Bad Rap: Examining the Role of African American Males in Popular Music

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the claims made by popular media and public figures regarding rap music and its potential to adversely socialize Americans—particularly young adults and children—and show that other genres of music also contain potentially harmful lyrics. It is believed that rap is unfairly singled out by the media and public figures because it is a minority art form. One highly criticized area of rap music, the denigration of women in lyrics, was used as a measuring stick to judge rap against other forms of music to see if the criticisms of rap are justified. It was expected that the study would find no difference between rap and other forms of music and that other genres would also contain negative images of women within the lyrics. The study used the *Billboard Hot 100* charts as a guide for selecting songs for the study. The top 50 songs from 1980-2005, taken in 5 year increments, were used for the study. 300 songs were selected in all. The lyrics were then obtained from a peer-reviewed lyrics website and analyzed by the study to see if the song contained one or more negative images of women within the lyrics. A bivariate analysis, using Chi-square, was conducted to see if any significant relationships existed between the independent variables, gender of the performer(s), race and genre of music, and the dependent variable, negative images of women existed.

Mixed results were obtained with regards to the hypothesis. Other genres of music did contain a significant number of derogatory lyrics; however, the genres with the highest number of negative images were also the three genres that contained the highest concentrations of African American males. Therefore, it was determined that race does play a role in terms of

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portraying women negatively in popular music. It is further postulated that due to adverse

economic conditions within the African American community, the deterioration of the African

American family, and on-going tensions between African American males and females

contribute to this defamation of women in popular music. Since music can be an agent of

socialization, it is further postulated that these derogatory songs can influence the minds of not

just African Americans, but all Americans, thus exacerbating racial and sexual tensions in the

United States, thus creating a never-ending, vicious cycle for African Americans that keeps them

subjugated and dominated by the majority culture of America.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Rap and the Media

"White people sell guns, that's all right.

Black rapper *says*, "guns"… congressional hearing!" (Gallen 2004).

In the quote above, popular African American comedian, Chris Rock, in his 2004 comedy special, *Chris Rock: Never Scared*, highlights how American society has been concerned with the socialization effects of music. In recent years, much of the attention is placed on controversial rap artists, rap music and its potential socializing effects. However, is all of this negative attention towards rap justified? Do rappers and rap music, a predominantly African American form of music, deserve all of the attention, or is it easier to blame rap because of its African American roots? Are there other artists and genres of music--particularly forms of music that are dominated by whites-- that also contain potentially harmful lyrics?

This study will investigate rap and other predominantly African American genres of music that are singled out by the media, activist groups, and the government and compare them with predominantly white genres of music to see if rap is unfairly vilified in the media. The study will use one aspect of the lyrics that has drawn considerable media attention in the last twenty years—the use of negative female stereotypes—as its basis for measuring the potentially harmful socialization effects of several genres of music. This study will attempt to show that there is no difference between rap and other genres of music with respect to misogynistic lyrics, and that rap and rap artists have been falsely accused of being the sole proprietor of such

ideologies due to prevailing racist stereotypes that exist in American culture.

The Sociology of Music

The interest in music as a potential data source for sociologists who sought to find information on modern cultures is at roughly a century old. Max Weber believed that music was a "deeply meaningful part of society's culture" that developed through the rationalization process from capitalism (Turley, 2001, p. 636), and therefore, it was worth studying. Theodor Adorno, who also had an interest in music, believed that music is a representation of a culture, and that cultural objects like music deserve to be studied. Adorno (1962) posits that a musical sociology "should take its bearings from the social structures that leave their imprint on music and musical life" (Turley, 2001, p. 636). Both of these theorists believed that society left an imprint on the music of the day, and that in turn, music also influenced society. Since music has the power to be an agent of socialization as well as a product of culture, then it is important to study music. In Adorno's *The Climate for Fascism in Germany* (1945), Adorno theorized that Wagner's operas, popular music of the time, contained "authoritarian" and anti-semetic images, and these themes were "a direct cause of the decultivation of Germany's middle and lower classes. This decultivation laid the groundwork for the rise of fascism, a ground work of noncritical, knee-jerk patriots willing to lay blame on a convenient scapegoat [the Jews]" (Turley, 2001, p. 643). Essentially, Adorno postulates that Wagner's operas served as an agent of socialization that was able to excite and influence the economically disadvantaged people in Germany into believing that the Jews were the cause of their hardships. However, Turley (2001) claims that Weber and Adorno also believed that music was also a product of a certain culture, and therefore, could also reflect the sentiments of the time. It is possible that Wagner's work was not meant to incite violence against the Jews, but was merely a reflection of the hostility that the Germans had

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towards the Jews because of the deteriorating economic climate of Germany at that time. Weber acknowledges that "economic rationale [is] at the basis for music production and consumption" (Turley, 2001, p. 641), and therefore, Wagner's music could be a product of economics and the economic climate of the day. Therefore, popular music that is produced today could, as many critics say, be a piece of propaganda to further the agenda of the dominant culture, or music could be a reflection of the economic situation of Americans—particularly African Americans. Either way, music is clearly a powerful cultural object, and worth the time and attention of sociologists today—especially minority music because of the attention that it has garnered in the media over the past few decades.

History of Public Attention to Rap Music and Lyrics

In the mid 1980s, a concerned parent and then-wife of Tennessee senator Al Gore, Tipper Gore, heard a questionable song blaring from her daughter's bedroom stereo. It was African American guitarist and pop singer (James, 2004) Prince's *Darling Nikki* (VH1, 2007). Once Ms. Gore heard these sexually charged lyrics, "I knew a girl named Nikki/ I guess you could say she was a sex fiend/ I met her in a hotel lobby masturbating with a magazine" (VH1, 2007), the PMRC (The Parents Music Resource Center) was born. Ms. Gore formed the PMRC along with other Washington wives to "inform parents on how dubious material was being marketed to their kids" (VH1, 2007).

The PMRC designated 15 popular songs of the time as "the filthy fifteen," which were songs that the PMRC felt had "questionable lyrical content" (VH1, 2007). Some of the artists whose songs made "the filthy fifteen" include: AC/DC**,** Black Sabbath**,** Cyndi Lauper**,** Def Leppard**,** Judas Priest**,** Madonna**,** Motley Crüe**,** Prince**,** Sheena Easton**,** Twisted Sister**,** and W.A.S.P. (Nuzum, 2003).

What stands out about "the filthy fifteen" is that it is composed primarily of white, male heavy metal rock bands, and therefore, seems contradictory to the previous claims that African American music is unfairly classified as the genres of music that have the most "questionable lyrical content." However, one must keep in mind that in 1984 and 1985, rap music was barely taking off. It had only been six years since the Sugar Hill Gang's *Rappers' Delight* (1979), which is widely regarded as the first rap single ever (Bush, 2007), hit the scene, and Def Jam records was still being run out of Rick Rubin's NYU dorm room (Huey, 2007). Granted, there were some predominantly African American genres of music, such as Motown and R&B, that were popular during the 1970s and somewhat into the 1980s, but prominent African American producers of these genres of music, such as Barry Gordy, "strove to make assimilationist R&B that would be considered respectable by pop audiences" (Huey, 2007); therefore, producers such as Gordy, were conscious that they were marketing a "black" form of music to white audiences and made sure that the music was "clean" and acceptable to the larger white audiences-- a distinction that later rap producers, such as Russell Simmons of Def Jam records, would not make (Huey, 2007).

Since rap was not yet on the radar of mainstream America or the PMRC, the PMRC turned their attention to heavy metal music and made claims that the lyrical content of heavy metal music "was responsible for the rising rate of rape and suicide among those between the ages of 16 and 24" (VH1, 2007). Claims made by the PMRC such as these garnered enough media attention that even President Reagan weighed in on the matter. President Reagan believed that "the music industry and newspapers and magazines are providing children with 'glorification of drugs, violence, and perversity,' and that pornographers have more rights than parents" (Weintraub ,1985, p. C17).

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The content of such songs were considered "obscene and excessively violent" by critics such as Reagan and Gore (Weintraub,1985, p. C17), but one must keep in mind these are value judgments by these critics, and that concepts such as obscenity are quite fluid, subjective and can vary from individual to individual—especially when these concepts are associated with minority groups, as could be the case with respect to music that is written and composed by primarily African American artists.

"Musicians who 'fail' to be white, straight, economically privileged, and/or male…are frequently and forcefully denied comparable artistic license, even when (or perhaps especially when) they're working within artistically valorized musical genres such as rock" (Rodman, 2006, p.13). If we were to refer back to the inception of the "filthy fifteen" list composed by the PMRC, we would see that the catalyst for the whole movement, Prince, fits this bill. Prince, an African American rock artist who wears effeminate clothing and make-up, does not fit the heterosexual, white male stereotype, and therefore, was easily singled out by Tipper Gore and her constituents as an indecent artist with questionable lyrical content. Keeping the lyrics and criticisms of *Darling Nikki* in mind, consider this point made by Rodman (2006): when artists such as "Madonna or Prince sing about sexual escapades in the first person, they're made into poster children for why compact discs (CDs) need parental warning labels—with critics such as Tipper Gore leading the charge to police the musical soundscape" (p.103). Rodman (2006) contends that if Prince were a white male or Madonna were male, then they or their lyrics would not be under such intense scrutiny by the media, politicians or activists, such as the PMRC, and this theory of Rodman's can easily explain why groups such as the PMRC or politicians such as President Reagan would attack non-white artists such as Prince or Madonna. However, this does not seem to explain why the other groups such as WASP, Twisted Sister or ACDC would be on

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the list and subjected to the same scrutiny.

What is interesting to note is that often times "some heavy metal groups [such as WASP or Twisted Sister] have been accused of being rap acts, because they allegedly embody the violent and crude stereotypes generally associated with…rappers" (Shank 1996: 131). Even though groups such as Twisted Sister and ACDC are composed of white, male artists, the type of music produced by these groups are contradictory in sound and subject matter to mainstream white America, and therefore, in the 1980s, and even today, are considered the "black sheep" of the music industry (no pun intended). Additionally, many male artists in heavy metal bands from the 1980s sported long manes and heavy eye, cheek and lip make-up, which gave them a more effeminate appearance. Therefore, if the heavy metal acts "skew" more Black than white and more feminine than masculine, then it is easy to see why the PMRC would also take issue with these heavy metal acts, thus explaining the criticisms levied upon these groups in the 1980s. Judith Lorber (2003) explains that "as part of a stratification system, gender ranks men above women of the same race and class" (p. 247). Additionally, the same American stratification system ranks white above black.   Lorber (2003) quotes Nancy Jay's (1981) explanation of how individuals see themselves as part of society, "That which is defined, separated out, isolated from all else is A and pure. Not-A is necessarily impure, a random catchall, to which nothing is external except A and the principle order that separates it from not A" (p. 247). Male and white are considered A, and black and female are considered not-A, and these categories of people that are defined as A are considered "the touchstone, the normal, the dominant"(p. 247) and those defined as not-A are "different, deviant, and subordinate" (p. 247). Therefore, music produced by artists that fit the A mold (that appear white and male) are not considered to be offensive, but music that is made by artists who are either female and/or black themselves or appear to be either

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black and/or female then fall into the different and deviant not-A category and are deemed inappropriate, even if the artist who produces a particular song is biologically white and male.

