HAS HIP HOP CHANGED ITS TUNE? ANALYZING THE STEREOTYPES ADOLESCENT AFRICAN AMERICAN GIRLS ARE HEARING AND SEEING IN HIP HOP MUSIC AND VIDEOS

by

Leddy G Glenn

An Abstract
of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in the Department of Communication
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This study sought to decipher the difference in women’s images between Hip Hop music videos of 2007 and 2011. Four songs were chosen, two by Beyonce Knowles and two by Gym Class Heroes. These artists were popular in 2007 and are popular today. All four of the performances will be described, a critical analysis will be performed and the findings will be provided. This analysis will answer the questions: Has Hip Hop changed its tune? Are adolescent African American girls today hearing and seeing the same stereotypes in the vast sea of music and videos, or are they being exposed to a more mature, socially conscious set of lyrics? The findings of this study showed that the backdrop to the videos changed from 2007 to 2011, but the representation of women did not. Unfortunately, African American women are visible only in roles that neither fulfill them nor encourage loving relationships.
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Leddy G Glenn

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APPROVED:

Thesis Chair: Dr. Carol A. Atkinson

Thesis Committee Member: Dr. Barbara L. Baker

Thesis Committee Member: Dr. Carol L. Benton

ACCEPTED:

Chair, Department of Communication: Dr. Jack Rogers

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL MISSOURI
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Chapter 1
Introduction

In 2007 a poll showed a large number of African America teens believed rap music was too violent and degraded women, and in another poll 71 percent of African America adults said rap music was a bad influence on society (Beaver, 2010). Today’s youth are bombarded with media messages, and parts of those messages are teaching adolescents what it is to be a woman or a man (Arnett, 1995). Squires, Kohn-Wood, Chavous, and Carter (2006) explained how Hip Hop music is used by African American youth to negotiate the formation of their identity, so African American youth are likely to see the music as a reflection of their own lives and who they are supposed to be.

Adolescents must navigate through a multitude of changes as they mature. They are trying to figure out who they are as an individual, what they are about with their own interests and personalities, and who they are going to become (Powell, 2004). In particular, for African American females, they are not only figuring out their identity, but they also must deal with living in and being socialized in a society that is driven by patriarchal, white views about their devalued societal status (Stevens, 1997).

Stephens and Phillips (2003) asserted that there are more diverse representations of African American females than in previous generations, but in reality these representations are just stereotypes that have changed very little in the past century. Throughout this time African American women have been shown as being exotic, wild, sexually promiscuous, and amoral (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).
By being bombarded with repetitive stereotypical representations of African American women, a normalization emerges that makes these stereotypes an acceptable way to view African American women as a population.

From 2005 to 2010, the Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (MOCSA), located in Kansas City, Missouri, employed the author of this thesis. During that employment, the author was asked to develop and carry out a critical analysis of selected Hip Hop music videos and how young African American adolescent girls understood and interpreted that music. The author, along with Kim Goering, completed the study in 2009. Eleven girls from the inner city were asked to watch the videos and then to interpret what they saw. The study’s findings were disturbing. The girls heard all the insults and abusive language about women. They could identify all the “wrong” type of women they saw in the videos, and could explain their sexual roles. They heard and understood the appropriate roles for males. They understood that women were sexual playthings; that women were good for cooking, cleaning, and sex. And if they weren’t good enough sexual partners, then the male could bring in another woman to make sex better, or she could just be discarded as a partner. The girls in the study heard all of this, understood all of this. And, reported that it didn’t apply to them—it was about women in general, not about them.

As the author read about social identity theory, she made an interesting connection between the theory and the MOSCA study. This Hip Hop music is teaching these African American girls what women and men do in society, yet it doesn’t really apply to them individually.
So a certain disconnect is formed between what should be—an ideal view of relationships, marriage, motherhood—and what is or could be for them—the playing out of the Hip Hop stereotypes. Because the MOSCA study is dated now, and Hip Hop music has moved on, the author choose to review social identity theory and the substance of current Hip Hop music. The question is: Has Hip Hop changed its tune? Are adolescent African American girls today hearing and seeing the same stereotypes in the vast sea of music and videos, or are they being exposed to a more mature, socially conscious set of lyrics? The author choose to explore what a selected number of Hip Hop music videos are saying today, using up-to-date stereotypes used by other researchers.

