final step in measuring frame resonance was to assess the perceptions of a more non-feminist population, or the bystander public. Using key themes discussed in the focus group I designed the survey around the issues the focus group thought of as important (see survey tool in Appendix C). The goal of the survey was to measure held attitudes of rape culture and build an idea of how a bystander public would receive the video and if the frames resonated the same way as they did with the feminists.

The survey was constructed using common themes found in the focus group. Questions prompted reactions to the videos as well as a section from the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale called “She’s asking for it” to determine whether the likelihood that students would have bought into the rape myths presented in the original video (McMahon & Farmer 2011; Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald 1999). Using polls from Ms. Magazine and PollingReport.com as models, I constructed questions regarding political affiliation to determine conservativism/liberalism in respondents as well as if they identified as a feminist. Respondents were prompted to answer demographic questions and reveal their knowledge of “Blurred Lines” as well as rate their opinions on the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale before watching the parody “Defined Lines.” After they were asked short-answer questions surrounding their opinions and reactions.

Because the survey was meant to measure if the video resonated with a non-feminist audience, it was distributed multiple ways in hopes of getting diversity. An email was sent to all Sociology and Anthropology majors, male students on the baseball team, as well as a link shared on my personal Facebook page.
CASE IV: FINDINGS

Case Study of “Blurred Lines”

In this section, I will first give a brief analysis of the release of “Blurred Lines.” Second, I will explain reactions to the single and include a timeline of when the parodies emerged. I will also give an overview of how parodies were received by the media. Lastly, I will analyze the lyrics as well as the video for “Blurred Lines.”

Release

With a catchy melody, a rap bridge and sexy lyrics like “I know you want it” and “Blurred Lines” performed by Robin Thicke featuring Pharrell and T. I. was released in March of 2013 followed by music video only weeks later. Popularity peaked that summer when Billboard declared it “Song of the Summer.” Overall, the song held the number-one spot on the Billboard Hot 100 for 13 weeks (Trust 2013). Judging from the number of articles written about it in a simple Google search, its peak month was July. Also about that time, people slowly began speaking out against the song and its questionable themes. The unrated version of the music video on VEVO was viewed over sixty-two million times within the first year of its release.
Reception and reviews of “Blurred Lines”

Despite phrases like “boob-laden,” “cocky,” and “cheesy” rape themes remained an unimportant undertone until the late summer (Payne 2013; Harris 2013). One particular review on Spin.com actually joked about how people will find the song offensive, when really it is consensual flirtation (Harris 2013). However unnoticed, few feminist activists spoke out almost immediately after the song’s release, criticizing it for its “rapey” nature but most articles were still positive up until the end of the summer. The Guardian reported that only a few weeks after the song was released by Thicke, a blogger branded it the “rape song” and shortly after that, The Daily Beast called it “rapey” which then became the buzzword for the media when describing the controversy (Lynskey 2013). With the chorus containing the lyrics “you know you want it,” the issue of consent entered the forefront. Concerned student unions at universities began banning the song, with the first being Edinburgh University in September 2013. Two months
later, *The Guardian* reported that they were only one among over 20 other UK universities to ban the song (Lynskey 2013).

The music video’s director, Diane Martel, received a lot of criticism, according to NPR, for the way women were objectified, especially considering her own gender (Powers 2013). In contrast to the popularity of the video, the album itself, also called “Blurred Lines,” received very mixed reviews. Some were scathing and others were raving. One reviewer at Rolling Stone dubbed it “the worst song of this or any other year” (Sheffield 2013). And while those who did not like tended to mention that it was creepy at the least, others admitted the issues but still liked it anyway. Like NPR when they proclaimed that Thicke had “an oily charm, but with the right material, is by no means off-putting” (Tucker 2013). On Metacritic.com, a site that compiles reviews from critics and users, critics favored “Blurred Lines” nine to one. In August, a possible copyright violation surfaced as Marvin Gaye’s family alleged that Thicke’s song sounded a little too similar to Gaye’s “Got to Give It Up.” Also in August, the VMA’s were broadcast, bringing the song even more attention as Miley Cyrus twerked her way across the stage with a foam finger while performing “Blurred Lines” with Thicke. While much of the media focused on Cyrus, the song was still getting attention and was now associated with a popular and controversial event.

The most criticism however was towards Thicke for the song’s main hook, “I know you want it.” With the radio version probably being the most well-known, criticism against these lyrics picked up momentum among sociologists, feminist groups and colleges alike. In order to bring the rape themes to light, projects sprung up all over the internet. Sociological Images from the website *The Society Pages* featured a story about an online photo exhibit called “Project Unbreakable.” The story placed the photos of people holding words their rapists said to them
alongside the lyrics of “Blurred Lines” to emphasize the nature of the song. For some of the lyrics, the quotes from the rapists were almost identical (Koehler 2013). Other activists made attempts to reclaim the song entirely. Feminist groups and individuals put their creativity to use by rewriting Thicke’s songs to counter his original idea and then take the protest one step further by recreating the video. Many simply used role-reversal to make their point, putting half naked men in the place of the half-naked women in the original video.

*Activists respond with parodies*

Actress Melinda Hughes was the first to make one of these parody videos. She uploaded her version called “Lame Lines” to YouTube in July. Her version only appeared in articles or blogs a couple of times despite having over 400,000 views. Her version stayed true to the original using role reversals, “#DOUCHE” instead of “#THICKE” and had mostly-naked men performing many of the same tasks the women were in the original video. Her lyrics directly attacked Thicke’s most famous line with “You think I want it/I really don’t want it” and others attacking his ego or intentions with “But then you try to rape me/and that’s why I’m gon’ call you douchebag.” And while Hughes’ version did get some attention, it was not until The Auckland Law Revue Girls introduced their parody that the issues surrounding the original exploded into popular culture because of how directly it contrasted the original. Their lyrics focused on independence with lines like “You think that you're so slick/Let me emasculate ya! /Because your precious dick/Can't beat my vibrator/We're feelin' the frustration/From all the exploitation/Prepare for your castration.” According to their YouTube channel, their version was uploaded on August 30th, 2013—just after the VMAs and still in the midst of the song’s popularity. Only four days later, despite support from Auckland University and viewed over 450,000 times, YouTube removed “Defined Lines” for being “inappropriate” (Battersby &
Denham 2013). It was restored by the next day and shared by popular young adult site, College Humor, while the media like Huff Post and The Independent reported on its deletion and included comments from the creators themselves (Gray 2013; Battersby & Denham 2013). The question of what was appropriate about Thicke’s video in contrast to “Defined Lines” was at the forefront, and rape culture became a buzzword for the media as they asked “is this ok?” and activists continued to prove why it’s not. A few more videos were made after this controversy but never gained the same attention “Defined Lines” did. The song still remains rather popular and played frequently on the radio despite the objection from feminists.

Content Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>If you can't read, from the (D) I hate these blurred bring that ass up to</td>
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<td>Maybe I'm going deaf I know you want it (x3) (E) Had a bitch, but she</td>
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<td>[HOOK] (B) OK, now he passin' through</td>
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The song starts with a catchy funk beat, but the lyrics which may seem innocent and fun at first sound more like unwanted advances after a couple of listens. He states “if you can’t read from the same page/maybe I’m going deaf/maybe I’m going blind/maybe I’m out of my mind” (A). So from the beginning its clear there is some disagreement about what exactly is going to happen between Thicke and the presumed woman he is after. Thicke then reduces the woman to an animal saying “Okay now he was close/tried to domesticate ya/but you’re an animal/baby it’s in your nature/just let me liberate you” (B). Not only is the woman now just an animal, but she is also controlled by men and can only be liberated by a man (Thicke). It is also clear this is the beginning of the persuasion to get her to sleep with him. The song goes to the chorus of “I know you want it/cause you’re a good girl” meaning she is too shy to admit she wants to sleep with Thicke and she can still be a good girl and do it anyway (C). “I hate these blurred lines” is actually when it becomes clear the lines are not blurred: she does not want it, and Thicke cannot comprehend that she does not, insinuating she is playing hard to get when in reality, no usually means no (D).

The most sexually violent part of the song is the rap section near the end when T.I. comes in. Part nonsensical, part graphic, the intent is clear only seconds in: “Yeah, had a bitch, but she ain't bad as you/So hit me up when you passing through/I'll give you something big enough to tear your ass in two” (E). With visions of rape or rough sex and also degradation with his choice
to use “bitch” he finishes the rap only a couple lines later with: “He don't smack that ass and pull your hair like that/So I, just watch and wait for you to salute and choose this pimp'/I’m a nice guy, but don't get confused, this pimpin’”\textit{(F)}. Pimps bring to mind sexual abuse but in this context it is supposed to be sexy somehow which is problematic. And despite a visual of rough sex including hair pulling, spanking, and pain, he claims he is a “good guy” to parallel the “good girl” line in the chorus. Finally the song leads into the last chorus with “do you like it hurt?/Does it hurt?” \textit{(G)}. Thicke seems to dance around the consent part and play into more of a rough sex fetish but upon closer look, the song is pressuring someone into sex they seem to not want.