However, focus was soon taken away from heavy metal, the abstract not A's and given to the conspicuous not-A's once rap and hip-hop culture became more prominent in the United States. "By 1989, rap music was at the center of censorship debates, and both Republicans and Democrats blamed rap music for all of the nation's social ills" (Canton, 2006, p. 249). Trapp (2005) notes that it seems as soon as rap and hip hop culture were born, they were almost immediately assaulted by parents and politicians alike as "an evil influence on impressionable youth" (p.1482). The appeal of rap and hip-hop only grew exponentially in the 1990s, and Canton (2006) marks 1994 as the year in which interest in rap music grew considerably. In 1994, as the popularity of rap music was on the rise, so was "the emergence of a highly visible campaign against rap artists for promoting offensive and socially irresponsible music" (Ogbar, 1999, p. 164).

The campaign began between two presidential elections, as "this public discourse regarding cultural standards and hip hop involved presidential candidates, congressmen, and academics who joined the chorus to condemn what they considered violent, sexist, and bigoted rap" (Ogbar, 1999, p. 164). On his campaign trail, Republican Presidential candidate, Bob Dole, used rap lyrics as part of his platform. Dole "blasted [rap] lyrics and record companies for promoting such music" (Ogbar, 1999, p. 174). Dole thought that these companies should be criticized and brought into the light because they were responsible for the "marketing of evil through commerce" (Ogbar, 1999, p. 147).

New York Times columnist, Frank Rich, posits that Dole, using such campaign tactics to attack rap music, is not as honest and pure as Dole would have the American public believe.

Rich (1995) theorizes that Dole does not use his platform to keep the innocence and interests of America's youth at the forefront, but rather wages war against rappers and rap music in an attempt to make the music more popular, thus increasing the profits of record companies who donated to his election campaign. Rich (1995) posits that "in the Senate, Mr. Dole does everything he can to promote the financial interests of corporate campaign contributors that produce the nightmares he purports to deplore—and nothing to support even the modest effort of Reed Hundt, the Federal Communications Commission chairman, to force broadcasters to run a pitiful three hours of educational children's television per week" (p. A23). Therefore, Dole is not using his political campaign to help children nor does Rich even suppose that Dole even *cares* about the content of rap music, but rather what Dole really cares about is his ability to line the pockets of his campaign contributors, who happen to be the very record companies that pander such "filth" to America's youth. Therefore, by taking an anti-rap stance, politicians such as Dole find themselves in a "win-win" situation. Dole gains support and potentially votes from worried parents who are fearful about their children being influenced by "violent" minority culture, while at the same time pleasing his campaign contributors by drawing attention to the same violent minority culture that they stand to make more of a profit from.

Therefore, it is easy to see why the same anti-rap platform was implemented again in the 2000 election, and why conservative (value-based politicians) such as George W. Bush were again poised to use rap music as part of their election platform. As *The New York Times*' columnist, Jon Pareles puts it, "What's an election year without a moral panic? Popular music, and pop culture in general, are set up to be prime targets this year, stuck in the crossfire of a battle for the righteous high ground. Republicans and Democrats are both positioning themselves as guardians of what George W. Bush, in his speech accepting the Republican

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nomination, called 'essential values'" (p. 2-28). Bush and other Republicans were quick to make music, and rap music in particular, a moral issue, since Bush's opponent in the 2000 election was none other than Al Gore, the husband of PMRC founder, Tipper Gore. Again, the most prominent rap artist of the time, Eminem, was under attack for his latest album, *The Marshall Mathers LP*. What is unique about Eminem is that he is a white, male rapper; however, as was noted earlier, Eminem and his music do not embody the qualities of white (dominant, A group) music, and is therefore under the same scrutiny as minority artists. Since Eminem does not represent the majority culture, then he is not afforded the same kind of artistic license as other music acts of the day who model the majority's ideals. Another group that was also in "hot water" was the heavy metal act, Slipknot, "which dresses its members like clowns and ghouls and draws rabidly slam-dancing crowds…" (Pareles, 2000, p. 2-28). A hallmark of Slipknot's look was white or black gory, often expressionless masks and long hair. No one could tell what the "real" artists looked like under their masks, and therefore, it was extremely difficult to determine the gender or race of the artists. Therefore, it is not surprising that Slipknot was chosen as an example of immoral music, since they fall under Shank's (1996) theory of how heavy metal is considered "less white" than other genres such as rock and pop and Jay's (1981) theory that if a person does not appear to be part of the dominant white male "A group," then they are not-A, and thus, are considered part of deviant culture.

Obviously, there is a pattern that has formed since the founding of the PMRC. It starts with an election year, and then a presidential candidate who wants to use "morals" and "values" as part of his platform, which results in the denouncement of minority culture and music, which are simply the most popular rap and heavy metal acts of the day.

However, what is also interesting to note about this pattern is that after white political and

other popular figures denounce rap and heavy metal music, certain prominent African American figures and organizations are quick to follow the lead of the politicians. This behavior is not unlike what W.E.B. DuBois (1903) describes as an African American's gift of "second sight" (p. 262), in which an African American views himself through the lens of the dominant, white culture, which "only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world" (p. 262). African American critics seemingly are taking cues from the dominant, white media and politicians, and adopting the same value systems as the majority culture. For example, in the mid 1990s, C. Delores Tucker, president of the National Political Congress of Black Women, condemned certain record companies, such as Time Warner, for their involvement with and representation of certain rap acts that they deemed violent and misogynistic (Ogbar, 1999).

In addition, other organizations, including print and televised media, have joined the campaign against rap music, and many of these organizations are headed by African Americans. Ogbar (1999) notes that "every major hip-hop magazine has voiced opposition to the popularization of drugs, misogyny, and drinking that pervades rap" (p. 180). Most notably is the African American, *ESSENCE* magazine's campaign, "Take Back the Music." Women who work for or are readers of the magazine are becoming increasingly "concerned about the degrading ways in which black women are portrayed and spoken about in popular media, particularly in popular urban music and music videos" (TBTM, 2007, p. 1). *ESSENCE* purports that these images may be having a negative impact on African American children, and that it is up to these women to take a stand and refuse to have such negative images of women portrayed in the mass media.

In 2006, a large group of women at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia also joined the "Take Back the Music" campaign, when rapper, Nelly, wanted to hold a concert on campus. The

women of Spelman College did not want Nelly to perform and protested his music because they believed his music contained "misogynist and sexist lyrics" (Carpenter, 2006, p. 753), and his music videos also featured the same themes.

In 2007, the subject matter of rap was at the forefront of many discussions and television programs after radio show host, Don Imus, made an off-color remark about the Rutgers University Women's basketball team, which was composed primarily of African American women. Instead of the discussion focusing on racism and Imus' remarks, it quickly turned to a symposium on "the crude language some rappers use" (Sanneh, 2007, p. E1). What was unique about this discussion of rap music is that "this one doesn't have a villain, or even a villainous song. The current state of hip-hop seems almost irrelevant to the current discussion" (Sanneh, 2007, p. E1). It appears as if the media and the public used Imus' situation as a way to "point the finger" at rap artists, and furthermore, at Black culture in general. Imus' comments were used by the media as a means of drawing negative attention towards African Americans. The media acknowledged that calling a group of female black athletes "nappy headed hoes" is not a favorable portrayal of these women, but it is not as bad as what rappers do and say. According to Sanneh (2007), it is as if the media was saying, "[W]ell, he might have said that about those girls, but rappers say *nigger*. That's worse" (p. E1).

Not surprisingly, after the "Imus scandal," prominent African American figures were quick to jump on the media bandwagon and condemn the lyrics in rap music. African American presidential candidate, Barack Obama, called for rappers and other hip-hop artists to "reform their lyrics" (Solomon, 2007, p. 6-13). Def Jam's Russell Simmons, created a group called the "Hip Hop Summit Action Network." Simmons and his associate, Ben Chavis, "released a statement that said, in part, 'we recommend that the recording and broadcast industries

voluntarily remove/bleep/delete the misogynistic words 'bitch' and 'ho' and a third term, a common racial epithet'" (Sanneh, 2007, p. E1).

In conclusion, what one may deduce from this history of attention to rap music is that music typically associated with minority groups, such as African Americans, is often used as fodder for political debates and television programs, and that both whites, and then, blacks are quick to attack this culture and music. The next section will explore some of the studies on how and to what extent rap and other genres of music are violent and misogynistic, and why some of these criticisms made by politicians and other activists may be valid.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Misogyny

Ironically enough, "the term rap was originally used in the African American speech community to refer to romantic, sexualized interaction, usually originated by a man for purposes of winning the affection and sexual favors of a woman" (Smitherman, 1997, p. 4). Since the beginning, "rap" and sex have been linked to each other. This association between rap and sex has only grown since rap became a popular musical genre. Some rap, especially a sub-genre of rap called "gangsta rap" has been "upbraided for its openly hostile attitude toward women. Deeply misogynist lyrics have haunted a popular cultural form [rap] known for its consciousness-raising potential on other social issues" (Martinez, 1997, p. 274).

Popular rap artists, such as Tupac Shakur and Eminem, are often cited as purveyors of these deeply misogynist lyrics. Tupac often presented himself as a "rider" (a player of women) in his lyrics and music videos (Iwamoto, 2003). Eminem, in his lyrics, often has "a tendency to portray women as bitches, sluts who (at best) are nothing more than 'good fucks'" (Rodman, 2006, p. 114). By presenting themselves as "hyper-masculine" ladies men, rap artists such as Tupac and Eminem could preserve their status and present themselves as "successful" (Iwamoto, 2003, p. 47) because they could get any number of women they wanted. It seems as if the women are being presented as possessions, and the more women that these rappers could acquire the more "rich" and successful they would be in their respective communities.

However, unlike media and political discourse, academics focus on a variety of musical

genres in order to glean information about how images of women are constructed in music. One

study, conducted by Sloat (1998), focused on female sexuality in other genres besides rap. Sloat

focused on pop and lite metal, which are more concerned with "creating radio-friendly songs" (p.

286), i.e. songs that can be marketed to large, often times, white audiences. Sloat (1998) found

that:

> a review of numerous hit and less popular songs shows that women are portrayed as
>
> obsessive, evil, and dangerous, and as deserving of degradation, violation, and even
>
> violence, commonly expressed in depictions of women as sex toys whose primary
>
> function is to please men and serve as receptacles for seminal fluid (p. 286).

Sexual objectification of women is a "staple" of music videos (Smith, 1995). Gow (1996) posits

that *women* are underrepresented in music videos, and females are portrayed in a manner that

puts an emphasis on physical characteristics rather than music ability. The bodily objectification

of women as sex objects has steadily risen since the 1940s (Cooper, 1985).

A reason for this increase could be explained by Lorde (1978) who posits that female

eroticism has been distorted by men and used against women. "[Female eroticism] has been

made into the confused, the trivial, the psychotic, the plasticized sensation…it has been confused

with its opposite, the pornographic. Pornography emphasizes sensation without feeling" (Lorde,

1978, p. 8). Presenting women as pornographic reduces women to mere objects of sexual

gratification—existing solely for the pleasure and amusement of men. These women are not

people, but playthings, and reducing them to sex objects makes them less threatening—socially

and economically. Less threatening women who embody the "sex object" persona in music are

more popular than ones with deep convictions and emotions, as David Crosby of the band

Crosby, Stills and Nash notes, "that's what puts Britney Spears, who's as deep as a birdbath in

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front of Joni Mitchell" (Arquette, 2005).