In this study, the author uses rap as a genre of music within the Hip Hop culture. As rap pioneer KRS- once said: “Rap is something you do, but hip-hop is something you live” (“Rap vs. Hip-Hop,” 2008, p. 1). Others, however, say Hip Hop is distinct from rap. Hip Hop has a specific beat and uses scratching and sampling. “These folks say all hip hop is rap, but not all rap is hip hop” (p. 1). More importantly, the girls in the MOSCA study said there was no difference, to them, between Hip Hop and rap (MOSCA, 2007). Rather than engage in the cultural discourse, this study uses rap and Hip Hop music as a shared cultural phenomenon and engages the literature that accepts the intersection between the two.

**Justification**

More than 26 million Hip Hop albums are sold throughout the United States each year (Beaver, 2010). Hip Hop is considered the second most listened to music genre after Rock and followed by R&B/Urban (The Recording Industry Association of America, 2007).
Thus, it is important to drill deeper into Hip Hop and rap music because it influences the way youth learn about gender identity and how they are supposed to act in relationships. From previous research it is known that negative stereotypes being portrayed in Hip Hop images are creating ambivalence in the receiver—how they idealize relationships and how those relationships seem to play out. It is important to continually update the research to know what young people are ingesting and then how they can be taught to disconnect from these images and beliefs. More than likely, the negative stereotypes in the media aren’t going to change; so for all of us, it is important to know what the stereotypes are that are being presented so we can better teach and understand how the substance of the music is affecting the youth and their identity development.
Identity Theory

In identity formation, the media can provide materials that adolescents can use toward the construction of an identity. According to Arnett (1995), there are five common uses of media by adolescents: entertainment, identity formation, high sensation, coping, and youth culture identification. It is common for adults and adolescents to use media as a form of entertainment and a way to distract from reality. Adolescents tend to be more sensation seeking than adults. There are many forms of media that appeal to adolescents: car explosions, car chases, gunfire, and other loud and explosive events. The next common use of media is coping; the adolescents use media to relieve and dismiss negative emotions. Lastly, youth culture identification is where the media gives adolescents a sense of being a part of a larger peer network (Arnett, 1995).

Arnett’s (1995) study looked at gender role identity as an important aspect of identity formation. Adolescents take pieces of what it means to be a man or a woman from the media. Also it is important to note that media seems to fascinate girls who are starting to have sexual and romantic experiences, so the girls are particularly interested in the way male-female relationships are represented.

Arnett (1995) looked at the theory of broad and narrow socialization, too. According to socialization theory in general, there are seven principal sources of socialization: family, peers, school, community, media, the legal system, and the cultural belief system. These are all things that adults must possess knowledge about and youth must learn and figure out so they can function in society.
Narrow socialization involves sources of information that stress obedience and conformity, and encourages members of a group to adhere to a set standard of beliefs and behaviors. Broad socializations are the cultures that stress individualism and independence. Broad socialization has a range of variability in social and psychological development among members. Each person is allowed and encouraged to find out preferences for him or herself. The media tends toward broad socialization in particular, especially in a society where there is freedom of the press. The media is diverse and offers a wide range of potential models and influences for adolescents to learn from.

With the prevalence and diversity of media and adolescents’ ability to access that media, adolescents have a greater array of social roles and examples to select their socialization from. As stated above, broad socialization allows for individual choice. But with so much individual choice, adolescents could come to feel disoriented and then struggle to find who they are and what their relationships should really look like Arnett (1995).

Physical appearance is highly regarded by adolescents and is associated with peer popularity. Adolescents who look older and are more physically mature than their peers are considered more attractive. It should be noted that early physical maturity in boys and girls could be associated with emotional distress, substance use, and earlier age of sexual interactions Arnett (1995).

Arnett (1995) recommended school programs for girls who are at risk of being suspended, and that these programs provide positive female peer relationships, role models, and strategies for coping with boys involved in antisocial behavior.
Stevens (1997) addressed the importance of looking at how identity is constructed within all humans, and then we can apply that knowledge to how a person’s identity can be created when individuals are of different races. It is important to mention that in American society, race has been constructed so that undesirable characteristics are attributed to minority racial groups based on the social hierarchy. This hierarchy is meant to create unequal power and privilege. The group with the least power and privilege is African Americans.