Along with the sexually violent lyrics, the music video itself is blatantly sexual, with the original version featuring topless models being ogled by fully-clothed Pharrell, T.I. and Thicke. The more “PG” version featured the models in very tight nude-colored bras and panties, leaving very little to the imagination. The beginning of the original video involves the camera zoomed in on a model, only to pan out revealing the word “no” written on her backside. Then it shifts over to T.I. who sings “I hate these blurred lines!” Sex is blatantly a major theme as there are girls in a bed with Thicke, they are naked and he is in a suit. The rest of the video continues with the fully-dressed men standing around while the mostly-naked models act as accessories around them. Touching, dancing and playing with each other. Sometimes the women push them off playfully playing on the “blurred lines” idea and the songs strong theme of persuasion to do things you may not want. There are odd themes of fetishism in the video with the naked women playing with a goat, a stuffed dog, toy cars and other objects. The objectification is clear as the men stand around lip-synching while the women appear as accessories: they dance on them, around them touch them and look at the camera all while the men do nothing. A toy car rolls down a woman’s back as if she were part of the toy; T.I. enthusiastically brushes one of the women’s
hair as she sits there doing nothing. It is clear the women are merely there for the men’s entertainment. As if the video was not playing on Thicke’s ego enough, “#Thicke” covers the screen numerous times and there multiple points where the camera flashes to a wall full of balloon-letters that spell out “Robin Thicke Has a Big Dick.” As if the song itself was not already perpetuating the patriarchy and male domination of sexuality, the video only amplified these ideas making the ideas of rape culture even more clear.

Interview with Parody Creator

Intentions

Ms. Lubbock began by saying their group did not realize how problematic the song was at first and simply thought of it as another catchy pop tune. However, when pressed to come up with a skit for their school’s comedy sketch show, Auckland University Law Revue, Ms. Lubbock came up with the idea to do a gender swap parody video, realizing it would be funny but also have a message after reading commentary online about how awful the lyrics were. Significant for the show itself, the sketch would also be the first female-led parody for the show.

The video was not intended as an activist response, as it was meant for their student comedy show, but it was intended as a critique of the original. Their target audience was meant to be their peers, but after uploading their parody and exploding into the media, feminist activists appeared to have appropriated the video for their own cause. The video was reposted on feminist/activist sites like Jezebel and The Society Pages as a tool to start a discourse on what feminism means and the problematic themes behind the original song.
Resource Mobilization

Resource mobilization “emphasizes the importance of structural factors, such as the availability of resources to a collectivity and the position of individuals in social networks” (Klandermans 1984:583). In other words, it is exactly as it sounds: using your resources including money, social networks, and positions in life to further your movement. Lucky for the Auckland Revue Girls, among their group they had many resources to produce their video. They spent little money in the process—only about four-hundred dollars. Ms. Lubbock acknowledged how lucky they were that two friends of theirs offered their skills: one a free session recording in his studio, the other his filming and editing skills. The only cost came with a hired studio to help with the background and props/costumes, and was covered by money raised by the Revue as part of the comedy show. Because of the fact that as students, they were generally most biographically available, and also their participation in extracurriculars like the Law Revue allowed them free time to complete the video—and in only a few days. Actually filming was not hard, she said. All four girls are good friends so it was easy to mimic the suggestive behavior of Robin Thicke and TI in the video. It was important to the group that they resemble the original as much as possible. It took about 5 months from being an idea to being published on YouTube on August 31, 2013.

Frame Amplification by Media

Initial reactions to the video were positive. Since it was meant for a student audience at the comedy sketch, they were well supported by their classmates and the school. Ms. Lubbock said, “The University and Law School were really supportive. We've been asked to write a couple articles for university-affiliated publications, including the Law School's alumni
magazine. I think the University likes to see its students using their education to speak out for a positive social purpose.” The video also unexpectedly made its way to the mainstream media. Local media in New Zealand were very supportive and Ms. Lubbock attributes this to the fact that they are a fairly liberal country adding, “I think that speaks volumes about how [New Zealand] values female empowerment and equality. After all, we were the first country to give women the vote!”

Frame amplification occurred as the media continued to allow creators to clarify and reinforce the message as they distributed it (Benford & Snow et al. 1986:469). After the video was removed, the media continued to reach out to the Revue Girls, public reaction varied from threatening and hateful comments on YouTube, to educators taking this as an opportunity to teach students about rape culture. Ms. Lubbock explained,

It was really cool to see men and women not only agreeing with the messages, but to see how it was empowering them in their own lives. We received quite a few emails from people from around the world telling us about their reaction to the video. The most amazing one came from a staff member at a university who had held a meeting concerning sexual assault on campus for the members of the hall of residence she worked at - first she had showed the students the original Blurred Lines video, which the students were all laughing and smiling to. She then showed them our video, and the mood was somber, some students were even crying. It was incredibly humbling to know that our video could be used for a positive purpose such as raising awareness about sexual assault. Other backlash was negative as she explained she was suddenly made aware of Men’s Rights Activist groups because of the hateful comments on YouTube. However, the positive feedback was so overwhelming she said she quickly stopped bothering with the negative and could not think of any specific comments that stood out to her.
Frame Resonance

The Auckland Revue Girls were also aware of the problems with their video and the issues it would bring up. It was effective because it so closely resembled the original video but also was opposite enough so that it highlighted exactly the problematic sections of the first. However, the lyrics which she mentioned multiple times in our interview like “let me emasculate you, it’s time for your castration” were drastic and some people found them offensive. But like she emphasizes, the point of the video is to draw attention to the way women are treated as sex objects and completely disrespected. She does admit that if she had known the video would go viral there are some aspects like some of the more extreme lyrics that she might change.

However, Ms. Lubbock accurately states that no matter if this was merely an exaggeration to make a point or not, people are going to be upset when standing up for something like feminism. She concluded our interview after I asked her about using parodies as a form of protest with a very thoughtful opinion that I think especially applies to my generation—the main consumers of these videos:

The most effective types of protest are those that catch people off guard. If you can hook people in with comedy and present your message in a way that's funny and appealing, it's probably more likely to be picked up by your audience. We definitely weren't making a protest with our video at the time it was made, but there are a lot of examples out there on the web of music video parodies being used as a medium for social activism. In an age where people are kind of apathetic about social issues, maybe this is a new way of getting people interested?

The Revue Girls did not set out to start a movement against Robin Thicke’s song; however they accidentally started a conversation that went beyond their target audience at their school. Their intentions were not impossible as Ms. Lubbock recognized that they simply wanted to catch people’s attention in order to make them think about this song that even they themselves liked at first. The framing devices they used focused on diagnostic framing and frame vilification. They
made very clear what the problem was—objectification of women, women’s body issues, sexual harassment, rape—and stopped short of offering a way to fix it. Instead simply hoped it would start a conversation. The vilification was also clear in the way they objectified men and used exaggerated lyrics about the castration and bigotry of men for what they do to women. However, this is most likely the cause for its removal from YouTube suggesting that while parodies are an innovative tool for activism, it is also risky. While the Revue Girls believe the video does seem to have been effective in creating a discourse, the question remains about whether it was actually the controversy around YouTube that made it so popular and not necessarily the message. Ms. Lubbock did not speak to this question but I think it is important to keep in mind when assessing the impact and the way people were exposed to the video.

*Feminist Focus Group*

The first section of these findings will focus on the positive aspects of the parody video, “Defined Lines.” I will discuss the ease of technology as a medium for protest, its effectiveness as a tool for consciousness raising and finally how it can help adherents engage in consensus mobilization. The second part of these findings will note the negative aspects and concerns brought up by the focus group. Concerns about the parody included the video perhaps going too far, possibly vilifying men and lacking in prognostic framing.

*Initial reactions: humor with a message*

Initial reactions of the group were vocalized during the viewing, before I even asked the group their thoughts. Most of them laughed at the same parts. For example, there is a scene in which one of the women is squirting a can of whipped cream into one of the male model’s mouth while the lyrics are saying “I don’t want you to come on my face.” Everyone erupted in laughter
at this. Other parts they seemed to think were funny included a close up of one of the underwear-clad male models being spanked by a woman, a man in an apron on all fours, and one man on a leash held by a woman.

I opened the focus group discussion by asking for their initial reactions. Fred thoughtfully reflected on what made it funny: “It’s almost funny because it’s something you don’t see all the time. And when men take on that role, it’s very humorous. And it just goes to show how separated we are from that, form that possibility that it becomes humorous to us.” The other participants expressed their agreement. The reason why it was funny was because the roles were reversed, disrupting what we normally would expect. More importantly, they said the humor makes them think. Marie stated that initially she thought it was funny but then realized that they were really also telling the truth about the way women are treated: “but that’s the image of women. That’s me” she related. So it was the humor in the parody that got their attention and kept them engaged, but then also made them think about the implications and the message the parody was trying to convey. Janet lauded the video for this reason, saying it is funny but with lyrics that speak about sex crimes; these issues are relevant especially to college campuses where sexual assault is a major issue. “That’s a really serious thing for any college campus and for any bigger cities” she stated “and that is the message [here] that was ‘haha-funny’ but I’m also glad they have that in there.”

The focus group began to unpack the message of the video fairly quickly. Janet addressed the theme of rape culture and how the video is saying that just because a woman acts or dresses a certain way does not mean she is “asking for it”—which completely subverts the main message of the original video. In response to the comment, Marie asked why the parody was not popular like the original, despite the message in the parody actually saying something about society
rather than perpetuating something problematic. Overall, they seemed to come to a consensus that the main message was that women should not be degraded, that what is happening to the men in the video actually happens to women and is not funny but actually a really serious problem.