Denishoff (1988) posits that MTV creates a format that emphasizes images over the music itself (in Katovich and Makowski, 1999). In fact, Chrissy Hynde, lead singer of the Pretenders, believes that "MTV has ruined music" (Arquette, 2005) because it places such a high emphasis on physical appearance.

MTV is a form of marketing for music, and MTV definitely believes in the adage "sex sells." Sut Jhally (1995) notes that ninety percent of music videos are directed by males, which could account for the high degree of sexism that Vincent et al. (1987) found in their analysis of music videos. The researchers found that seventy-four percent of music videos contained sexist images of women (Vincent et al., 1987). Women in music videos are relegated to a secondary status, as "women and blacks are rarely important enough to be part of the foreground [in music videos]" (Brown and Campbell, 1986, p. 104). Most of the music videos involve all male performers, and women are often portrayed condescendingly (Vincent et al., 1987). White women, in particular, are portrayed as passive, sexual beings, as Brown and Campbell (1986) found that this category of women is often shown in "passive and solitary activity or are shown trying to gain the attention of a man who ignores them" (p. 104). The videos examined by Brown and Campbell (1986) show women as dependent and the only way they can be "complete" is to have the love of a man. In the lyrics, Dukes et al. (2003) also found evidence of women being portrayed as sexual beings by males. "From 1991-1998, men used more sexual references than females [in song lyrics]" (Dukes et al., 2003, p. 43).

American society is continuously bombarded with negative images of women in music, both lyrically and visually. Jhally (1995) believes that the music industry is trying to convey the message to women, "if you're not part of the dreamworld, then do not apply." The dreamworld,

according to Jhally (1995), is filled with women who are nothing more than sexual playthings that not only accept, but enjoy, existing for the entertainment and pleasure of men.

Violence

Violence towards women is another degrading image of women that is prolific in the music industry today and is a more overt form of misogyny. Of course, much of the attention is focused on rap music and its misogynist overtones. Susan Faludi (1991) cites one commentator's report that the use of the word "bitch" to refer to women in many rap songs makes "rap music sound more like rape music" (p. xxi), but Johnson (1992) theorizes that misogynist lyrics of rap music do not represent an accurate account of Black culture, nor are they different from the lyrics that contain violence against women in songs by *white* males. Vincent et al. (1987) found that an overwhelming proportion of videos involved male performers that portrayed females in a condescending or "less than human" manner, and these videos contained the greatest percentage of violence towards females (p. 752-753). Brown and Campbell (1986) discovered that white men are also presented in music videos as "aggressive and hostile" (p. 104). They found that white women were also depicted as aggressors, but they often used aggression to gain the attention of a male—not to exert domination or control over their victim like males do. Brunner (1995) found that violence towards women is expressed more overtly in music videos and album artwork, but is still present, although less explicitly, in lyrics. Brunner, along with parents and possibly politicians, are concerned with how these violent representations are experienced and internalized by young audiences because it appears that popular music and videos are having a socializing effect on young people, as many reported to her that these images are "just the way things are" (Brunner, 1995, p. 366), true representations of the world.

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The Underlying Backlash

Gilbert and Gubar (1988) noticed in other artistic mediums that "just as more and more women were getting paid for using their brains, more and more men represented them in novels, poems, and plays as nothing but bodies" (p. 47). The portrayal of women in a sexualized manner is a type of defense mechanism for male artists of all colors. These lyrics reflect the artist's "emotional subtext of fear, pride and desire. The fear is the inability to provide or financially take care of a woman. Men are socialized to link taking care of women with male pride" (Canton, 2006, p. 250).

If a woman can take care of herself, then what good are men? This question may be similar to what men across the United States are asking themselves. As more women are graduating from college, especially in the Black community, it is "more difficult for low-wage black men to get married" (Canton, 2006, p. 252). It seems as if the tables have now turned, and women can now provide for men. However, as Canton (2006) pointed out, men are still socialized to believe that it is essential to their manhood to be able to provide for their women, and this ability to be the "provider" is intimately linked with a man's pride, self esteem, and self worth. According to the Yankelovich Monitor survey, for the last twenty years, men have overwhelmingly defined masculinity in terms of being "a good provider for his family" (Faludi, 1991, p. 65). Therefore, "if establishing masculinity depends on succeeding as the prime breadwinner, then it is hard to imagine a force more directly threatening to fragile American manhood than the feminist drive for economic equality" (Faludi, 1991, p. 65). Therefore, men must be able to make sense of their situation, as well as preserve their pride to the outside world. Willis (1997) believes that "politically and economically marginalized men often prey on women over whom they are able to exert some degree of power" (in Ralph 2006, p. 77). Cole and Guy-

Sheftall (2003) posit that "rather than striking out at those who may be responsible for their oppression, some men lash out at women because they are accessible and vulnerable targets who lack the power to protect themselves or retaliate" (in Ralph 2006, p. 77).

Susan Faludi (1991), in her work, *Backlash*, posits that the media has propagated a series of myths about women in order to control women. "Faludi begins the book by looking carefully at then-current myths about the status of women, including the press reports that single career women are more likely to be depressed than other women, that professional women are leaving their jobs in droves to stay at home, and that single working women over age thirty have a small chance of ever getting married" (Enotes, 2006). These myths, promoted by the mass media and popular culture, are used as scare tactics in order to keep women in their traditional roles as mothers and housewives. Faludi (1991) believes that these myths are evidence of a cultural backlash against the perceptions of female advancement.

> [W]e find such flare-ups are hardly random; they have always been triggered by the perception—accurate or not—that women are making great strides. These outbreaks are backlashes because they have always arisen in reaction to women's 'progress,' caused not simply by a bedrock of misogyny but by the specific efforts of contemporary women to improve their status, efforts that have been interpreted time and time again by men— especially men grappling with real threats to their economic and social well-being on other fronts—as spelling their own masculine doom (p. xix).

Faludi posits that these backlashes are not organized movements, and that "the lack of orchestration, the absence of a string puller, only makes it harder to see—and perhaps more effective" (p. xxii).

Therefore, if there is a tendency to devalue women in the mass media and popular

culture, then could a backlash possibly be seen in popular music as well? Black forms of music, such as rap, depict women less than favorably, and this could well be a result of the fact that black women are gaining a considerable amount of economic ground on black men. Rappers, who have lost some "pride" because they are no longer needed by black women for economic support, take this loss of pride out in their rap music. Ralph (2006) argues that "the tendency in rap music to depict women as accessories and sexual servants is the partial result of a widespread attitude that women have better prospects for earning a legitimate wage than their male counterparts" (p. 61). Even rap artist Tupac acknowledged the fact that "many men often degrade women by telling them 'you ain't nothing,' which is a way for them to assert their dominance and bolster their own low self esteem" (Iwamoto, 2003, p. 48).

However, this male "loss of pride" is not unique to the African American community. Sloat (1998) analyzed pop and lite metal music and found that the same themes were common in these White genres of music. Sloat (1998) argues that "these songs reflect fear of a loss of control that threatens masculinity; fantasies of rape and total dominance alleviate fear of rejection…" (p. 286). Cooper (1985) studied popular songs from 1946-1976 from a variety of genres before rap became a mainstream form of music and found that certain unfavorable stereotypes increased or decreased depending on the decade, but that regardless of time, unfavorable stereotypes of women persisted throughout the longitudinal study.

Furthermore, if one looks at an analysis of the English language, we can see that the devaluation of women is widespread throughout American culture, and not just in the black community. Stanley (1977) conducted an analysis of the English language and found that there are 220 expressions for a sexually promiscuous woman compared to 22 words that describe the male counterpart (in Grossman and Tucker, 2002, p. 102). Grossman and Tucker (2002)

conducted their own study on American English and found that a cohort of males and females were able to list more sexual slang words to describe women than men, and that overall, more sexual slang words exist to describe women rather than men. Even more interesting than the ratio of male to female sexual slang words is a concept found in the English language called "semantic derogation," which is the "process by which initially positive or neutral words acquire negative (and often sexual) connotations," (Schultz 1975 in Grossman and Tucker, 2002, p. 102) and not surprisingly this process of semantic derogation occurs more frequently for words that describe women (Grossman and Tucker, 2002).What is most bothersome about these linguistic studies is that "using sexual and derogatory slang to describe women may not only reflect existing biases against women, but may lead both sexes to view women more negatively" (Unger and Crawford, 1992 in Grossman and Tucker, 2002, p. 109).

The use of semantics to promulgate existing biases is not confined solely to gender. As noted before, the American stratification system not only exists for gender, but also for race. We can see the use of words, and the focus of the media, politicians, and other groups on words and lyrics, is merely a vehicle that allows dominant parties the ability to not only extend sexism, but to extend other hidden biases such as racism in the United States.

Rap and Racism

Many young African Americans appear to be looking at rap, and its lyrics, for messages and guidance about life (Sullivan, 2003, p.616), and music is one of the most important contributing factors to the development of the Black community (Williams, 2007, p.1). As Ogbar (1999) points out "without a doubt, the misogyny, debauchery and anti-social hedonism of some [rap] lyrics deserve to be attacked" (p. 181). Obviously, from the previous sections, rap, as well as other genres of music, has the potential to be quite harmful to disadvantaged groups,

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especially women. However, the focus on rap and its lyrics by politicians, activists, and the media may not be laced with such good intentions as these people would have one believe, (as was the case with Senator Dole in 1996). Ogbar (1999) goes on to say that "what may appear to be a sincere concern for the well-being of America's youth is often a guise of a more sordid and insidious attack on Black youth culture and its ability to critique, analyze and provide commentary on society" (p. 181).

When examining popular music, one cannot simply discard race as a factor when making judgments about a particular genre of music or the culture that produces such music. The "naïve, color blind myth that race is simply irrelevant to popular music" (Rodman, 2006, p. 108) is something that cannot be used in an analysis of music. "Questions of race and racial politics are absolutely crucial to understanding any and every major form of US popular music since minstrelsy" (Rodman, 2006, p. 107). Therefore, one must be cognizant that African Americans are the primary producers of rap, and one reason why rap may have received so much attention the last twenty-plus years is because it is a product of a minority or African American culture.

Pointing the Finger

"From the start, the public viewed hip-hop culture and rap music through a racist lens. Rappers and rap fans were often portrayed as menacing Black adolescents and rap music was vilified as violent and misogynistic" (Feagin et al., 2000 and Rose, 1994 in Sullivan, 2003, p. 607). Many rappers viewed their lyrics as a cultural critique and a description of life in African American communities. However, instead of looking for ways of trying to understand or improve these underprivileged communities, critics have taken these rap lyrics that "glorify violence against women and men, drug dealing and other destructive behaviors" and used them not as a platform for discussion and understanding, but as a "platform for attack" (Ogbar, 1999,

p. 167).