Stevens’ (1997) studied African American female identity development and revealed that their development is the same as with other social groups, but with some additional issues. These females, too, need to sever parental ties, but an African American female must also go through a similar crisis of severing ties with her fictive kinship group. The fictive kinship group, also called the cultural reference group, represents a conceptual translation of the African American folkloric expression of “play kin,” which provides a sense of shared experiences with societal oppressed minority groups (Stevens, 1997). Also, cultural dissonance is a dilemma that adolescent African American females must face. She perceives not only the societal devaluation of her gender but also the societal devaluation of her as member of a racial minority group. The female adolescent doesn’t want to separate from what is valued and seeks to change the content of her relationships so her developmental changes are validated and her racial group affiliation is accepted. Separation from one’s cultural group creates guilt and shame, as well as cultural dissonance, and it also deprives her of the full psychological support needed to cope with the stress of living in a racist society.
Stevens (1997) discussed how the identity formation of African American adolescent females is multidimensional and complex. There is a core developmental task of synthesizing meaning from three types of experiences of her socialization: (a) mainstream society, which is the Euro-American worldview; (b) a devalued societal status; and (c) a cultural reference group, here, the Afro-American World View. African American female adolescents must negotiate the experiential domains of Afro-American, Euro-American, and racial minority states all within their socialization experiences of gender. Basically, African American female adolescents must develop bicultural competence while they are developing their social identities.

Stevens (1997) worked with an inner city public middle school in a large northeastern city to develop these observations. Stevens found that among the girls surveyed, they fantasized or had romantic liaisons with male peers and these were a basis for valuations of self-worth and self-definition. According to the girls’ self-reports, many of their male peers pursue multiple romantic relationships and rarely made a commitment to one girl. Although the girls in the group used assertive coping strategies, they seemed vulnerable in their relationships with male peers, especially ones with which they wanted to create romantic attachments. They seemed to view themselves in competition with their female peers for the attention of their male peers. In a way, they were opponents of other girls for the male’s attention, they tended to engage in typical masculine behaviors like abusive language and violent attacks to gain the respect and asset a sense of self.
Interestingly, self-esteem concerns were significant in the management of sexuality and gender development among the girls surveyed. The romantic interest and involvement with male peers tended to erase the ethic of care in female peer relationships.

Stevens (1997) found it reasonable to suggest that African American adolescent girls may be at risk for antisocial and delinquent behaviors if management of racial identity issues is unsuccessful. Adolescents’ experiment with adult roles and try to navigate a world in which they are more and more responsible for themselves, this is a time they are trying to find their own identity. Adolescence can be characterized by a sense of invulnerability and the creation of an individual autonomy from family and societal limits. As African American youth create their identities, they may see Hip Hop music as a reflection of their own lives, and that it imposes empowerment, cultural connection, and a positive identity development. They seem to resist the criticism that Hip Hop portrays men and women in negative ways.

Often, adolescence is a time of self-discovery and growth, it is when a person is figuring out who they are, and who they will become. This process of discovery and identity creation will continue for the rest of their life. Stets and Burke (2000) believe identity theory is the categorization of the self: A person occupies a role, incorporates into the self the meanings and expectations associated with that role, then performs that role.

Social identity theory is a person’s knowing that he or she belongs to a social group—a group of people who have commonalities and view themselves as members of the same social category.
Stets and Burke (2000) proposed merging identity and social identity theory because they believed the two are nearly identical. The authors make comparisons between identity and social identity theory to demonstrate how to eliminate the redundancies between the two.

They noticed three areas that are key to connecting the two theories:

- The different bases of identity in the two theories;
- The activation of identities and the concept of salience as used in each theory; and
- The core processes that arise once an identity is activated.

Both theories assert that the self is reflexive and it can categorize, classify, and name itself in certain ways in relation to other social categories. This is, Stets and Burke (2000) asserted, the fundamental interpretation of identity.

The authors (2000) also explained the activation of identities and the concept of salience. Social identity theory asserts that salience demonstrates the activation of an identity basically as “one which is functioning psychologically to increase the influence of one’s membership in that group on perception and behavior” (p. 229). While identity theory states that salience is the probability that an identity will be activated in a situation. Within social groups, identity theorists are more concerned about gaining an understanding of the effects of the persons’ positions in the social structure or the likelihood thereof. Identity theory focuses on social structural arrangements and the connection between people.
Social identity theory also focuses on the characteristic of the situation in which identity might be drawn from. With these differences, both theories recognize the importance of each individual and his or her goals in social groups or situations.