_Catchy and clear: “They’re being super blunt.”_

One word they used to describe how the message was delivered often was “blunt.” I found this a little surprising since humor seemed to be a main theme. However, the focus group seemed to feel that the humor was actually what made the message clear. As Fred stated, the fact that the roles were so obviously switched is what would tip people off to their intended message. The original “Blurred Lines” seems normal, he pointed out, because we are used to seeing male dominance, hyper sexualized women and the roles they take on particularly in music videos. He stated, “It would take a specific population—a smaller population—of people to realize there’s something wrong with that video” meaning the objectification, sexual harassment and gender role reversal. However, he continued, in this parody anyone will notice something is strange because the roles are so blatantly switched and exaggerated making this video the “more strange one.” So therefore the message became clear to the group: if it seems so wrong to have men in these roles, why do we allow women to be constantly put in that exact position? The parody dramatizes this question, but consequently makes you consider what is wrong.

_Consciousness raising_

For the group personally, they all felt that the video was extremely effective for other feminists. In fact, all of the participants agreed that they would share the video for their friends and family to see. Marie talked about how she wants to show her younger sister the parody
because she is at vulnerable age as a young teenager. She was adamant about showing her the reality of growing up as a woman in a culture that consistently demeans her. “It’s not going to stop in two years. It’s going to be something that she’ll be living with” and it is something she wants her sister to be able to recognize and talk to her about. As feminists, they shared her feelings and emphasized the fact that it is mostly effective because they are most likely to be interested in viewing the video; feminists are the ones going to click on it, share it, and try to start a conversation. They concluded the video stands as a solid consciousness raising tool. It brings awareness easily as stated earlier, and is funny and light-hearted so that people may actually be interested. In addition, it appeals to feminists who would be willing to spread it around and increase momentum to bring awareness to rape culture in music.

*Frame Amplification: “It’s more than just a video.”*

Frame amplification is the clarifying and reinforcement of the message, and in this parody, the humor factor seems to be what amplifies the message and distinguishes the original from this parody (Benford & Snow et al. 1986:469). The humor is what deems Robin Thicke’s version offensive, and this one a PSA. Janet states,

So in this one, they’re like making fun of all the concepts and everything, and in that one it’s completely serious about how sexual it is and how it’s so sexual to women. Where this one is like a joke. They’re throwing around fake money, eating cake, having a good time and being like “fuck you” but like in all seriousness they view women that way. In other words, the original video is more disturbing because Robin Thicke and his crew are completely serious about their objectification and harassment of women because as men, they know what women want. They know women are just good girls who secretly really “want it” and are afraid to admit it; it is up to Thicke and his group to bring their desires out. And whatever humor they might be intending to have is lost in the coercive undertones. Laura brought up a
song by Jennifer Lopez who tried to make a serious video but with roles reversed so that she was the center with hypersexualized men around her. Jenn pointed out, women can try to reverse the roles but “the power structures totally different” and therefore does not have the same threatening feeling as Thicke’s video. In the parody however, you can tell they are intending to be funny and overdramatic. Men are not objectified or abused in nearly the same capacity as women are in real life so to see them in that lesser role that women usually occupy is much less threatening and often times funny because the power difference is not reversed as Fred had stated at the very beginning of the discussion. While the women in the video are in control of the men, in real life this is still not true.

Consensus Mobilization

Consensus mobilization is a process in which a movement tries to gain agreement on its viewpoints (Klandermans 1986). The group spent a lot of time theorizing which groups the consensus would include and which it may alienate. Laura believed that the video brings up some uncomfortable points and because of that would bring people out of their comfort zones and make them think. At that point in the discussion the controversial “Men’s Rights Activists” were brought up. Sarah stated that for people like that who are against feminism and do not even believe in the problems in the first place, the video would do nothing or even alienate them. But she followed up by saying that it is effective for feminists “because we’re the ones going to click on it and talk about it” which is crucial to getting the message out and beginning that discourse. Carol emphasized that we cannot just think about the two extremes of MRAs and feminists. How would the people in between be effected by the video? The video is accessible and she thought that the humor may be an “easy way to digest a serious issue” and be a real tool in bringing awareness to those who were either uneducated about these issues at all or at some tipping point
in their perceptions. Additionally, Jenn agreed saying that the language is easy enough for anyone, even non-feminists, to understand the message. She pointed specifically at the fact that they spell out sexual harassment by saying “You can’t just grab me…that’s a sex crime.” Therefore, for bystander publics, it is accessible for them enough so that they could be inspired to become adherents.

The medium of a YouTube video was critical to the discussion about the video’s effectiveness. Janet stated it is an incredibly fast and easy way to start the discourse, and therefore makes it more likely people will do it. When all someone has to do to fight for a cause is to click a button, it is more accessible for anyone to become an adherent. Fred in particular had stated during introductions that his area of interest in feminism revolved around the media. Therefore, he felt very strongly that social media like YouTube being “an amazing tool” however he also felt that because it is so easy to get the word out, it is also risky because people can take the issue or the message to the extreme. Laura also noted that this parody is not the first way feminists have tried to get the word out, citing Beyoncé’s use of a TEDtalk soundbite in her song “Flawless.” Our generation is using popular culture as a medium to convey social messages and it ranges from powerhouse celebrities like Beyoncé to students like the Revue Girls. Because sharing videos is so easy, and fast, anyone can use it as a tool as Janet emphasized. She noted that videos that speak about feminist issues allow girls to cope with what they are experiencing in society and have a conversation about it. She cited one example of a time when she shared a video she found to one of her classes so they could talk about it. Marie talked about showing her sister as an educational tool. For millennials, this medium of videos on social media is most accessible and allows for innovation like parody, with minimal physical risk to the person interested in sharing.
Negative Effects

In this last section of the focus group findings, I will discuss the concerns of the focus group surrounding the possible negative impact of the parody video. First, I will present their ideas that the nature of the video may be counterproductive by vilifying feminists. Their second concern plays off this idea in that they believed its greatest risk was vilifying men. And finally, the greatest problem the group found in the video was a lack of prognostic framing, or a call to action which to them seemed to defeat the point of the parody.

“Too much” or “Spot on?”

Despite the humor, the focus group did come to a consensus that parts of the video could be very problematic. The emphasis remained on how it some of the language and objectification of men gave a kind of “eye for an eye” feel to the video as Janet and Jenn described it. Most of the participants were concerned that perhaps the strong language and images may seem like a mere stab back at the problem and actually hurt its message and the argument of feminism. To illustrate, the line “let me emasculate you” did not sit right with Janet who expressed her concern that it defeats the point of countering misogyny. She argued that feminism is about equality and that line in particular tries to bring men down, which is not what feminism fights for. Laura agreed and mentioned they also said “castration” and especially did not like the part where one of the men, still in his underwear, is on all fours with a leash that has a woman holding the other end. Overall, most of the group felt that some of the images and lyrics were too extreme to the point where it could hurt the main message of the video.

Interestingly, Carol actually countered some of these points by suggesting that we should think less about what these women were doing but more about why. Of course they are not being
serious about castrating men, but it is not misandry they are promoting. “The truth is, most feminists are fighting for equality. And I think we would all agree that the patriarchy hurts men, too…These types of things they’re parodying are not feminist ideas. They’re actually very much patriarchal ideas.” In other words, Carol seemed to think that men are already being hurt by the patriarchy and the women acting out how they are treated on men is problematic, but it is important to realize that it is also happening. Her idea sounded as though they were fighting less for feminism and more against the patriarchy. But as Fred pointed out, either way the light in which all of this is portrayed is not something that could be easily understood or accepted. He claimed the video may be too radical which is critical because it could “scare men away from having that conversation” and also more conservative women. But Carol disagreed and noted that perhaps radicalism is the way to go. She felt that sometimes feminism tries to cater too much to men and worries too much about including them that it may not necessarily get the message across. Therefore the video might be more effective because it is problematic.

Frame Vilification: “Using [Thicke] as a facet.”

During this conversation, I tried to play devil’s advocate by pointing out that in some light the video could just be funny and the problematic bits are not so because they are in jest and trying to make a point. Oddly enough they seemed to agree despite the earlier discussion. This video was comparatively better because the original was “borderline pornography” as Fred observed. It was agreed upon that the original was problematic for many reasons including the nudity, objectification and rape themes, but also because they saw Robin Thicke as problematic. When asked if the video was taking a stab at Robin Thicke, all agreed that if people saw this parody as a personal attack on Thicke, they would be completely missing the point. He was just a part of the problem, and that is what the video was getting at. Fred spoke about how sex sells and
that is what is disturbing about the success of Thicke’s video but the point of the parody and the role reversal presented was to point out that ideology—not to call out Thicke’s personal philosophies since there is no way to know that. The problematic images poked fun at Thicke but as Carol concluded “This [parody] is just using him as a facet.”

*Lacking prognostic framing: “Just doing the problem, no solution.”*

The group came to a consensus on a couple of things regarding the impact of this video: first, it is a great conversation starter and it would definitely resonate with adherents and sympathetic bystanders. More importantly, their other conclusion was that it has a lot of shortcomings. There is no sort of prognostic framing; instead the parody is limited to simply diagnosing the problem, and for non-feminists set in their ways this video would not even appeal to them. In other words, it is an effective tool for consciousness raising but does not go as far as to encourage any type of action mobilization.