As mentioned earlier, in the 1990s many politicians used rap as part of a platform to speak about moral values. Both Republicans and Democratic politicians blamed rap music for "all of the black communities' social problems: drug use, teenage pregnancy, unemployment, gang violence and high school dropouts" (Canton, 2006, p. 244). What these politicians and other critics of rap music are doing is using this criticism of rap or hip-hop as "a way to utter sweeping condemnations of black people and black culture without ever having to explicitly frame such commentary in racial terms" (Rodman, 2006, p. 105). What is interesting to note is that these "critics of hip hop…self righteously condemn the genre because of the violence and blatant sexuality it contains. Yet everyday, women are objectified and sexualized on television, in movies, and in the magazines at the checkout line of the local grocery store" (Iwamoto, 2003, p. 49). If women are objectified in other media besides rap, and this objectification is done by all races and ethnicities of men, not just black rappers, then why is so much attention placed on rap and its contents in politics and the media?

The White Psyche

"What made gangsta rap intimidating was its lyrics. The lyrics were not from the imagination of or the words of a college-educated, middle class, white male…" (the dominant, A group) but from "the minds of what many white Americans considered to be the most violent and threatening segment of America—young, angry inner city black men" (Canton, 2006, p. 245). What rappers are doing is playing into the underlying racial tensions and fears of white America. For years, controversial rap act 2 Live Crew went unnoticed by critics of rap music. It was only when 2 Live Crew began to "cross over" into white audiences that it ran into "a buzzsaw of controversy" (Rodman, 2006, p. 109). Another controversial rap artist, Ice T, only

became a target of criticism and controversy once his song, "Cop Killer" started appealing to suburban white audiences. Shank (1996) argues that "Cop Killer" became "the object of a successful censorship campaign because it produced a structure of identification for white listeners that tapped into some of the deepest fears of the white unconscious" (p. 125). By placing rap lyrics on top of guitar music, "Cop Killer" appealed to young, white suburban males, and it encouraged its white listeners to "identify with black rage" (Shank, 1996, p. 125). As mentioned earlier, Whites viewed young black rage as one of the most violent and dangerous sectors of American society. They did not want their children to listen to such music and then become the very stereotypes they had long associated with violent black culture. Granted, even the title "Cop Killer," does seemingly promote violence; it is not the only song that features violence, or even violence against the police. Eric Clapton's "I Shot the Sheriff" carries the same violent and anti-law enforcement title as "Cop Killer," but there were no political campaigns or protests against Clapton's song when it reached number one on the charts in the 1970s (Shank, 1996, p. 136), so why all the fuss about "Cop Killer?"

Ice T, the author and performer of "Cop Killer," believes that critics of the song are not concerned about its possibility of inciting violence against the police. Ice T believes that what critics are really trying to do is "shut down my platform. They do not want to let me be able to speak to the masses. That's what they want to do" (Shank, 1996, p. 140). Shank (1996) believes that not only were the critics of "Cop Killer" successful in shutting down Ice T's agenda, but that "they were able to use his platform to make their own statements" (p. 140). Critics of Ice T, other rap artists, and rap music were able to use this platform to make the "sweeping generalizations about Black culture" without having to specifically point out race.

White Control

Music, and other forms of media, such as television, have "proven to be a source of degradation to all the historically oppressed groups in America" (Williams, 2007, p. 1). The super-ordinate group is able to use music such as Ice T's in order to further their own agendas and promote the existing stratification system in the United States. Berry (2000) posited that "negative portrayals of minorities can have two potential outcomes: a) continued prejudice and racism and b) negative self esteem of members of the minority groups" (p. 57), and both of these outcomes work to preserve the existing racial stratification system.

The first point addressed by Berry (2000) that negative portrayals of minorities serve to continue prejudice and racism is confirmed by a study conducted by Rudman and Lee (2002). Rudman and Lee exposed a group of participants to "violent and misogynistic rap music," and they found that after listening to this rap music, it "increased the automatic associations underlying evaluative racial stereotypes in high and low prejudiced subjects alike" (2002, p. 133). Since rap music has long been associated with such negative racial stereotypes, it naturally brought forth many long-standing stereotypes, even from those who believed that they were less prejudiced than other subjects in the study. Furthermore, Rudman and Lee (2002) exposed a group of participants to rap music, and then used another group as a control that was not exposed to rap music. They found that after presenting both groups with images of Blacks and whites, the group exposed to the rap music "judged a black target less favorably than a white target" (p. 133), which is further evidence that "negative portrayals may generate attitudes and beliefs about such groups [African Americans] among the general public" (Berry, 2000, p. 1).

The second point of Berry's thesis (2000) is that negative representations of minority groups, such as African Americans, by super-ordinate groups can negatively affect the self

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esteem of members of the minority group. "Historically, dominant racial ideologies in the United States have served to explain or legitimize conquest and dispossession, enslavement, exclusion, discrimination, and the continuing existence of racial stratification (Doane, 2003 in Doane, 2006,p. 256). Certain racial ideologies are played out in the media in order to adversely affect the self image, esteem and worth of minority groups such as African Americans. Rodman (2006) posits that "people of color continue to be regularly depicted as dangerous criminals who threaten to destroy the existing social order…"(p. 96). These depictions can be seen easily in the criticisms made of rap music. What is detrimental about taking rap artists' lyrics literally as messages and encouragement of violence, rather than as social critiques, is that is has an adverse effect on black youth.

Moreover, due to poverty and neglect, black youth are often deprived of and under-exposed to cultural influences that differ from those of the mass media, which often negatively or one-dimensionally depict black men as villains, murderers, gang members. These one dimensional portrayals are indicative of the limiting stereotypical attitudes, beliefs, and values of the larger society (Iwamoto, 2003, p. 46).

Graves (1993) noticed that although the number of African Americans in the media has increased over the years, "characters are still more likely to be presented in a highly stereotyped manner than are European-American characters in terms of occupational level, social role and behavioral characteristics" (in Berry, 2000). The lack of diverse images of Black men and women in the media may be done purposefully, as Berry (2000) posits that "devaluing and stereotyping social and ethnic groups can occur by ignoring them entirely and presenting them in negative ways. Under-representation and negative portrayals may influence the self concepts and beliefs of one's own group" (p.57). By giving Black youth only a limited number of images, then

they are doomed to imitate these images and carry out the very stereotypes the dominant group uses to keep them subordinate.

In rap songs, the themes are "homogenous because certain formulas have proven to be profitable and are therefore imitated exhaustively" (Wright, 2004, p. 13), and the reason why these songs are profitable is due to the fact that white male suburban teens purchase the large majority of rap music (Canton, 2006, p. 255). African Americans still constitute the majority of rap artists and producers, but "white dominated corporate America is now its primary distributor, with white-dominated mainstream media outlets its primary marketer" (Neal ,1999 in Wright, 2004, p. 11). Therefore, rap artists intentionally use "sexually charged language to sell records and to create their unique style" (Canton, 2006, p. 248) because that is what is easily marketed to white audiences.

Originally, hip-hop culture and rap music was supposed to be a protest against the dominant white culture. Hip-hop was created as a medium of expression where disenfranchised African Americans could speak about the "urban woes plaguing their lives, namely underemployment, poverty and racial discrimination" (Wright, 2004, p. 9). Martinez also notes that "political and gangsta rap music artists…were utilizing a bold form of oppositional culture in protest and condemnation of perceived racial formation, institutional discrimination and urban decay in our inner cities" (1997, p. 266). What is ironic about rap music is that it was originally intended to be a "rebellion against white America's economic and psychological terrorism against black people" (Upski, 1993, p. 48), but rap has been turned against the Black community and is now used as a source of psychological control and "terrorism" against them. "In this social climate, even 'black' cultural expression can reinforce the racialized power structure" (Wright, 2004, p.1). Sullivan (2003) is correct in his assessment about rap. He posits that "rap as an

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interracial socializer…could be detrimental…because it may perpetuate prejudices, particularly the view that African Americans are materialistic and hedonistic, which could inadvertently promote stereotypes more than it dismantles them" (2003, p.617), and this is exactly what has been occurring over approximately the last twenty years or so that rap has been mainstream.

Self-Critique

So far, the focus has been on the dominant, white critics' ability to preserve racial stereotypes and use music and the media as a means of discrimination against minorities. However, after examining how black youth are presented with limited stereotypes and role models in the mass media, it is easier to understand why blacks use their "second sight" and are also critics of rap. As stated before, misogyny, violence, and sexist and degrading terms used against women are contained in rap, but they are also contained in other genres of music that do not receive one iota of the attention that rap receives. The reason why rap garners so much attention from critics of all colors is because these stereotypes, clearly, have been promulgated in American culture for some time now because the dominant white group uses these stereotypes to keep the stratification system in tact. African American critics, unaware of this underlying psychological control, only see the surface problem with rap, and therefore, point the finger at rap, just as whites do, and blame it for all of society's ills. Selwyn Hinds, editor of *The Source* magazine, believes that African American critics such as C. Delores Tucker or Russell Simmons "[fail] to acknowledge that misogyny is a sickness that has plagued America for all 200 plus years of her existence, not simply the last 10 or dominated by hip-hop" (Ogbar ,1999, p. 180).

Hypotheses

On the basis of the existing literature, I hypothesize that rap and hip hop music will contain negative images of women, as will R&B and other African American genres of music,

but that there will not be a significant difference in the number of negative images of women contained in African American genres of music when compared to predominantly white forms of music. When analyzing everyday American speech, Stanley (1977) found that there was a widespread devaluation of women across *American* culture, not explicitly in the African American community. Additionally, Sloat 's 1998 study of pop and lite metal rock music also contained themes of fear and loss of male control which are also depicted in rap music as well. Therefore, African American male rap artists are not the only category of people that have a fear of female dominance and power. These themes are also prevalent for white males--as demonstrated by Sloat's 1998 study--and therefore, it stands to reason that these negative stereotypes of women should also manifest themselves in other genres of music as well.

Second, I hypothesize that lyrics performed by males--regardless of genre--will contain more negative stereotypes of women than will songs performed by females. If males are the ones who fear a loss of power, then this fear, again, should materialize in their work. Women, who are becoming more financially independent, should not depict themselves negatively if they are coming closer to equality in the United States. According to Faludi (1991), as women become more independent, the backlash against them intensifies in popular media, and Faludi believes that this backlash is initiated by men who feel disinfranchised by this loss of power. If this backlash is seen in the media, and popular music is one form of mass media in the United States, then this backlash should be seen in male lyrics.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Data and Method

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether or not African American genres of music--rap and hip-hop music in particular--contain a higher instance of degrading images of women than do predominantly white forms of music. The data from this study was obtained by first selecting the cases from the *Billboard Hot 100* charts which are available in the book, *The Billboard's Hottest Hot 100* (Bronson, 2002) or online at www.billboard.com/archives. The *Billboard Hot 100* List was chosen as a data source because it (1) includes songs from all genres--including, but not limited to pop, rock, country, rhythm and blues, rap and hip hop-- and it (2) ranks the songs based on sales data, frequency of radio airplay, and online streams and downloads according to Nielsen (Billboard.com 2010). The *Billboard Hot 100* is essentially a compilation of the most popular, most listened to songs of a given time period across all genres, and therefore, are a good indicator of which songs are most listened to by the American public.

The *Billboard Hot 100* Lists are available for each week of a given year as well as a compilation of the top 100 songs for each year in the United States. This study chose to use the *Hot 100* list for the year, starting with the year 1980 and ending in the year 2005 in 5 year increments. Based on the literature, rap has been critiqued in the media since it gained popularity in the late 1980s, so the study wanted to examine songs that spanned this period of time in order to get an appropriate cross-section of the songs in question. 1980 was chosen as a starting point because the first commercially successful rap song , *Rapper's Delight* by the Sugar Hill Gang,

debuted in 1979 (Bush, 2007).