The third area involved the core process, which occurs when an identity is activated. In social identity theory, the central cognitive process is depersonalization, which is seeing the self as an embodiment of the in-group prototype instead of as a unique individual. Within this process an individual acts within the norm of the group. Depersonalization is the basic process of social stereotyping, group cohesiveness, ethnocentrism, cooperation and altruism, emotional contagion, and collective action. Social identity theory has a similar term to depersonalization--self-verification. To understand self-verification, the individual behaves in a certain way to maintain the consistency in the identity standard, which underlies the behavioral processes such as role taking, role making, and group formation as the person acts to represent identity.

People’s self concept is important in life roles for creating a person's identity. Hay (2000) conducted research that specifically looked at adolescents who displayed antisocial behaviors. While using the self-concept theory, Hay wanted to assess whether the adolescents had strong or low self-concepts. For males and females the development of an adolescent’s “oppositional self-identity” is a risk indicator for the development of antisocial behavior and encourages bonding with a “deviant” group. Studies have shown that girls were more likely to resist antisocial peer pressure than boys. However, girls tend to become delinquent through their association with delinquent boys and the boys’ peers. Within this group are the ones who typically develop and mature early physically, and who are in coeducation rather than in single-
sex schools. Also, girls with antisocial behaviors are thought to have lower self-concepts (Hay, 2000).

The data for Hays’ (2000) research was collected from 128 students on 40-day suspensions and enrolled at the time in an alternative school program; the students came from high schools in Queensland, Australia. The majority of the students were in grades 9 and 10 and were 14 to 15 years old; 107 of the subjects were male and 21 were female. The students were given the Self-Description Questionnaire-II (SDQ-11) within a week of being suspended.

The results showed that only girls were in the low range for same-sex relationships and emotional stability. Hay (2000) postulated that their actions caused them to be rejected by their female peers, suggesting that females involved in antisocial behaviors become marginalized and isolated within their community. The scores for female/male relationships were higher. This could mean that females will seek more attention from males, or the females become more attractive to certain males who give them more attention, or a combination of both.

Stets and Burke (2000) proposed merging identity and social identity theory because they believed the two are nearly identical. Throughout the article the authors make comparisons between identity and social identity theory to demonstrate how to eliminate the redundancies between the two. They noticed three areas that are key to connecting the two theories: (a) the different bases of identity in the two theories; (b) activation of identities and the concept of salience as used in each theory; and (c) core processes that arise once an identity is activated.
Both theories assert that the self is reflexive and it can categorize, classify, or name itself in certain ways in relation to other social categories. This is what Stets and Burke (2000) identified as the different bases of identity. In social identity theory, this process is called self-categorization. In identity theory, this is called identification.

In identity theory the main part of an identity is the categorization of the self as occupying a role, and the incorporating into the self the meanings and expectations associated with the role and the performance. Social identity theory is a person’s knowing that he or she belongs to a social group—a group of people who have commonalities and view themselves as members of the same social category. In general, one’s identities are made up of the self-views that emerge from the reflexive activity of self-categorization or identification in terms of members in a certain group.

Stets and Burke (2000) explained the second area, the activation of identifies and the concept of salience. Social identity theory asserts that salience is that which demonstrates the activation of an identity basically as “one which is functioning psychologically to increase the influence of one’s membership in that group on perception and behavior” (p. 229). While identity theory states that salience is the probability that an identity will be activated in a situation. Within social groups, identity theorists are more concerned about gaining an understanding of the effects of the persons’ positions in the social structure or the likelihood thereof. Identity theory focuses on social structural arrangements and the connection between people. Social identity theory focuses on the characteristic of the situation in which identity
might be drawn from. With these differences both theories recognize the importance of each individual and their goals in social groups or situations.

The third area involves the core processes that come up when an identity is activated. In social identity theory the central cognitive process is depersonalization, which is seeing the self as an embodiment of the in-group prototype instead of as a unique individual.

Within this process an individual acts within the norm of the group. Depersonalization is the basic process of social stereotyping, group cohesiveness, ethnocentrism, cooperation and altruism, emotional contagion and collective action. Social identity theory has a similar term to depersonalization: self-verification. With self-verification the individual behaves to maintain the consistency in the identity standard and underlies the behavioral processes such as role-taking, role-making, and group formation as the person acts to represent identity.

In conclusion, Stets and Burke (2000) found that in more instances the differences between identity theory and social identity theory are more of emphasis than in substance. The differences originated in the view of the group as a basis for identity (social identity theory) and the view of the role as the basis for identity (identity theory). The authors state that both are central to one’s identity, and a complete theory of the self would look at both the role and the group in terms of identity.