However, the focus group was very insistent that the video had a glaring flaw. As interesting as it is to raise consciousness, it does not call for mobilization. As Fred summed up, “What lacks in this video and what lacks in a lot of media that challenges the gender stereotypes and the sexism and the patriarchy, is that there is an attempt at humor, but there’s not a call to action. Hardly ever. And that’s what’s missing.” Of course there are people who will think it is funny and get the ideas, but after the video ends, then what? For someone who feels strongly about the video and may want to do something has no resources to do so, nor would they even know where to start. According the focus group, this part is crucial in actually changing the culture. It is good to talk about it; in fact they said it is very important to begin that conversation. However, in order for anything to happen, the parody needs to go further. All we are left with at
the end is why we should do something but not what or how. Laura compared it to comedy shows today that parody the news or make into satire like “The Daily Show” or “The Colbert Report.” She said, “These issues are brought up and they’re talked about and funny things are said about them and then it’s like ‘Oh our time slots up! Have a good day!’ And I can see why it’s funny, but at the end of the day, what has changed? No one’s opinion is changed, it’s just funny.” While humor helps, it is not the answer. And in the opinion of the focus group, this reigns especially true for non-feminists. A direct parody points out the problems, draws attention and begins a discourse, but it does not attempt to fix the problem which should really be the goal.

Survey Analysis

In this section, I will discuss the findings of the survey. First I will give a brief overview of the backgrounds of the participants. Then I will discuss their initial reactions to the video as it gave insight into the thought process of the general public. And finally, I will analyze whether or not they found the parody an effective tool to communicate ideas they might not be well-read and if they found any parts problematic as the focus group had hypothesized previously.

Demographics

Overall, the survey received 43 responses after eliminating the incomplete surveys. Sixteen respondents were male and twenty-seven were female (see Figure 1).

<table>
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<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
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Figure 2 Percentage of male and female respondents
Over about 47% identified as democratic, 28% republican and the rest were unsure (Figure 2). Although we were aiming for a non-feminist audience, a surprising 59% identified as either a “strong feminist” or “feminist.” 34% were “not a feminist” or not sure and only two respondents claimed “anti-feminist” (Figure 3). 83% knew the song “Blurred Lines” and about 75% were aware of the controversy around it. The majority of respondents rated high on the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale meaning they are less likely to accept rape myths related to the ones presented in “Blurred Lines.”

Figure 4 Self-reported level of feminism

Initial reactions of bystander public

The first question posed after having respondents watch the video asked what their initial reactions were. Interestingly, this question seemed to be hard to answer as at least seven people responded with speculation about how it might make other groups like men feel. One male stated that he tries not to be chauvinistic and one female stated her support for Emma Watson. A
handful of others simply stated what the video was doing by saying “it is a parody” or “they’re reversing roles” or used vague one-word answers like “different” or “interesting.” I coded other responses based on their explicit statement of liking or disliking the video. Therefore, 67% liked the video and about a fifth of them identifying as “not a feminist” or “not sure.” Commonly used words were “insightful,” “funny and clever,” and especially “better than the original.” 14% had negative opinions of the parody. One male said it was a waste of time, another said it seemed to be trying too hard. One interesting comment from a female student who identified as a feminist called their message “militant:” “While I consider myself a feminist, I do think people have taken the intent out of the original ‘Blurred Lines’ a bit too far out of context (although I do still find it dislikeable). I do agree with the main idea of the parody video, but I don't think there needs to be such a militant undertone to it.” Only a couple of others seemed to agree with her, saying right away that the role of men in the video was a little too much. Another female who said she was “not a feminist” said that “Guys dancing in their underwear around girls singing about sexual ‘liberation’ and ‘freedom’ is not a good way to get equality between the sexes.” Her opinion was the most well-rounded negative opinion, and a sticking point that carried over from the focus group discussion. However, she was the only one to say that this reflected negatively. Others that brought up role-reversal had a positive reaction. Over half of all respondents found the video at least “somewhat funny” which was a common theme in the initial reactions as well.

The message

I asked respondents to state what they believe the purpose of the video was and agreement on the message varied among a few different themes. The most common theme was objectification/sexualization of women. 24 responses mentioned objectification or women’s purpose as being only for sex. On male’s answer seemed to be straight from the rape myth
acceptance scale stating that, “our current society teaches men that it is okay to treat women as
sexual objects and that men can use women for sex whenever/however they please while the
blame is placed on the woman (i.e., a woman not saying no verbally and being raped, but she is
blamed for ‘not communicating’).” A female stated that the popularity of “Blurred Lines” is
“excusing” sexual harassment and objectification of women. Some stronger language was used
not only to describe Thicke but males in general such as “chauvinist” and “bigot.” One female
took issue with the way the message was conveyed but made a point about objectification:

Men on leashes dehumanizes them. I never saw the original Blurred Lines video because
the song is offensive enough, though I think the problem is that when women are
property, they are in their place. It disturbs me that when a man is in this position of
being objectified it is seen as a parody, yet when a woman is in the same position many
don't react.

Another noted that it is because of the lack of reaction that rape culture continues to permeate
popular culture. Interestingly, one female took gender out of the problem and simply said the
video “sexualizes people.”

While this was the most common theme, others did mention rape culture specifically
noting that “Women are being taught to blame themselves while we should be teaching men not
to rape.” While rape was brought up only twice by females and once by males, there was
mention of men feeling “entitled to sex” by one female and another stated that men “Guys expect
too much from girls and that deep down inside we really do wanna [sic] have sex with them.
When we don't.” One female blamed gender roles for this problem which seemed to be the
overarching theme among all responses. Men expect certain things from women while women
expect to be treated like humans but continue to be overly sexualized and objectified.
Frame resonance

I asked whether the respondents felt that the video made them want to take action and this proved to be a divisive question. Similar to the focus group, they seemed to have a hard time deciding what that meant to them. Only 46% said that it definitely did motivate them to want to take action. But 53% said it did not or that they were unsure. The following question asked them to specify what kind of action they felt they should take and there were only two people who were unsure about what kind of action they wanted to take, but felt like they should do something anyway. The rest all had rather vague answers. Two said they wanted to share the video and were among about twenty others that wanted to educate people on the toxic gender roles we place on men and women. A common response among females was simply “standing up for myself at parties when I feel a man is overstepping his boundaries,” “be proud of who I am and demand respect” and “better myself.” There was one female respondent that claimed the video made her want to “take charge of my sexuality, though not necessarily any responsibility.” She also identified as a republican and scored low on the myth acceptance scale and did not find the video funny. Compared to the other responses, hers stood out and may represent a population that would find the video problematic.

Most did not find the video offensive or problematic. Only eight said they found the video problematic and only one of those people said it was also offensive. Two claimed it was only problematic because the video did not actually do anything “except tell men to stop,” which was interesting. The rest claimed the role reversal and the sexualization of men is what ruined the message. Two others speculated about the types of people that would find it problematic, naming anti-feminists and men in particular because of the breaking of traditional gender norms.
The majority of respondents agreed that the video is a good tool for protest, with only 13% saying it was not. The ones that disagreed worried about alienating men, as four people stated. Others said that it requires some form of prior knowledge and three people said that said no was that it makes the issue too humorous. One stated its ineffectiveness was “because parody videos have a danger of downplaying the feminist argument and turning it into comedy.” In contrast, most people who said it was effective claimed that it was because it was funny. One said it made the video “memorable” and “gets them to think” and is “funny but not in a way that is disrespectful to the issues at hand.” It also was easily accessible and “a way to spread the word and educate through a more entertaining way.” Most importantly, it was such a clear contrast to “Blurred Lines” that its purpose was obviously defined, but education was where the video stopped according to this survey group.

**Summary of Findings**

Overall, between both the feminists and non-feminists, parody as a way to counter rape culture in “Blurred Lines” was an effective tool. Humor and a familiar medium like YouTube helped bring the message out in an understandable way for everyone. “Defined Lines” use of frame amplification was the driving force that ultimately made the video successful among those who favored the video. Ultimately the parody seemed to spark consensus mobilization among feminists and motivated them to want to use it for consciousness raising among their friends and families. However, among all groups in the focus group and survey it was clear the choice to demean men was a risky decision for parody creators and seems to vilify men, alienating them from a movement in which they are inherently an important part of. And finally, the biggest flaw of the parody was simply the fact there was no prognostic framing or call to action. The problem was obviously diagnosed and agreed upon by virtually all participants in this study, however at
the same time all populations were rather lost as to what to do next, even if they felt like they should act. So while the video parody was effective, it is merely the beginning of a refining process of a tool that could be very useful for feminists in the future who may want to undertake a parody as a way to protest.

SECTION V: DISCUSSION

In this discussion I will present my contributions to the theory on social movement framing and parody as well as my methodological contribution to the literature. Second, I will explain key findings of my research and how they apply to social movements and the greater idea of rape culture. And finally, I will discuss my opinions of parody based on my results and offer future directions for parody and research on this subject.