Additionally, the study chose to use the top 50 songs from each of those 5 years because those were the "most listened to" songs of that particular year, and therefore, had the greatest number of opportunities to be agents of socialization. There are 300 cases in all.

Once a list of the cases was compiled, the researcher then obtained the lyrics to these songs. The Billboard Hot 100 list only contains the artist and title of the song and does not provide the lyrics to the songs, so the study gathered the lyrics to all of the cases from one website, the Top 40 Database(www.top40db.net). Several websites were considered as potential sources for lyrics, but Top 40 Database was selected for a number of reasons. First, the website contains complete lyrics for all of the top songs that were selected for the study. Second, Top 40 Database requires that users must create an account and password in order to view the material or edit any of the website's content. This makes users accountable for their activity within the site. Third, the lyrics are transcribed by the website administrators and not copied from other websites. Top 40 Database claims that for some of the songs, the artists submit the lyrics directly to the database. Lastly, the database is peer reviewed. Members of the site can "red flag" lyrics that appear to be incorrect and suggest corrections. This lessens the chance that a particular case would have incorrect or missing lyrics, thus ensuring a more accurate representation of the song.

Dependent Variable

Once all the songs' lyrics were compiled, the researcher conducted a content analysis of the song lyrics, looking for any patterns or themes that may be present with regards to the depiction of women within those lyrics. A 1985 study by Virginia Cooper in which the researcher investigated the presence and perseverance of stereotypes of females within popular music was used as a basis for constructing the variable "Image Present." Cooper identified 11

feminine images: woman as evil, physical characteristics, need for man, possession of man, woman as mother, woman as sex object, woman as delicate, woman as childlike, woman on a pedastal, woman as attractive, and woman as supernatural.

This study reconstituted some of the images in order to better reflect the qualitative findings of the lyrics researched. Physical characteristics and sex object were combined into one variable. Woman as delicate and female dependence on a male were also combined. Additionally, since the Cooper study was conducted in 1985, the restrictions on what could be said on the radio have loosened, and the category, "derogatory terms typically associated with a woman" was added as was the category "physical violence towards a woman." In all, the present study identified 10 stereotypes that appeared to be prevalent within the cases. Operational Definitions were created in order to help determine what constituted the presence of an image.

Table 1. Operational Defintions of Negative Images of Women			
Image	Definition	Examples	
Woman as Evil/ Manipulative	Any explicit reference to a woman as bad, evil, manipulative or exhibiting deceptive behavior	lying, tempting, seducing a man, being unfaithful, "gold-digger"	
Woman as a Sex Object	Any explicit reference to woman as being sexually desirable or of a man desiring sex with a woman; any mention of any part of a woman's body	"butt," "booty," breasts, "let's get it on," "I want,""give it," "make love"	
Female Dependence on Men	Any refernce to a woman's reliance or need for a man	depending on a man, clinging to a man, finding fulfillment in a man, waiting for a man	
Posession of a Man	Any explicit reference to a woman as a possession of a man	"She belongs to me," or "Make her mine"	
Derogatory Terms	Any name used in reference to a woman that is demeaning or degrading	"bitch," "ho," "hoochie," "slut"	
Violence Towards Women	Any explicit reference of violence towards a woman.	slap, "smack," "hit," "pop," "kill"	
Woman as a child	Any reference to a woman as an infant or child	"girl'" "child," "baby"	
woman as a mother	Any explicit reference to a woman as a mother or her nurturant abilities	"mama" "she takes care of me"	
woman scorned	Any explicit reference to a woman being rejected by a man romantically	"he cheated on me" "he left me"	
Woman resisting affections of a	Any explicit reference to a woman denying a man's affection or sexual advances	"She doesn't want me" "She treats me badly"	

If an image was identified, then it was coded 1 which meant the case contained one or more of the images listed in the table. By coding for image present, it alleviated the problem of having more than one image present within the song and trying to evaluate which image if any was more salient than the others identified. If no image could be identified, then the song was coded as a 0, which meant that no image was present for that particular case.

Independent Variables

For the purposes of this study, three independent variables, genre, race and gender of the performer will be used. Genre refers to the style of music in which the lyrics are presented. Five major styles of music were identified. Songs that best fit the rock genre were assigned a 0. These songs included, but are not limited to, classic rock, heavy metal, and alternative rock. Songs that are considered popular or "pop" music were assigned a 1. These include mainstream pop music, adult contemporary, easy listening/soft rock, disco and dance music. Rap and hip hop songs were coded as a 2. All other predominantly African American genres of music were coded as a 3. These include R&B, soul, funk and jazz music. Country music, bluegrass, cross-over country and pop country were coded as a 4. If the case did not best fit into one of these 5 categories, then it was assigned a 5, which stands for "other genre."

The second variable, race of the performer, refers to the subjective race of the person(s) performing the song lyrics. If the performer or one or more members of the group contained an African American member, then a 1 was assigned to that case. If the artist was white or the group was comprised solely of Caucasian members, then a 0 was assigned. If the race of the performer could not easily be determined, then the case was assigned 4 and excluded from the sample. Two cases could not be coded. It is believed that these two cases will not adversely

affect the outcome of the study. Additionally, no other races of people were coded in this study. None of the cases contained exclusively Asian/Pacific Islander or American Indian performers or music groups. It is believed that the lack of these two races will not adversely affect the outcome of the study, as the study aims to investigate differences between African American and white forms of music only.

The variable, gender of the performer, refers to the subjective gender of the performer(s) of the lyrics in a specific case. If the performer was a male or the group was contained one or more males, then a 1 was assigned for "male." If the performer of the was a solo female artist or the group was comprised solely of females, then a 0 was assigned to that case to indicate that there was no presence of a male.

Control Variables

One control variable for the study will be utilized--time. Since Cooper's 1985 pooled time series study was used as a basis for this study, time appeared to be an important factor in that study; however, the current study is not interested in how the images changed over time, but rather, whether or not an image was present. If only songs from the current year were used, then the data could be skewed because the social, political, and economic climate could adversely affect the lyrics that were written and songs purchased in a given year. By taking samples from 25 years worth of music, it keeps time constant and controls for any outside social influences that may have affected a particular year.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Univariate Analysis

This study began by first compiling the frequencies of the dependent variable (ImagePresent), then the independent variables (Genre, Race and GenderofPerformer in Tables 2-5. For the dependent variable, ImagePresent, 99 cases did not have at least one negative image present within the lyrics, while 199 cases did have at least one image present. 4 cases were excluded from the sample because they contained no lyrics and two were excluded because race could not be identified. The results are illustrated in Table 2.

For the independent variable, genre, there were 66 rock songs, 118 pop songs, 30 rap or hip-hop songs, 77 R&B/Soul songs, and 3 songs that did not fit any of the genre categories. Genre was coded as 0 for rock, 1 for pop, 2 for rap and hip-hop, 3 for R&B, 4 for country and 5 for other, as illustrated in Table 3. For race, there are 148 white artists and 146 black artists, which shows that there is an even distribution of black and white artists, as shown in Table 4. For Gender of Performer, shown in Table 5, there are 85 exclusively female artists or groups as compared with 209 male artists or music groups.

Bivariate Analysis

One assumption that the study makes is that black artists are more heavily concentrated in African American genres of music--namely rap/hip-hop and R&B, and white artists are more heavily concentrated in rock, pop and country music. In order to assure that this assumption is a fair one, a crosstabulation of the variables Race and Genre was conducted. The study found that

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there is a significant relationship between race and genre. White artists are most heavily

concentrated in pop music (79 cases), followed by rock music (59 cases). Conversely, black

artists were most heavily concentrated within the Rhythm and Blues genre (74 cases), followed

by pop music (37 cases), and then rap/hip-hop (28 cases). Therefore, it appears that the

assumption made by the study is correct in one sense by assuming that African Americans are

more likely to produce R&B music, and white artists comprise the majority of the rock songs,

but incorrect when concerning pop music. Pop is a genre that seems to be prevalent with both

white and black artists and appears to be a more multicultural genre than previously thought

since pop is the number one category for white artists and the second largest category for black

artists. Rap appears to be an African American genre of music as there are 28 cases of rap music

for African American artists while there are only 2 cases of white rap artists. This relationship is

significant at the .01 level with a Chi Square of 152.318 with 5 degrees of freedom. The results

can be seen in Table 6.

Once the relationship between race and genre was established, a crosstabulation of genre

by image present was conducted. The results are displayed in Table 7. The study found that a

significant relationship does exist between genre and image present. The genre with the highest

number of images present is pop music (73) followed by Rhythm and Blues music with 66 cases.

Therefore, the genre does seem to exert some influence whether or not a negative female image

is present. This relationship is significant at the .01 level with a Chi Square of 27.33.

Interestingly, the biggest gaps in this crosstabulation occured in the African American genres.

Rap/Hip-hop had 24 cases that contained at least one negative image while only 6 cases did not.

Even more so, the R&B category had 66 positive cases of images present and only 11 cases that

contained no image. It appears that since African Americans and whites are lumped into the

same categories--especially in the pop category-- that race may be distorting the statistic.

Therefore, a crosstabulation of race by image present was then conducted. The results can be seen in Table 8. The study found that a significant relationship does exist between race and image present, and the significance is with the African American artists. Of the 146 songs performed by African Americans, 76% (111) of them contained at least one negative image of women while only 24% did not (35 cases). An almost 1:4 ratio of songs that do not contain an image to ones that do. The distribution among white artists was more even as 91 songs contained an image versus 61 songs that did not contain one image. This relationship is significant at the .01 level with a Chi Square of 9.442.

One final crosstabulation of race by image present was conducted, but the cases were divided by gender to see if that variable was a confounding variable and affected the results of the previous crosstabulations. The results can be seen in Table 9. The study found that there was a significant relationship, but only with males. White males had 51 songs that did not contain one image and 64 songs that contained at least one image, which seems to be somewhat even. It appears that this relationship is significant because there is a difference in the number of songs that do not contain an image that are performed by African American men (25) and songs that do contain at least one negative image (74). Again it appears to mimic the 1:4 ratio seen earlier in the race x image crosstabulation. The relationship is significant at the .01 level with a chi square of 8.044. For females, the relationship is not significant (p=.429). Therefore, gender did not distort the results seen earlier.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

Race Matters

The crosstabulations conducted in this study show mixed results in regards to the original hypotheses. It was hypothesized that a significant relationship would not exist between genre and image present and that genres of music that are considered primarily "black" or "white" forms of music—not just rap music—would contain negative images of women. However, a significant relationship did exist. The study was correct in hypothesizing that rap would not be the only genre of music that contains negative images of women. Rhythm and Blues music and pop music also contained a significant number of images present. However, it was ascertained through previous statistical analysis that these three genres contained the greatest concentrations of African American performers, and therefore, the study was incorrect in postulating that music—regardless of race and genre—would have negative images present. It appears that music performed by African Americans had a greater number of images present when compared with music produced by whites.