Response to Theory

Framing

My findings around framing devices really further solidify what scholars Benford & Snow have already determined: in order for a movement to succeed, there are steps leaders must take to make their frames resonate. To the disappointment of the group, the parody used in my research fell short with prognostic framing and relied too heavily on vilification to make it resonate with someone who may not care at all about these issues. Vilification, while an effective method perhaps among movement adherents, is too risky for a bystander public. Among feminists, vilifying men may be an inside joke and funny simply because it is what feminists are stereotyped to do, like the focus group discussed. But this did not apply to all who did not identify as feminist. Therefore, social movements must understand their audiences, particularly if they are putting it into the public sphere for any population to view.
Prognostic framing also emerged in my findings as a critical aspect. Benford and Snow emphasized its importance, in fact making it the third step in frame alignment (Benford & Snow 1986:616). From my findings, it is clear that when prognostic framing is lost, the last step of motivational framing does not occur. Particularly feminists in the focus group were convinced of the movement’s message, but lacked the prognostic framing to tell them what the next step is and therefore motivational framing was lost. Without all the steps of frame alignment, action will not occur. The frame must be complete in order to resonate and include all the steps of alignment. All of the steps blend into each other and if one falls short the ones after that will also be limited, if possible at all.

Parody

With news parody as popular as it has become, music parody as a way to critique society may be the next step. It is clear that humor makes an issue more accessible. For something as serious as rape culture and it’s widely accepted and perpetuated presence in music, the humor in the parody video actually made people consider the message in this study once they realized what exactly made it funny: the fact that they are not used to seeing swapped gender roles. While exaggeration is a key aspect of parody, again it is important to know your audience or risk exaggerating to the point of offending or alienating groups. “Defined Lines” was mimicking the behavior in the original “Blurred Lines” video, however putting men on a leash was an exaggeration of the original behavior and for most of my study participants, it was too much. In fact, the parody went from critiquing society, to being the object of critique itself, taking away from the purpose.
Most importantly, my findings prove that parody does actually work to subvert a system. The parody was removed from YouTube two days after it was uploaded because of its content. Therefore, it did its job. People were upset enough by the ideas that were pointing out systematic flaws, that it was actually deemed inappropriate and taken down. But in the process, I believe its controversy brought more attention, causing it to reach an even wider audience meaning more people who normally would not care learned something about rape culture and sexism.

Methodological Contributions

Finally, the methodological contribution from my study is significant because I used multiple methods to understand the issue and answer my research questions. It is important to break down and issue from multiple angles and this study successfully accomplished this task. Obtaining different perspectives is the best way to understand anything in its entirety. An interview with parody creators provided a foundation of understating the intention of the parody. Knowing that the parody was not meant as part of a message of a wider movement was important to understanding how and why it was received by the media and then my study participants. It is also rare that you can speak directly with leaders or creators of movements or frames and understand what they were trying to do. The interview with Olivia Lubbock therefore gave me insight I normally would not have access to and gave perspective to the situation between her parody and the original.

The focus group of feminists also provided insight to the process in which parodies resonate with people. Being able to compare their responses to the intentions of the feminist creators of the parody and the way other feminists received their frames was a critical to understanding if their messages adhered with their feminist ideals. Then using the feminist
responses to create the survey allowed me to compare and contrast the messages and frames that resonated with feminists against those of the general public. All three methods allowed for a broad understanding of the controversy and the ideals of the movement. Using multiple methods allowed a deeper analysis because it filled in gaps that otherwise would have been speculation.

*Social Movements and Rape Culture*

The findings from my studies point to some of the most and least effective framing devices social movements can use. Most importantly, I think that this study emphasized how risky frame vilification can be. In the case of the Auckland Law Revue Girls, their video was not intended for the general public, but their classmates. Participants in my study tended to dwell on their use of vilification, ultimately deciding that it could potentially hurt the overall message. Therefore, if a movement is going to make something available to the public, they have to be acutely aware of their audience and even steer clear from vilification in order to avoid alienating populations. Another important finding is that prognostic framing is incredibly important and should not be overlooked. As a main complaint of participants in my research, it was clear that people want to be able to do something about the issues that upset them. To leave that out is ultimately hurting a movement. Adherents to the movement may have some idea of how to react but those who are suddenly inspired to do something need resources to tell them what to do if they feel something is necessary.

In this day and age, frame amplification may be one of the easiest and most effective ways to push a movement. Technology allows for multiple mediums including YouTube videos, but there are always Facebook and Twitter, Instagram and tons of other mediums that movements can use to amplify their message. With the goal of many to “go viral,” it is easier
than ever to get something into the public fast and far. But as stated earlier, movement leaders have to be aware of the populations their content will reach and therefore have to be careful of the frames they use.

Rape culture continues to permeate society, particularly music. And while it seems like vilifying the artist is not the best tactic, using parody that addresses the broader systematic problem is an incredibly effective option to combat rape culture. For many in my survey, it was noted that they realized the harmful themes in the original song, but did not realize just how bad it was until they watched the parody. Satirizing rape culture using the exact medium it came from therefore makes the issue more accessible and aids in understanding of what is wrong with the original themes.

*Opine and Future Directions*

In my opinion, I agreed with most of my participants in that the parody is effective for conveying ideas. But I also agree that it falls short of making a difference. Particularly with music, the system around pop music that continues to accept rape culture as an acceptable theme for a song is hard to take action against. It is not just a label or an artist, it is an entire industry that has condoned the behavior of Robin Thicke and T.I. and countless others. Therefore, while parody is creative, there needs to be something people can do to mobilize the message. It could be something as simple as putting something at the end of the parody people can read about doing something. Or making a parody around what people can do to subvert rape culture in pop music. I also understand that parody can be alienating for certain populations, especially when concerning rape culture, the potential to vilify men is great, yet men are an important part of the equation in fighting rape culture. Therefore, there needs to be a more neutral stance that should
be used in parody. A current example would be Amy Schumer’s TV show that successfully parodies multiple aspects of society in a way that men and women relate to. In order for feminism to be successful and for rape culture to be successfully protested, we need men and women. While videos and the internet are the right medium in reaching as many people as possible, the message itself also needs to be understood and accepted by as many people as possible without risk of turning people away.

With these findings I think future research could be directed at creating a set of guidelines for movements to follow when looking to create a parody. It could include how movements should avoid vilification and use technology to help amplification and that movements need a call to action. Other parodies need to be researched to determine other framing devices that are effective whether its news parody, music that is original but still parodying some greater theme, or parody TV shows. More importantly, I think the general population needs to be examined closer. Because we only used a portion of the rape myth acceptance scale, I think it would be significant to explore if people’s perceptions were changed after watching the parody video. Applying this to other issues could be important as well. While parody was effective in the case of “Blurred Lines” we need to explore how it can be improved and how it can be used for other movements to not only raise awareness, but also spark action mobilization and create a difference to counter harmful ideas that have been unchallenged or unheard otherwise.

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(http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/03/defined-lines-robin-thicke-blurred-lines-parody_n_3860969.html)


Lubbock, Olivia. 2014. Email message to author, November 19.


APPENDIX A: Interview Transcript

1. When did you decide to do take action against "Blurred Lines?" How did the idea originate?

Olivia: Our Defined Lines parody was part of a student comedy sketch show called the Auckland University Law Revue, of which Zoe and Olivia were half of the four-person directing team. Like everyone else, I think our initial reaction to Blurred Lines was just that it was a catchy pop song. Zoe came up with the idea in April to do a gender-swapped music video parody of the song for the show, which she pitched to the other directors after having read some commentary online about how the lyrics of the song promoted some pretty rapey ideas. It really put a new light on the song for us and, combined with the objectification-heavy video, it presented a great opportunity for us to use the platform of the comedy sketch show to not only produce a funny music video, but something which had an important message behind it too.

2. Why did you decide on a parody video?

Olivia: As stated earlier, the video was part of a comedy sketch show. Music video parodies are kind of a tradition for this show because they're fun to make and the audience loves them. Defined Lines was a really exciting opportunity for the Law Revue because it was also the first time a female-led music video parody had featured in the show!

3. Was technical support and style important in making the video?

Olivia: If our video has an air of professionalism about it, it's because we had some incredible people come forward and offer us their professional skills at no charge: the song was produced by Rich Bryan, a friend of one of the cast members, who works in the music business here in NZ. He kindly offered us a Sunday afternoon to come into his studio and lay down the track (thank God for autotune!). On top of that, a fellow law student Milon Tesiram, who has experience filming and editing, offered to do all our videos. Rich and Milon took the production quality of our video to a whole new level and blew us away.
In terms of style, we of course wanted to imitate Blurred Lines' distinctive aesthetic as closely as possible. We attempted this by hiring a studio and buying a few costumes and props, and also by trying to mimic the flirty behaviour of the video's stars. Given all 6 of us who appeared in the video are pretty good friends, this wasn't too hard.

4. How long did the process take (from idea to actually posting it)?
Olivia: The timeline was probably about 5 months: Zoe came up with the idea in April, but because rehearsals for the show didn't start until July and the show wasn't until August, we had to put the idea on ice for a few months, particularly because we knew we wanted Adelaide, who was in the cast and a good friend of ours, to help us out with writing the lyrics. Once rehearsals started, everything moved pretty quickly: we had the concept developed and the video roughly storyboarded in a couple of rehearsals, Adelaide wrote the lyrics in one night, the video was filmed in about 4 hours, and editing took a day or two. We then waited till after the final show to post the video on YouTube on August 31st.

5. Did it cost money and did you raise any funds from making it?
Olivia: The video was in fact pretty low budget, largely because we had Rich and Milon offer us their technical services free of charge. All in all, the only costs were $400 for the studio hire, the cost of the boys' Calvin Klein's, the cake and the whipped cream! All this was covered by the money the Law Revue raises to put on its show. We were never looking to make money out of this video, and we've been happy to license others to use it freely (with our permission) for documentaries etc. because we hope its message can help do some good in those contexts.

6. What was the purpose/what message(s) were you trying to convey?
Olivia: The video was meant to be funny and a joking take on Blurred Lines, but we did also want to use it as a platform to say some things about gender inequality and the objectification of women in society, which all 3 of us girls have perceived to be really prevalent in modern society. In particular, we were trying to emphasise the importance of respecting women for more than their appearance, but we were also critical of the attitude to sex and consent portrayed in Blurred Lines and were trying to get people to think about how those attitudes ("I know you want it" etc.) are associated with rape culture. Of course, we did this through extreme hyperbole and satire, but it has to be remembered that this was part of a student comedy show.

7. What do you think worked/didn't work in the video?
Olivia: I think we were all really surprised at how closely our video mimicked the appearance of the original Blurred Lines video, and I think this helped portray our message more clearly because it distinctly highlighted the differences between the two videos. I think if we'd known the video was going to go viral, there are a few things we would've done differently, ie. changed some lyrics to be a little less offensive outside the comedy sketch show context.

8. Do you think it resonated? Why or why not?
Olivia: I don't know whether I can say our video resonated or not. Rather, I think it's been a part of a general awakening and recognition in society to the fact that a lot of the things we accept as "normal" and "traditional" in our society are in fact, sexist and discriminatory towards women.
9. Did you see any risks in making this parody and what were they?
Olivia: The only perceived risk was perhaps the risk to our dignity! Outside the context of the Law Revue, the idea of people seeing us frolicking around with boys in underwear, brandishing vibrators, singing profanities, was a little embarrassing. But NZ is a really liberal kind of place, so it's actually been kind of a positive, rather than negative, thing for our reputations.

10. What was your target audience? Did you want the media to pick it up?
Olivia: It's a student comedy sketch show, so our target audience was really our friends and other students. That probably explains the pretty crass lyrics and behaviour in the video. We really weren't expecting this to be picked up by the media, but it was pretty cool that it was. Particularly in NZ, the media had some really positive things to say about the video and its message, and I think that speaks volumes about how NZ values female empowerment and equality. After all, we were the first country to give women the vote!

11. Did anyone from the media interview you or reach out to you at all?
Olivia: Once the video started getting hits, we were swamped by media calling us and asking us for interviews. It was bizarre and kind of crazy because none of us have any media training or experience and we really hadn't been expecting media attention at all.

12. Since you are associated with the university, how did the school respond if at all?
Olivia: The University and Law School were really supportive. We've been asked to write a couple articles for university-affiliated publications, including the Law School's alumni magazine. I think the University likes to see its students using their education to speak out for a positive social purpose.

13. Do you feel like you may have alienated anyone with your version?
Olivia: There are always going to be people that disagree with you, particularly when you're standing up for something like feminism. We tend to just shrug it off. Of course, there are some people who feel we took our message too far, eg. "let me emasculate you...it's time for your castration", and taken literally, that's a fair view, but we'd like to remind people that the video is a complete exaggeration, offensive for the sake of offensive in some places because it was part of a student comedy sketch show, and everyone knows what student humour is like.

14. How do you think men took the parody versus women?
On the whole, I think the male and female reaction was pretty similar - some men and women felt offended and turned off by the video, others thought it was great. What really surprised us was the number of men who not only found the video funny, but actually appreciated its message. Feminism just advocates for equality of women with men, most people can see that that's a positive thing for everyone.

15. Some of the comments on YouTube were pretty nasty in criticzing your video. How did you take them and how did you respond? Which stuck out to you the most?
Olivia: I gave up reading the YouTube comments pretty quickly but before I did, I was introduced to the MRA - the Men's Rights Activists. It was these comments that tended to be the most vitriolic and even violent. I guess it's important to know that those views are out there and
to try understand why, but you just have to remember that YouTube is a breeding ground for trolls and extremist views and to try not to take it personally or to heart.

16. What did you think about the positive comments?
Olivia: It was really cool to see men and women not only agreeing with the messages, but to see how it was empowering them in their own lives. We received quite a few emails from people from around the world telling us about their reaction to the video. The most amazing one came from a staff member at a university who had held a meeting concerning sexual assault on campus for the members of the hall of residence she worked at - first she had showed the students the original Blurred Lines video, which the students were all laughing and smiling to. She then showed them our video, and the mood was somber, some students were even crying. It was incredibly humbling to know that our video could be used for a positive purpose such as raising awareness about sexual assault.

17. Would you recommend parodies as a strategy of protest?
Olivia: The most effective types of protest are those that catch people off guard. If you can hook people in with comedy and present your message in a way that's funny and appealing, it's probably more likely to be picked up by your audience. We definitely weren't making a protest with our video at the time it was made, but there are a lot of examples out there on the web of music video parodies being used as a medium for social activism. In an age where people are kind of apathetic about social issues, maybe this is a new way of getting people interested?

APPENDIX B: Focus Group Transcript

El: Ok so first of all, thank you all for coming. This is for my thesis. I’m doing a study on “Blurred Lines” parodies as a case study to see if this form of protest works in countering rape culture in pop music. Your purpose in all of this is to discuss this parody video and I will take your answers and create a survey for non-feminists and see how the video resonates with them. So you will be compared to different people.

Laura: Wait I think I answered a question wrong. I don’t know if it matters…[takes questionnaire back] I have seen it. I don’t know why I put that I haven’t.

[everyone laughs]

EL: so if we could just go around the table and everyone say your name and either what you wrote for the particular area of interest in feminism or your favorite feminist.

Fred: So I’m [redacted]. Um let’s see. I love media. Media is my thing and we’re talking about media so this is really interesting. I’d say…I’m going to go with a classic. I love Gloria Steinem. I think she’s a bad ass. I love her. She’s awesome.

Sarah: I’m [redacted]. Not taking any GWS courses…I don’t know many people but I admire you [Points at JANET] I think you’re cool.
[Everyone Laughs]

SARAH: But yeah I really like the media, too. I can’t even read a book or watch something that like touches on that subject I’m like…mm can’t do that.

[Off Topic]

Carol: I’m [redacted]. I’d say I’m a hobby feminist. Like I don’t take the academic courses so I don’t know the jargon. But I’m passionate most about work place feminism and also trans rights.

JANET: that’s really specific!

CD: I guess it is…I mean I think all feminism is important.

Janet: [Redacted]. No it’s good that it’s that specific! I think my favorite feminist would be Dr. Berkland. With everything she talks about…it’s just so overbearing but welcoming at the same time. Also she confuses the shit out of me. [Laughs] Um…my biggest thing I think would also be media. Because I’m a nanny so I also see how these children are affected by songs on the radio like you know…”Blurred Lines” and it goes into their body image and how they can be. And it doesn’t just affect the females it affects the males just as much.

Janet: I’m [redacted]. I don’t really know any fancy scholar feminists so I’m going to stick with me. [Everyone laughs]. I’m just kind of like…I see a lot of things on the internet and I’m like, “I can really get behind this. Yes this is good stuff; we should be talking about this.” But media is very important in protecting young girls and how they see themselves. They need to grow up and not be afraid or be restricted by who they are. That’s really important to me. But I would like to get more into the scholarly side of things. Sometimes I don’t know what books to read though.

[Off topic]

Laura: I’m [redacted]. [off topic]. So I put on the sheet “gender stereotypes” but that’s like super broad. What I mean is like how prevalent gender in literally everything [agreeing mumbles from everyone]. [off-topic story]

Marie: I haven’t taken any GWS courses. But last term with Emily I took Christianity and sexuality and it touched on a bunch of different things so it really opened up my eyes to issues and stuff. I knew they were present and just gave a different perspective. And I like the way these conversations are going so far! I’m all in!

EL: So I’m going to show you this parody of “Blurred Lines.” Hopefully you all have heard that song a little bit.

[Plays video] [laughing]

EL: Ok let that sink in for a little bit.
EL: Here are the lyrics if you want to see the lyrics.

EL: Ok so what is your reaction? What are you thinking right now?

[Mumbling]

JENN: I thought it was funny.

[Laughing and agreeing]

EL: What parts did you think were funny? I heard you guys laughing.

JENN: Um…I liked the part when the boy is on his hands and knees and he had an apron on with a cupcake on his butt.

[Laughing]

EL: why was that funny to you?

JENN: I don’t know. The expression on his face.

FRED: It’s almost funny because it’s something you don’t see all the time. And when men take on that role, it’s very humorous. And it just goes to show that how separated we are from that, from that possibility that it becomes humorous to us.

JENN: Also just how blunt they are.

[Everyone laughs and agrees]

EL: so how did it make you guys feel?

MARIE: Initially it was really funny. But then you’re like “haha this is so funny” and then you’re like “but wait…” [Laughing] That’s like me but…the image of women, but it’s flipped.

SARAH: I guess when you’re really listening to what they’re saying you’re like “oh…” that’s not a good feeling at all.

JANET: Since I can read it…the chorus of like “don’t harass me, don’t just grab me, that’s a sex crime,” because women do get the whole “she deserved it because she was dressing like a whore and if you’re gonna dress like that then I can grab you like that.” And that’s a really serious thing for any college campus and for any bigger cities and that is the message that was “haha funny” but also like…I’m glad they have that in there.

MARIE: Why isn’t the popularity of this song as popular as the other song?
JANET: yeah like why does he think it’s cool like showing girls changed and like being raped?

CD: I haven’t seen it. I don’t care to, but I’ve heard things about it.