Additionally, it was hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in the number of images present in music produced by males when compared with music performed by females—regardless of race. However, the crosstabulation of race and image present, divided by gender, showed that a significant relationship did not exist for females, but a significant relationship did exist for males. Upon further inspection, it was clear that the relationship was

significant because of African American males. Overwhelmingly, African American males had a higher number of songs that contained negative images of women when compared with white males. Therefore, mixed results were again obtained. The study was correct in assuming a relationship did exist for gender, but incorrectly assumed that race did not play a factor. Again, race was an overwhelming factor. African American males produced more offensive songs than any other category of people and at a four to one rate of negative to positive or neutral songs.

When studying music, one cannot look at the music and lyrics in a colorblind fashion. Rodman (2006) was correct in positing that "race and racial politics are absolutely crucial to understanding any and every major form of US popular music" (p. 108). Elizabeth Higginbotham, in her 1997 study called *Women and Work*, claimed that the social sciences focuses too narrowly on class and that is not the only contributing factor to the stratification system in place in America today. She posits that one must also look at race and gender to get a deeper understanding of the subject matter at hand. In this instance, she studied the workplace environment; however, it appears that this theory can be applied to a broader set of circumstances than the workplace. Race is also significant in the study of popular culture and popular music, and is a key factor in the present study.

William Julius Wilson (1996) claims that in situations of "heightened racial awareness" (p. 284), people have a tendency to overlook the fact that "racial antagonisms are the product of situations—economic situations, political situations, and social situations" (p. 284). This is true especially when examining African American males. Often times, the dominant culture looks on this category of people with disdain and claims that "there is something terribly wrong with the black man…In any discussion of prisons, welfare, joblessness, family desertion, crime, violence,

or drugs, his name is invoked…It has become easy to grumble that he is the reason for our nation's problems" (Anderson, 2000, p. 267). In the literature review, it was shown that time and time again, rap music, an African American form of music, was blamed for society's ills, especially during heightened political times, such as election years. However, the present study has shown that while rap music is not the sole source of inflammatory lyrics, genres of music that have high concentrations of African Americans are overwhelmingly more misogynistic. Therefore, it would be easy to conclude the study by saying, "well, there's just something wrong with the black man," but that would be simplistic and wrong. When examining the results of the study, one must keep in mind Wilson's (1996) statement that these racial antagonisms are the product of social, economic and political situations. African American males are not born with a misogynist gene. Environmental conditions have lead to this mindset and behavior.

Music and Economics

One such socio-economic condition that was highlighted in the literature review that is most likely a major contributing factor to the degradation of women by African American males is the fact that masculinity or "being a man" is overwhelmingly defined by the ability to be a good provider. Faludi (1991) cited a survey in her book, *Backlash*, in which masculinity is intimately linked with the ability to provide for one's self as well as one's family. Anderson (2000) also states that "men are considered to be responsible for the welfare of their families and communities in our society" (p. 267). According to Frances M. Beal (2008), capitalism— through its exploitative practices—has attempted "to destroy the humanity of all people and particularly, the humanity of black people" (p. 166). Beal believes that capitalism attacks the livelihood and wellbeing of every black person in America.

In keeping with its goal of destroying the black race's will to resist its subjugation,

capitalism found it necessary to create a situation where the black man found it

impossible to find meaningful or productive employment. More often than not, he

couldn't find work of any kind. And the black woman likewise was manipulated by the

System, economically exploited and physically assaulted. She could often find work in

the white man's kitchen, however, and sometimes became the sole breadwinner of the

family. This predicament has led to many psychological problems on the part of both

man and woman, and has contributed to the turmoil that we find in the black family

structure (2008, p. 166).

Since black women are often times the sole bread winner of the family, dating back to the times

when they worked "in the white man's kitchen," black women have developed a sense of

independence and self-sufficiency about them. Beal (2008) views women who work inside the

home as nothing more than legalized prostitutes (p. 166)—clearly looking at these women with a

sense of disdain. This negative view of housewives serves to motivate African American into the

labor force and to earn a wage for their families because "marriage offers less monetary benefit

to women of color….Particularly for less-educated African American women—who are

relatively unlikely to be married—work is a critical poverty prevention strategy" (Catanzarite

and Ortiz, 2005, p. 170-171). This notion of self sufficiency permeates the lyrics performed by

African American women.

A Black Female's Ability to Provide

Janet Jackson, in her song, *Escapade*, which was the sixth best selling song of 1990,

sings about her ability to make money and provide for a man: "My mind's tired/I've worked so

hard all week/Cashed my check/I'm ready to go/I promise you/I'll show you such a good time"

(Jackson et al., 1989). Here, Jackson speaks about her ability to work and earn money. In fact,

Jackson says that she has earned enough money to take herself as well as a man with her on an adventure that she can fund solely.

We can see this theme again in 1995, with African American singer, Adina Howard's song, *Freak Like Me*, which was the fifteenth best selling song of 1995. In the lyrics, Howard bluntly says, "I don't care what they say/I'm not about to pay nobody's way/Cause it's all about the dog in me/Mmm hmm/ I wanna freak in the morning/ A freak in the evening just like me/I need a roughneck nigga/That can satisfy me just for me" (Clinton et al., 1995). Howard clearly states that she has money, but she does not want to use this money to take care of anyone else—including a man. This could imply that Howard believes that although she has money and can provide for herself, she believes that a man should be able to contribute financially and pay his own "way." Interestingly, Howard also takes on some of the male sexual characteristics that were highlighted in the raps of LL Cool J and Notorious B.I.G. in the same year (discussed in the next section). She discusses her own physical prowess and sexual needs, and essentially reduces a man to a sexual plaything. She does not claim that she is interested in any kind of relationship with a man, other than a sexual one. Since Howard can provide for herself and potentially others, she is only interested in sexual gratification from members of the opposite sex because she can meet all of her other needs herself. Thus, almost rejecting men entirely.

This same rejection of men who are unable to provide can be seen in Destiny's Child's *Independent Women Part 1*, which hit number two on the Hot 100 chart in 2000. "Question…Tell me what you think about me/ I buy my own diamonds and I buy my own rings/Only ring your celly when I'm feelin' lonely/When its all over please get up and leave" (Knowles et. al, 2000). Destiny's Child lists how they are able to afford expensive possessions such as fine jewelry and diamonds without the aid of a man. In addition, Destiny's Child also

mimics the sentiments of Howard's *Freak Like Me*, by reducing men to sexual playthings. The women say, essentially, that all they need men for is sex and nothing else—not even a relationship, as they tell the man to "please get up and leave," after intercourse is through. Destiny's Child also takes it a step further, and mimics the sentiments of Beal (2008) by bluntly telling women that they need to reject being dependent on men and to take pride in the ability to provide for themselves: "Question How'd you like this knowledge that I brought/Braggin on that cash that he gave you is to front/If you're gonna brag make sure its your money you flaunt/Depend on no one else to give you what you want/The shoes on my feet/ I bought it/The clothes I'm wearing/ I've bought it/ The rock I'm rockin/ Cause I depend on me" (Knowles et al., 2000). Destiny's Child shows that it is frowned upon for women to brag about having a man to take care of them, and that it is respectable to be able to provide lavish possessions for yourself; thus, again rejecting males for everything but sexual gratification.

Masculinity, Femininity, and The Black Male's Ability to Provide

Like stated before, if a woman can take care of herself, then what good are men? This question may be similar to what men—especially black men-- across the United States are asking themselves. As more women are graduating from college, especially in the black community, it is "more difficult for low-wage black men to get married" (Canton, 2006, p. 252). It seems as if the tables have now turned, and women can now provide for men. However, as Canton (2006) pointed out, men are still socialized to believe that it is essential to their manhood to be able to provide for their women, and this ability to be the "provider" is intimately linked with a man's pride, self esteem, and self worth.

Beal (2008) also posits that due to the forces of capitalism, many black women believe that it is a man's duty to go out and work, and if they do not, black women believe that "black

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men [are] shiftless and lazy, otherwise they would get a job and support their family as they ought to" (p. 166). If one does not get a job and is deemed lazy, then they are also deemed not a man. "[I]f establishing masculinity depends on succeeding as the prime breadwinner, then it is hard to imagine a force more directly threatening to fragile American manhood than the feminist drive for economic equality" (Faludi, 1991, p. 65).

This importance of males being able to provide material comfort is present in the lyrics; however, this theme is not visible in the lyrics until 1985. According to the Pew Research center, black males and females in the 1970s and 1980s were equally as likely to attend and graduate from college, but by 1990, black women had pulled ahead of black men (Taylor et al., 2010, p. 24); therefore, once men began to see that they were not able to provide as well as they had before, they began to "advertise" their ability to provide in the lyrics—not unlike a peacock who shows his plumage to potential mates. Men display what they have or can provide in order to attract women. In 1985, Eddie Murphy illustrates this concept in his song, *Party All the Time*, which was number fourteen on the Hot 100 chart. Murphy sings, "Girl, I can't understand it/Why you wanna hurt me/After all the things I've done for you/I give you separate roses/Put diamonds on your finger/You wanna hang out all night/What am I to do?" (James, R., 1985). Here, Eddie Murphy is expressing the frustrations of the African American male cohort. Murphy is describing how he is able to give his "girl" expensive gifts, such as diamonds and roses, but it is still not good enough for her. Murphy is rejected even though he is able to do what African American males were better able to do in previous generations--provide for his girl. Black women have always had to work more than their white female counterparts (Higginbotham, 1997; Taylor et al., 2010), but now, they were not only working in greater numbers, but achieving more educationally than black men and no longer relying on them as much for

monetary support because "marriage offers less monetary benefit to women of color than to white women" (Catanzarite and Ortiz, 1995). The lyrics of Murphy's song expresses this new-found rejection that black males were experiencing during the latter half of the 1980s.

We can also see this pattern from an African American male artist, Calloway, in 1990. Calloway's aptly titled song, *I Wanna Be Rich*, highlights the black male's yearning to be able to provide for a woman. Calloway sings, "I want money/lots and lots of money/I want the pie in the sky/I want money/lots and lots of money" (Calloway et al., 1989). He goes on to say, "I wanna be rich, full of love, peace and happiness/ Every way rich/Love, peace and happiness/I want all the things lovers do/A pocketful of dreams come true/Even things you cannot buy/I want you by my side/To keep you satisfied and rich" (Calloway et al., 1989). In this song, Calloway straightforwardly says that he desires to have a lot of money, and one of the reasons for this desire for money is to have a woman beside him that he can provide for. Calloway also says that if he can acquire great sums of money, then he will have "love" from a woman, and "peace" and "happiness" which could imply that he no longer has any mental anguish over the inability to provide for a woman, and thusly, having a lot of money and a woman will make him happy and mentally at ease. This song highlights the cognitive dissonance that a black male has when he cannot provide for a woman and the remedy for this anguish is having a lot of money and being rich, and love, peace and happiness is only offered to those who can "afford" it.

By 1995, rap was becoming more mainstream, and rappers and other black artists were becoming more blunt about their earnings and ability to provide. Montell Jordan, in his song, *This is How We Do It* (the 8th most popular song of 1995), has a short rap at the end of his song that highlights his career and how his financial status improved,

Montell made no money and life sure was slow/All they said was 68 he stood/ And

people thought the music that he made was good/ There lived a D.J. and Paul was his

name/He came up to Monty, this is what he said/You and OG are gonna make some cash/

Sell a million records and we'll make in a dash (Jordan et al., 1995).