EL: So how do you think it compares over all to that one? Similarities, differences…

JANET: So in this one they’re like making fun of all the concepts and everything, and in that one it’s completely serious about how sexual it is and how it’s so sexual to a woman. Where this one is like a joke. They’re throwing around fake money, eating cake, having a good time and being like “fuck you” but like in all seriousness they view women that way.

FRED: that’s also very interesting in how you approached that video. Like if you had approached that video, it would take a specific population of people—a smaller population of people—to realize there’s something wrong with that video. Where with this video, anyone is gonna go “well something is off about this video, the roles are changed, it’s a little strange.” So people are more willing to come to agreement that this video is the more strange one, if you will, than the original.

EL: so what do you think its main message was?

SARAH: that it’s bad! You shouldn’t degrade women by doing anything or saying anything. Overall it’s wrong.

CD: I think specifically, too, it really addresses the discrepancy between how men react to and perceive discrimination versus women. There’s this cry of like emasculation or whatever and things of that when it’s really being treated as a human. It’s a basic thing and to say it’s emasculating or throwing a woman to too high of a standard is absurd.

JANET: Yeah I think the part that they really fell short was when they were saying “let me emasculate you.” I think that’s not the point of this stuff. We don’t want anyone to feel less than they should be.

CD: But I feel like that’s exactly what points it out. Like…it’s such…it’s a red herring I think. People argue that when women stand up for themselves and men cry that they’re being emasculated…I can’t speak as a man but its more or less infuriating when you call someone out on something and they’re like “no. I’m a man.” Like “Ok I’m not taking that from you…I can’t take that from you, it’s part of your identity.” But you can’t take being a woman from, me but I also deserve to be treated a certain way.

LAURA: I’m gonna be frank in that I don’t totally know where I stand on this. [Laughing] but um…because this reminded me of um… Has anyone seen Jennifer Lopez’s “I lu you Papi” video?

FRED: Yeah just as bad
MARIE: I’ve heard the song not the video

LAURA: Don’t watch it. It makes you want gouge your ears out first of all. But essentially it’s a similar situation. She’s on a yacht and has guys doing what women typically do in the video. So I think this parody brings up an interesting point and being super blunt by pointing out things that have been going unnoticed on people’s radar. And you think like whether it’s a song or whether it’s a video, how many times has Robin Thicke’s song played on MTV and people are like “yeah I love this song!” and they’re not really seeing it now because it’s so common. But at what point do parodies like this help? And raise the issue? And at what point do they just bring up emasculation and like “oh you’re doing the same thing back.” And what does feminism really mean at that point? Is it being angry? Or is it actually fighting for equality? And I say I don’t know where I stand on that because I think it’s an interesting way to break the silence on something that isn’t talked about all the time. I think it’s a way to force people out of their comfort zone and think different. But like…it can’t stop there. So I don’t know.

JENN: Seems kind of like “an eye for an eye” kind of thing. I think it’s better than Jennifer Lopez though I haven’t seen it.

LAURA: Don’t. [Everyone laughs]

JENN: Granted I haven’t seen it but if she’s making a video like that in all seriousness, then that’s when you get guys saying “oh well you’re doing the same thing to us” and you’re just like “yeah but you don’t get it. Like it’s a song it’s totally different.”

CD: The power structures totally different. So they’re not one for one.

JENN: And like watching a music video as one way is a lot different from being discriminated against in an everyday world. But boys on the internet… like people on the internet will be like “oh well she’s doing the same thing why don’t you call her out for treating men badly” and I feel like that’s why people are like “feminists are so whiny blah blah blah” like you don’t get it. It’s more than just a music video. It’s more than just just…

JANET: It’s more than just getting like tit for tat you need to start seeing the bigger concept behind it.

LAURA: Right and maybe this is a good platform to like bring that forward. That’s my question. Like is it a good platform or is it going to provoke people to say like “she just had him on leash and…”

[Everyone talks at once]

EL: So on that note, DO you think it’s effective?

LAURA: Well I don’t know. That’s what I say.
FRED: I think bare minimum, what it does is create a discourse and a dialogue and I think that’s important. I think that’s something that without a video like that, the conversation that we’re having about masculinity and about it means to be a man or woman or what it means to be oppressed in a patriarchal society—that whole conversation comes out. We don’t know what would happen in that conversation; otherwise we wouldn’t be having one. But it brings out the conversation which is important.

SARAH: I think that although it’s important the conversation is brought up, I don’t think it’s enough people—what is it? Men activists?

CD: MRAs yeah.

Sarah: I don’t think it’s gonna…I don’t think they’re gonna click with the video. They’ll say “oh that’s not true” and all that and I don’t see them sitting down and having a conversation about how “maybe we Sarahould change our ways.”

FRED: Yeah that won’t happen [Everyone laughs]

SARAH: So yes, I think it’s effective for feminists, because we’re the ones going to click on it and talk about it. But I feel like…[undiscernible]

EL: So you don’t think it would click as much with non-feminists?

SARAH: Slightly but not as much.

CD: I think looking at extremes it’s easy for us all to say as feminists, yeah we get it. And then you know to say an MRA is just going to reject the whole thing. But there’s a spectrum of people in between those. Like someone who isn’t educated about those things or someone who never had it brought to their attention or is on some sort of tipping point in their perception of those things. Something like this could be a really funny and easy way to digest a serious issue.

JENN: It’s kind of for like those middle of the road kind of people. I don’t expect “meninists” or MRAs to change what they are. [Laughing] One of the things…like there are other parody videos of “Blurred Lines” out there but I think this one is good just because the lyrics are in depth, they’re precise, and they’re not super academic-y but they are saying real things like “hey that’s a sex crime if you do that.” I know like there’s a pregnant lady parody or something? There’s like a pregnant lady one which is purely just funny whereas this one, it has the funniness of the visuals but the seriousness of the lyrics…like the lyrics are the thing that’s like…if you’re hearing them and you’re processing them, that’s the thing that should make you go like “oh ok. This is important.” But you’re also watching it and going like “haha that’s so silly” at the same time. So I think that’s why I think it’s a good one opposed to some of the funnier ones. It still gets to the point.

[LAURA takes conversation off-topic about Men’s Rights Activists]
EL: You guys kind of touched on it, but do you find anything problematic in this video? Like you mentioned the emasculation thing. Do you think it’s problematic?

LAURA: I think just like…the on the leash thing is too much for me.

JENN: they also said castrate and that’s a little problematic.

JANET: A lot of the feminist backlash is only when extremes of like “fuck males”…that’s why we have the stereotype of being lesbians and hating males, because people do promote ideas like that. I understand they’re trying to get a point across of like, I’m not gonna lash back and be like “you have a tiny dick.” No. Everyone deserves to have a chance and I just think… I don’t want to be a back and forth, tit for tat fighting for our rights when ti should be, “I don’t want to emasculate you, but I also don’t want you to hurt me.”

CD: The point is more why they’re doing it. Whether or not that will come across to most people I think is the issue, but I think that it’s a really important point. The truth is most feminists are fighting for equality. And I think we would all argue that the patriarchy hurts men, too by holding them to unrealistic standards. And I mean…there a sort of…this is not like an isolated idea. The types of things they’re parodying are not feminist ideas. They’re actually very much patriarchal ideas.

FRED: Yeah and I think one of the things too is that as feminists or feminism as a—we can go ahead and call it a culture. Because it is. But we see it as radical. We see it as radical most of the time and with like this…these ladies are pushing it, not entirely radical, but definitely on the line right? And the thing with being radical, we don’t do what I call “cooperative feminism” because we don’t incorporate everyone in the conversation. And there are times we isolate people out of the conversation. We have a lot of feminists who say well, you’re a man so—and trust me I get this one all the time—you’re a man, you don’t understand what it’s like. And yeah ok. I may not understand as a woman, but I want to have that conversation with you so don’t cut me out of the conversation. But people do that a lot.

JANET: Right because it’s like if I want to change it, why would I shut you out of a population that I want to understand more.

FRED: Right and vice versa.

JANET: Exactly!

SARAH: [to FRED] I know people kind of give you weird looks when you say “I’m a feminist.” And they’re like “oh. Alright…”

EL: do you feel like they’re alienating men? Especially from your perspective [to FRED]
FRED: Hmm. I feel like if you ride this train of radical feminism I think it does more hurt than help. Because you’re scaring men away from having that conversation and not only can you scare men away but you’re also scaring women away, who are more conservative women.

LAURA: and like when you’re approaching any conversation at all in life, when you start the conversation by pointing fingers and calling names, are you really gonna get…? You start a conversation and you say you’re going to castrate [name]…

[Laughing]

CAROL: I think there’s a fine line between excluding a group of people from a conversation versus pampering to them. I do hear that argument a lot like “We’ll never get anywhere if we don’t pander to male population” with feminism. And I’m the first to say that feminism is for the benefit of everyone. Like men benefit from feminism right? But that’s not why I’m primarily a feminist. Right? I’m in it for women.

JANET: right because being in it for the men…

[Everyone laughs]

CAROL: But that’s a thing though! I mean pandering and whatever. So. How far this video will reach as far as changing people ideas about things…like are these things problematic? I think things could be misinterpreted absolutely.

EL: So when I saw this the first time I was like “oh that’s funny. They’re kind of making fun of feminism and the things that men do…”

CAROL: Right.

EL: So I thought it was funny when they brought up castration and everything like “ha that’s too far.” So did you guys get the same feeling or did you just think it’s problematic?

CAROL: But I liked that part though! Because it really addresses how prevalent it is that we have certain expectations in our sex life like pornography.

FRED: True.

CAROL: So I really loved that a lot.

FRED: I think that’s extremely important when you go and just talk about the original video. Because the original video uncensored, they’re topless right? So it’s a borderline pornography.

[Conversation goes off-topic, making fun of Robin Thicke]

EL: Do you feel like it demonizes Robin Thicke? Since you brought that up?
JANET: Robin Thicke is an asshole. [Laughing]

EL: But is it taking a stab at him or something greater?

JANET: I don’t think… I don’t really think a lot of people think of it like that.

FRED: That’s a good point because here’s the thing: I’ve always felt this way. This is with female artists and this is with male artists. They’re taking this approach, this very male-dominated, sexual approach and it’s because it sells. And there’s a bigger broader societal reason why it sells. It’s a whole ideology that our society has been reinforced by the videos that make this what sells. Is it Robin Thicke’s personal philosophies? Maybe, maybe not, we don’t know that.

LAURA: Then you’d need to take on MTV. Because there’s so much of this going on with everything. I mean, you could go on from this video, body image things and any video … the unrealistic expectations of men and women.

JANET: Yeah I mean all those men are HUGE and Calvin Klein models. You’re not supposed to look like that. [laughing]

LAURA: And it’s just overwhelming to think of all the problems like that.

JANET: Yeah like if you talk to our cross-country team, all those men are really sick of being called tiny. And that’s the same idea of like body-image and how we’re being betrayed. And they take it really seriously like “I’m really sick of being called tiny.” So it’s the same thing.

CAROL: I think that if someone sees this as an attack on Robin Thicke then they’re missing the bigger picture.

JENN: I think Lily Allen’s video that she did with… you know how in this video there’s the big silver balloons that say “Robin has a big dick?” In her video it’s like “Lily Allen has a baggy pussy” or whatever.

JANET: THAT’S definitely taking a stab at him.

JENN: But this is a broader thing.

CAROL: This is just using him as a facet.

JANET: Yeah they could have said “fuck you, Robin Thicke.”

FRED: Oh man, I love that song. Are you looking at “hard out there” by Lily Allen?

[Conversation goes off-topic]
EL: So just as a broad question: do you think YouTube is an effective tool and do you think it really appeals to millennials?

FRED: It is, I think, an extremely useful tool. Social media, YouTube, is such an amazing tool. With it being such an amazing tool, it has it’s adverse effects to the extreme.

LAURA: My question is…so like Beyonce’s “Flawless.” It really clearly sends out a feminist message. So it’s like ok THAT…See this is why I don’t know where I stand. Do I think it’s more effective to just send out that honest, like in “Pretty Hurts” her honesty there or like in “Flawless” the positive…she has that clip from the TED talk woman in her song. So is that approach more effective? Or is like something that is pushing people so far out of their comfort zone, even though it might have the reverse effect, more…but like…I don’t know.

JANET: That’s the thing. All of this stuff…None of this is black and white. So like to girls that have had eating disorders and girls that have been abused, that have been sexually abused and emotionally abused, those are really good tools for them. For they can listen to it and be like “society did make me this way.” I am beautiful, pretty hurts and all that and it’s a good tool for them. And I think YouTube is very effective because you see all those women’s speeches on Ellen and Oprah and all of those and you can just send them. To anyone. You can get out your message the fastest way. Just like when I found a bad video, I sent it to the entire class. It’s so easy. Like hey let’s shit on this one too. [Laughing]

EL: So would you guys send this video to your friends or post it on Facebook?

FRED: Oh I would yeah.

[Others agree]

MARIE: I’d even show it to my younger sister. Like she’s at the age where like… teens, early teens. Like things that she thinks she wants like…I know you’re young and you may not know everything that’s going on in this video and we don’t have to talk about it if you don’t want to kind of thing, but you should still watch this.

JANET: Yeah be like hey, this is what’s going on in your life.

MARIE: And it’s going to keep happening. Unfortunately. It’s not gonna stop in two years. It’s going to be something she’ll be living with. I’d share it.

JANET: Especially with abuse rates just keep going up. It’s just like that is another huge part of this. So many women are abused because of the way that they’re viewed. And that’s why it’s so important.

EL: So is this a good tool to educate people? Like you said, it starts the discourse, is it actually good for that?
JANET: I think it is. I think it’s kind of light-hearted enough where women just…well…everyone [Laughing]. But like even people that aren’t educated about it, they can still talk about it. They can have an open discussion about it, not just people who have taken courses.

JENN: Yeah that’s why I think it’s a good spring board or a good starting point or something. It calls out some of the big issues like sexual harassment and all these other things. It calls out some of the big ones but it doesn’t go too in depth to where you’re like “What are they talking about.” But then it kind of gives people ideas like “oh, wait that is a thing.” And then they can internalize that themselves and get more into and then connect the lyrics and what they’re seeing.

LAURA: I was thinking of a story because people think like “Oh THAT only happens in rap songs.” But like this is a really weird story because you all half think it’s funny and half want to punch yourself in the face. But like…When [name of a bar] was still a thing…well that’s how the story starts. [everyone laughing] So I am a female, who also identifies as gay so like that’s how the story starts. So I’m at [the bar] with a bunch of friends and I’m dancing and so this guy comes up and is standing behind me. So I’m kind of drunk so yeah whatever, I’m having fun, we’re dancing. I kid you not, unfortunately he is a recent graduate of north central college and I just like hate that fact about him…go cards…he literally whispered in my ear “Hey you wanna fuck?” And I’m like…what about my appearance…the fact…like you actually think that because I’m a human, with a vagina, I will be like “yes sir!” [Everyone laughing.] But is that pick up line? Does that actually work for you?

JANET: But sometimes it does!

LAURA: Like what in your brain…you don’t even know my name, sir!

FRED: But here’s the thing! It doesn’t matter. And that’s the sad part. What’s also the sad part is you said something like “Does that work?” And you said it does. Here’s the thing, is with the culture, and with the videos with something like that, it makes that work. It does. Unfortunately.

[Conversation goes off-topic again]

EL: So to sum it up, do you guys think this video is calling for you to do anything? Is it calling for action?

[Mumbling no’s]

LAURA: Like besides just to share on the Facebook or in an email…and that’s why it’s like…is it effective. Everyone kept saying it’s a springboard, it’s a starting point and like yes. Yes and yes. But it can’t be the end.

JANET: It can’t be the start. Like it can be a good tool for teachers to use in the classroom during studies.
LAURA: It’s like Kony. [Mumbling yes’s] Which I totally bought into. Like an idiot. I didn’t know anything about anything. But I changed my profile picture and was like “I’m changing the world!” Like no. I didn’t. He was like an alcoholic and shit himself in public.

FRED: Yeah it’s one of those things I guess where…I forgot what I was going to say. No! Wait. Here’s the thing with the video. It’s very important for our generation, and our generation unfortunately needs, sometimes, to be told what to do. And it sucks. And so what lacks in this video and what lacks in a lot of media that challenges the gender stereotypes and the sexism and the patriarchy, is that there is an attempt at humor, but there’s not a call to action. Hardly ever. And that’s what’s missing.

JANET: Yeah like it’s just doing the problem, no solution.

JENN: Yeah so like you just laugh it off and then it’s like…

LAURA: It’s sort of like a john Stewart type situation where it’s like, these issues are brought up and they’re talked about and funny things are said about them and then it’s like “Oh our time slots up! Have a good day!” And I can see why it’s so funny but at the end of the day, what has changed? No one’s opinion is changed, it’s just funny.

JANET: At the end of the day [JANET] is still asking to get fucked at [bar].

[everyone laughs]

FRED: It’s not location specific!

EL: Well that is all I have for you guys. Thank you so much for doing this.

FRED: That was so fun! So what are you all doing tomorrow?

[Laughing]

[Off-topic discussion]
APPENDIX C: Survey Instrument

1. What is your gender? M F
2. In politics as today, are your views best represented by the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, another party, or do none of the parties really represent your views?
   a. Democratic  b. Republican  c. None
3. Do you consider yourself to be a strong feminist, a feminist, not a feminist, or an anti-feminist?
   a. Strong feminist  b. Feminist  c. Not a feminist  d. Anti-feminist
4. Are you familiar with Robin Thicke's original "Blurred Lines" video? Yes No
5. Are you aware of the controversy around the original "Blurred Lines" video? Yes No

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<th>1-Strongly agree</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5-Strongly disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>If a girl is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of hand.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>When girls go to parties wearing slutty clothes, they are asking for trouble.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>If a girl goes to a room alone with a guy at a party, it is her own fault if she is raped.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>If a girl acts like slut, eventually she is going to get into trouble.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>When a girl gets raped, it’s often because the way they said “no” was unclear.</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>If a girl initiates kissing or hooking up, she should not be surprised if a guy assumes she wants to have sex.</td>
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Sampled from the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald 1999; McMahon & Farmer 2011)

OPEN ENDED:

12. What is your initial reaction?
13. In your view, is the video funny?
14. What are the women saying the problem is?
15. Does the video make you want to take action? Yes No
16. If you feel the video DOES want you to take action, what kind or how?
17. Did you find this video problematic or offensive? In what ways?
18. In your opinion, do you feel this video is a good tool for protesting and if so, how?