Here, Jordan first comments on his financial situation before his music career began. He claimed

that when he had "no money" his life was "slow," which implies in this song, which is about

partying, that he was not able to have any fun or get any girls because he had no money. Earlier

in the song, Jordan talks about how he is a "Big G"(a big, important man), and "The girls see I

got the money/ A hundred dollar bills y'all" (Jordan et al., 1995). Now that Jordan is a man of

some recognition, a "Big G," as he phrases it and has enough money to provide for a female,

then he notes that he is able to get the attention of the ladies now, but was unable to do so when

he had no money and his life was "slow."

In a more risqué R& B song from 1995, LL Cool J, in the thirteenth best selling song of

the year, *Hey Lover*, talks about how he is in love with a woman who is involved with another,

wealthier man. "I saw you with your man/ smiling, huh, a Coach bag in your hand… What your

man got his hustle on gotcha type scared/break ya off a little chump change to do your hair/that

seems to be enough to satisfy your needs" (Smith and Temperton, 1995). Here, LL Cool J is

talking about how this particular woman that he desires is given expensive possessions, such as a

high-end, Coach purse and money to take care of her hair/grooming needs by a man who has

some money. By contrast, LL Cool J does not have the same wealth and ability to provide for

this particular woman, all he has is his body. He highlights his health, as he compares this

woman's man to himself, "…he drinks too much and smokes too many blunts/ and I've been

working out everyday thinking about you" (Smith and Temperton, 1995). Here, LL Cool J tries

to emphasize one of his attributes, his overall general health and superior physique, which the

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girl's "man" does not have. In addition, LL Cool J also highlights another physical attribute of his that he deems important, his sexual prowess, "I kissed you softly and you yearned for more/We experienced pleasure unparallel/into an ocean of love we both fell/swimming in timeless, currents of pure bliss/fantasies interchanging with each kiss" (Smith and Temperton, 1995). LL Cool J shows that he does have the ability to satisfy a woman sexually and better than any other man, including this woman's "man," because he claims that with him, she would experience pleasure "unparallel" to that of any other sexual partner. While these attributes seem desirable to women, physical characteristics do not hold as much weight to a woman as the ability to provide, as LL Cool J notes, " but it's a fantasy/It won't come true/we never even spoke and your man swear he love you/so I'm gonna keep all these feelings inside/keep my dreams alive until the right time" (Smith and Temperton, 1995). LL Cool J is afraid to even approach this woman because she is with a man who has money, and although he seems to speak highly of his physical attributes and abilities, he feels that those attributes cannot compete with the almighty dollar. Therefore, he will not approach the woman until the "right time" which could imply that once has some other things, possibly money that he would be able to enter into a relationship with a woman and provide for her.

One of the most noted rappers of the 1990s, Notorious B.I.G. also raps about how his money can attract women, whom he refers to as "hoes," in his 1995 song, *Big Poppa*, which made it to the forty-fifth spot on the Hot 100 List in 1995. "Now check it, I got more mack than Craig and in the bed/ Believe me sweety I got enough to feed the needy/No need to be greedy I got mad friends with Benzs/C-notes by the layers, true fuckin' players" (Wallace, 1995). Notorious B.I.G. emphasizes two characteristics that highlight his ability to provide and attract women, or as he calls it, "mack." He can provide, much like LL Cool J, physically "in the bed,"

as well as financially, as he claims that he has money and high-end possessions, such as Mercedes Benz automobiles. This makes Notorious B.I.G., "the man, girlfriend" (Wallace, 1995). Since Notorious can provide for a woman physically and financially, then he is a real man in his eyes—highlighting the connection between the ability to provide and masculinity.

African American R&B artist, Ruff Endz, in his 2000 song, *No More*, describes being rejected by a woman for another man who can provide: "Baby, relax, sit back and chill/Just give me a second/And let me tell you how I feel/Cause all around town you've been steppin' out" (Ferrell Jr. et al., 2000). Ruff Endz is upset that the woman has had an affair, and he tries to determine why the woman would choose this other man over him. He asks his "baby," "Does he lace you with the finer things?/ Does he make you wanna scream his name?/Does he hit it from the front to back?/ Did you let him break it down like that?" (Ferrell Jr. et al., 2000). The first thing that Ruff Endz asks his baby is whether or not this other man has the ability to provide for the woman financially, which shows that this ability to provide is important. Sexual relations is the second thing he mentions, which shows that it has some importance, but Ruff Endz is tying the sexual relationship with the other man's ability to provide. He thinks that a potential reason why his baby left him was because the other man can provide expensive gifts or the ability to "lace" her with "the finer things." After Ruff Endz asks his woman about the other man's abilities, he concludes that there will be "No more shopping sprees/No more late night creeps/No more VIPs/No more dough/We can't even kick it no more" (Ferrell Jr. et al., 2000). Ruff Endz is telling his baby that he will no longer clothe her, provide her with affection, lavish trips and outings or money. He goes on to say that they can no longer "kick it" or have any kind of relationship whatsoever. Here, Ruff Endz is displaying a self protective behavior by essentially saying that he is rejecting this woman because she rejected him, and he will no longer give her

what he claims to be the most important things in life, possessions.

African American rapper, Nelly, who—as mentioned in the literature review—was banned from performing at Spelman College, an all-female, historically black university for his misogynistic lyrics also has a hit song from the year 2000, (*Hot Shit) Country Grammar* that discusses his possessions and an ability to provide for women. Nelly says "You can find me, in St. Louis, rollin' on dubs/Smokin dubs in clubs, blowin' up like cocoa puff….It's all because I've accumulated enough stretch/Just to navigate it, fully decorated on chrome/And it's candy painted/Fans fainted" (Haynes Jr. and Epperson, 2000). All of this is a slang way of saying that Nelly has an expensive car—a stretch Lincoln Navigator-- with a nice paint job and chrome trim. He also is able to frequent night clubs and smoke marijuana. Nelly is showing that he has income and the ability to purchase expensive cars that are the envy of his town as well as illegal drugs. He believes that because he owns these things that he, like Notorious BIG said earlier, is "born to mack" (Haynes Jr. and Epperson, 2000), or has the ability to attract a lot of women, which makes women more like possessions than actual people. Nelly brags about his ability to provide, and he tells women that if they "play by my rules…you gon' stay high" (Haynes Jr. and Epperson, 2000). Therefore, if women do or say what he wants them to, then he will extend the ability to provide for them, but if they do not, then they will no longer be "high" in the literal, physical term or the figurative "high" in society.

2005's number 3 song, *Let Me Love You*, by Mario also deals with the same theme of providing for a woman. In this song, the Mario tells the object of his affection, "If I was ya man (baby you)/Never worry 'bout (what I do)/I'd be coming home (back to you)/Every night, doin' you right/ You're the type of woman (deserves good thangs [sic])/Fist full of diamonds (hand full of rings)" (Storch and Smith,. 2004). Mario, like the artists before him, brags about how he

can provide expensive gifts—like jewelry and rings. Additionally, Mario shows that in addition to being able to provide financially, he can also provide physically as he claims he perform sexually to the female's satisfaction, or "doin' you right." In Mario's eyes, this makes him good enough to be a "man."

Finally, another Hot 100 Hit from 2005, 50 Cent's *Just a Lil Bit* puts it explicitly how African American men believe that money and the ability to provide can attract women, as 50 Cent raps "Come get your bitch, she on me, dog/She must have heard about the dough/Now captain, come and save a hoe" (Jackson and Storch, 2005). These explicit lyrics highlight how 50 Cent believes that his money and ability to provide can attract women, even women who "belong" to other men.

What all of these songs highlight is how male artists link the ability to provide material possessions with masculinity. Beal (2008) theorizes that this psychological association is a product of capitalism's assault on the black race. "It has defined 'manhood' in terms of its own interests…Therefore, an individual who has a good job, makes a lot of money and drives a Cadillac is a real 'man,' and conversely, an individual who is lacking these 'qualities' is less of a man" (Beal, 2008, p. 166). One can see in song after song how the litany of possessions that a man owns or can provide, such as Jordan's "hundred dollar bills," Notorious B.I.G.'s "Benzs," Mario's diamond rings and jewelry or Nelly's "stretch Nav" serve to give these men a sense of power, and more importantly, a feeling of masculinity, which, according to Beal (2008) has been taken by the oppressive forces of capitalism.

Interestingly, the female artists, such as Destiny's Child or Adina Howard, who were mentioned earlier in the discussion about independent women also use this same masculine litany of possessions to demonstrate their power and ability to provide. However, according to

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Beal (2008), capitalism has also provided a rubric for what a woman should be like—and a self-sufficient black woman is not it. "The ideal model that is projected for a woman in to be surrounded by hypocritical homage and estranged from all real work, spending idle hours primping and preening, obsessed with conspicuous consumption" (p. 166). We can see these themes time and time again in the songs the study has highlighted. Eddie Murphy's 1985 song talks about how he gives his woman roses and diamonds, LL Cool J references a woman having an expensive Coach purse and concerned with getting money to do her hair, and Mario talks about how he wants to give a woman diamond rings and "the finer things." All of these men assume that black women want to fit this stereotypical role of what a "feminine" woman is, and furthermore, these men try to pigeon-hole black women into these stereotypes, thus limiting their power. In the lyrics, these women are not depicted as the backbone and breadwinners of their families. In the songs, they are displayed as nothing more than dolls who need to be "laced" with the finer things, as Mario (2004) puts it; thus almost dehumanizing them completely.

Degrading Images of Women in the Lyrics: The public assault on women

The degradation of women in the lyrics is one of the ways in which men—especially black men --are able to make sense of their situation, as well as preserve their pride to the outside world. Willis (1997) believes that "politically and economically marginalized men often prey on women over whom they are able to exert some degree of power" (in Ralph, 2006, p. 77). Beal (2008) posits that defaming women "acts as an escape valve for capitalism. Men may be cruelly exploited and subjected to all sorts of dehumanizing tactics on the part of the ruling class, but they have someone who is below them—at least they are not women" (p. 166), and a tried and true way in which men can keep women in this subjugated role is to present women in a negative light through the mass media—including popular music—which is what the study used to

quantify female degradation and to see which forms of music could potentially be dangerous

agents of socialization. According to Benokraitis, "women become objects as men become

objectifiers. As the culture has granted men the right and priviledge of looking at women,

women have been expected to accept the role of stimulators of men's visual interest" (p. 251).

Therefore, to regain control and power, men often times in the lyrics limit a woman's life

functions to simply a sex role—one of the themes explored in the study. For example, LL Cool J

(1995) does not show any interest in his woman other than a sexual one, as he does not describe

a romantic dinner or a movie in his song, but rather, he describes in a great amount of detail,

exactly what he envisions their sexual encounters would be like. Ruff Endz (2000) refers to a

woman as a sexual object when he asks her about how the other man performs sexually. He

assumes that the woman who cheated on him is not interested in the other man because he is

funny, kind, or caring. The only thing this woman is interested in is sex; thus reducing her to a

sexual being. Notorious B.I.G. also reduces women to sex objects. He starts out his rap by

asking women if he can "lace these lyrical douches in your bushes," (Wallace, 1995) which

reduces a woman down to nothing more than her sex organ. Additionally, Notorious B.I.G.

claims that he sees "some ladies tonight that should be havin' my baby (baby)" (Wallace, 1995),

which pretty much makes a woman not a woman at all—just a reproductive function.

Reducing women to sex objects in popular music is just one of the negative images

explored in the lyrics and only one form of subtle sex discrimination that allows men to regain a

certain degree of control. Another form that was accounted for in the study was treating women

as children to reduce their power. One way in which the study saw this play out in the lyrics was

constant referrals to women as "baby," "girl," or "child." In the Montell Jordan refers to women

as "girls," Eddie Murphy, Mario and Ruff Endz all refer to the women in the songs as "baby." In

Ruff Endz's song, the woman was punished much like a child for her actions. Since she cheated with another man, Ruff Endz was going to take away her allowance of sorts in order to punish her and regain some of his masculinity and control. Nelly (2000) also warns women that they better act right if they want to stay "high." Therefore, if they want to enjoy all of the material possessions that Nelly can afford them, then they better do as he say and let him be the one in control.

One final form of discrimination that was seen in the lyrics is using derogatory terms to describe women. This may fall into the category of what Benokraitis (1997) refers to as blatant discrimination. Rappers such as Notorious B.I.G. and Nelly refer to women as "hoes," as does 50 Cent. 50 Cent also takes it a step further and refers to a woman as a "bitch." Although these terms are a bit more blatant, they simply work in the same fashion as the child-like terms and serves as a way to defame women while simultaneously building up the self-esteem and power of the men who feel disenfranchised by the system.

Anderson (2000) posits that the reason black men feel that they have no power or control is because they have found out that "American society is not there for them" (p. 267). Black men know that "a racially stratified system is in place, and that his place, fortified through acts of prejudice and discrimination, is at the bottom of it" (Anderson 1990, 1999 in Anderson, 2000, p. 268). "Life has taught the young [black] man that he can do certain things but cannot go beyond his limited situation; dreams are simply never fulfilled" (Anderson, 2000, p. 268). At this point, black men are not graduating from high school and college as much as black women are (Taylor et al., 2010). They do not make as much money as their white counterparts (Catanzarite and Ortiz, 1995). They must rely on women to take a larger share of the financial burden and work to support their families (Catanzarite and Ortiz, 1995; Higginbotham, 1997). They do not have as

much wealth as their white counterparts (Oliver and Shapiro, 2005). All of these economic

factors are what men use as a litmus test when measuring their own masculinity, and if they

cannot fulfill these things and provide for their families, then they are simply not a man in their

eyes. They feel alienated by capitalism, or what Beal (2008) refers to as, "the system," and

therefore, "a common response is to embrace the profound alienation represented by the

oppositional culture of the street" (Anderson, 2000,p. 268). One of the common elements of

street culture is to defame women because, as Willis (1997) points out, "politically and

economically marginalized men often prey on women over whom they are able to exert some

degree of power" (Ralph, 2006, p. 77), as the Spinners in their 1980 hit, *Working My Way Back*

to You Girl, acknowledge "I used to love to make you cry/It made me feel like a man inside"

(Linzer et al., 1980). This power struggle can be seen in the music of the streets—in rap—and

other forms of African American music. Art is simply imitating the harsh economic realities of

African American life in America.

Socialization

Music is a powerful form of socialization that actually excites the listener and facilitates

memorization of the messages contained in the lyrics (Cooper, 1985). Therefore, the negative

images contained in the lyrics would be reinforced over and over again through the use of tonal

beats and rhythm contained in the music itself (Cooper, 1985). Since music is suggested to be a

powerful form of socialization, concerns should be raised about the effects that music may have

on children and young adults because psychological studies suggest that the acquisition of

values, beliefs, and expectations are products of the socialization process, especially during

childhood (O'Neil, 2005). Young people, ages 10-24, consume nearly a third of all album sales

(RIAA, 2003), and Brunner (1995) has found that such socialization could possibly be occurring

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with younger generations, as many young people in her study expressed that they believed messages contained in music are an accurate account of reality.

Berry (2000) posited that "negative portrayals of minorities can have two potential outcomes: a) continued prejudice and racism and b) negative self esteem of members of the minority groups" (p. 57), and both of these outcomes work to preserve the existing racial stratification system. If young African Americans see these negative images of women in music, then according to Brunner's (1995) study, they are likely to believe that these depictions of women in popular music are accurate representations of women, which furthers the tensions between African American men and women. Black males will believe that women are beneath them and nothing but "bitches," "hoes," and there for their own sexual gratification, and black females will think that they are not "good enough," and should conform to the ideals set forth by the capitalist system--that they should exist solely for sexual gratification and conspicuous consumption. Additionally, the majority group will continue to view African Americans in these limited terms, and popular African American music will serve as "evidence" for political debates and racist ideologies.

Limitations

While the researcher made an effort to capture an accurate cross-section of music from the last quarter century, it is not humanly possibly to procure and dissect every piece of music that was produced in the last 30 years. The researcher chose the *Billboard Hot* 100 because it is a list of the most played and sold music of a given year. However, one limitation is that the sample of rap was relatively small and is still not as mainstream as other African American forms of music, such as R&B, which was better represented in the study sample. By selecting other music lists or charts, there is a chance that different quantitative results may have come

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from those analyses, but since the current study's findings reflected much of the current stratification and income inequality literature, it seems highly unlikely that this would be the case.

Another limitation of the study is that music and lyrics, much like other forms of art, such as poetry, are subjective sources of information. What one person may find inflammatory may seem quite benign to another, especially when dealing with themes that are considered "subtle sex discrimination" (Benokraitis, 1997). Benokraitis (1997) describes subtle sex discrimination as:

> the unequal and harmful treatment of women that is typically less visible and obvious than blatant sex discrimination. It is often not noticed because most people have internalized subtle sexist behavior as 'normal,' 'natural,' or acceptable...Subtle sex discrimination is difficult to document because many people do not perceive it as serious or harmful. In addition, subtle sex discrimination is more harmful than it appears: What is discrimination to many women may not seem discriminatory to many men or even women... (p. 249).

While the study has made every attempt to neutralize biases or sensitivities, the researcher is still a product of the dominant, American culture. After reading Benokraitis' description of how subtle sex discrimination can often go unnoticed, even by women, then it is reasonable to assume that the researcher—a white female--although sensitive to sex discrimination in the lyrics, may have missed language or phrases in the lyrics that may be discriminatory to some groups of women, and conversely, some lyrics that the researcher deemed as discriminatory may not seem so to other people who listen to the music.

Research Implications

While this study experienced some mixed results with regards to the hypotheses, it is still recommended that further research be done in this area. Music—especially for minorities—is a good source for researchers to get a glimpse of minority life in the United States. Rapper Chuck D described rap music as "Rap is CNN for black people;" (Chang, 2004,p.1) therefore, if you want to know what is going on in the African American world, rap is where you would turn for your news and information, much like white America turns to CNN for theirs. One problem with the current study is the small sample of rap music—less than 30 cases. This shows that while rap garners more of the attention in the media over the last 3 decades, it does not have as much socialization power as the media and scholars fear. One way to examine more of the underlying themes in rap would be to select a sample of rap music from another source—either another chart, some kind of playlist or list in a magazine as Cooper used in her study in 1985—to see if the same themes are present in a larger sample of rap than what the present study has to offer.

Additionally, if the concerns of the minority populations such as African Americans are reflected in mainstream media, then we could use music to learn about other minority populations, such as Hispanics. The *Hot 100* chart did not contain a large number of songs produced by Hispanics, most likely due to the language barrier—as most songs popular with Hispanics are in the Spanish language and not yet part of mainstream America's music. However, if one is fluent in Spanish and English, then it would be wise to investigate the concerns of this category of people through different mass media outlets, including music. Hispanics experience much of the same economic climates and conditions as African Americans. The earnings of Hispanic men are less than their white counterparts (Catanzarite and Ortiz, 1995), and marriage is less beneficial for Hispanic women, just as it is for blacks (Catanzarite

and Ortiz, 1995). In fact, research has found that Hispanic poverty is even less responsive to economic recovery than for whites or blacks (Tienda and Stier, 2005). As of 2001, the Hispanic population became the largest minority, surpassing African Americans (de Vries, 2003, p.1), and since they are considered an "at risk" population for poverty (Tienda and Stier, 2005), just like African Americans, it would be interesting to see if the themes found in African American music were the same as the themes contained in Hispanic music.

Conclusions

Rap has been given more than its fair share of negative attention in the media. It is reviled by critics in the media as a degrading, misogynistic form of music. Through the present study, it was ascertained that while rap does contain a great deal of negative images of women within its lyrics, it is not the only form of music that does so. Other genres of music degrade women, but the study found that these genres contain the highest concentrations of African American artists. Clearly, race plays a role when it comes to presenting women in a negative light within the music. However, rap music is not the cause of the friction between African American men and women. The study contends that economic hardships within the black community contribute to an on-going power struggle between African Americans, and that the power struggle between the genders is reflected in popular African American music of the day. As Weber stated, music is the product of capitalism, and as Beal put it, the stereotypes within the music are a product of the oppressive forces of capitalism, and we can definitely see this in popular African American music today. However, while the music is a product of the African American community, it does have the potential to socialize future generations and cause further tensions between the races and sexes as well as serve as a medium to continue the dominant culture's oppression of minorities and women.

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Table 2: Frequency of Image Present

	Frequency	Percent
Image Not Present	99	**33.2**
Image Present	199	**66.8**
Total	**298**	**100.0**

Table 3: Frequency of Genre

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rock	66	22	22.1	**22.1**
Pop	118	39.3	39.6	**61.7**
Rap	30	10	10.1	**71.8**
R&B	77	25.7	25.8	**97.7**
Country	6	2.0	2.0	**99.7**
Other	1	.3	.3	**100**
Total	**298**	**99.3**	**100**	

Table 4: Frequency of Race

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
White	148	49.3	50.3	**50.3**
Black	146	48.7	49.7	**100**
Total	294	98	100	

Table 5: Frequency of Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Female	85	28.9
Male	209	71.1
Total	294	100

Table 6: Crosstabulation of Race by Genre

Race	Rock	Pop	Rap	R&B	Country	
			Genre			
	Rock	Pop	Rap	R&B	Country	
White	59	81	2	3	6	**152**
Black	7	37	28	74	0	**146**
Total	**66**	**118**	**30**	**77**	**6**	**298**

Chi Square=152.318, p=.000

Table 7: Crosstabulation of Genre by Image Present

Genre	Image Present		
	No	Yes	
Rock	33	33	66
Pop	45	73	118
Rap	6	24	30
R&B	11	67	77
Country	1	5	6
Total	95	203	298

Chi Square=27.33, p=.002

Table 8: Crosstabulation of Race by Image Present

	Image Present		
Race	No	Yes	
White	61	91	**152**
Black	35	111	**146**
	96	**202**	**298**

Chi Square=9.442, p=.009

Table 9: Crosstabulation of Race and Gender by Image Present

Race and Gender	Image Present		
	No	Yes	
White Female	10	27	**37**
White Male	51	64	**115**
Black Female	10	39	**49**
Black Male	25	72	**97**
	96	**212**	**298**

For Males: Chi Square=8.044, p=.005

For Females: Chi Square=.626, p=.429