Powell (2004) studied individual development through the influence of psychoanalytical views and human development theories to explain possible conflicts during the adolescent years, and more specifically in adolescent girls. The individuation process for both boys and girls develops in three key ways:
1. A core “sense of self” and “separation of self” are complex processes that may be different for males and females, depending on their social support or environment;

2. For identity development, early relationships are very important, including how young boys and girls evolve despite separation or connection conflicts; and

3. During the adolescent process, the support of schools to develop challenging activities is necessary to create many stable, unique and healthy adolescent identities.

(Powell, 2004, p. 86)

Identity, in Powell’s work (2004) was referred to as the sense of self or a consistent unique character over a period of time. Adolescent girls have many identity conflicts, which may result in school discipline problems or lack of focus. During adolescence, girls start noticing biological, emotional, or psychosocial conflicts because they are learning how to cope with the changes concerning their self-image, self-esteem, and social expectations. During this time, adolescent girls are trying to find out:

1. Who they are as they separate from their families;

2. What they are about, their interests and personalities; and

3. Where they are going in order to discover their place in adult life. (p. 77)

Also during this time, adolescents are dealing with romantic relationships, career choices and decisions, school success, and responsibilities that are all new to them. And, they are also trying to adjust and learn how to have their own identity.

Adolescent girls are also developing self-esteem; for some this may be good or for others it may be not so good. This process starts from early childhood and builds upon the
achievements that she accomplishes as she ages. While self-esteem is lower during adolescence rises and continues to rise after adolescence. If a girl’s self-esteem doesn’t increase over time, then more serious problems may arise later in their life.

Powel (2004) stated, “Self-esteem is also called “self-concept,” which is the process of understanding the “self” (p. 83). Additionally when a person is shown care and respect, he or she will gain better and better self-esteem.

As adolescent boys and girls learn about themselves they are also learning about what their relationships will look like. In Stewart and McDermott’s (2004) research, it is discussed how gender is increasingly understood as a system of power relationships. Gender is largely recognized to be an important variable in understanding many aspects of behavior.

Within mainstream psychology research, even the term “gender” does not have one meaning. It can mean sex differences, intrasex variability, and gendered social roles and institutions. Stewart and McDermott (2004) sought to look at how gender often acts as shared attributes that mold experiences, identities, emotive expressions, and thought processes.

Stewart and McDermott (2004) also stated that some psychologists have begun to recognize that gender signifies a set of power relationships that often converge on a particular behavior of interest, such as, leadership in a relationship or marital conflicts. Basically, psychologists have found gender to be a powerful conceptual instrument in these three ways:
• Sorting individuals into male and female and exploiting the ways in which differences in behavior, performance, and characteristics are associated with that individual difference;

• In understanding how gender might relate to individual differences among men and among women; and

• In understanding how gender structures social institutions within which men and women operate. (p. 522)

Psychology sees gender as an analytic tool for research to identify how a person’s traits may be gendered. The authors assert that the “big five” personality traits -- “extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, emotional stability or neuroticism, and openness to experience” (p. 527)--can be seen as gender. For example, extraversion can be seen as masculine, while agreeableness can be seen as female.

Stewart and McDermott (2004) also looked at how the objectification of the female body is a commonplace gendered phenomenon, known as objectification theory. This theory provides information about how women are taught to see themselves from an outsider’s perspective, more particularly from a perspective of a person with more power, evaluating a less powerful person as an object. Basically women are taught the male person has more power, he is viewing her, and that they as women are less powerful. This constant objectification affects women’s views of their physical self and therefore they create a habit of monitoring their body and seeing themselves as objects.
Stewart and McDermott (2004) also discussed a phenomenon of denial known as “personal discrimination.” This research looked at how women readily acknowledge how women as a group are discriminated against and yet they deny ever having experienced being discriminated against themselves. Basically, the concept is that an individual believes that discrimination happens to “others,” not themselves.

In reality, personal discrimination happens to women of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, but woman who face racial and gender-biased discrimination may find it difficult to identify it if the discrimination is race or gender related. Therefore, African American women may utilize different coping mechanisms than European, white women when dealing with discrimination. They further discussed domestic violence briefly and how it is a shared experience between women of all races; yet, a woman’s racial, ethnic, and class identities influence her strategies for coping and her beliefs about domestic violence. For example, African American women resisted involving law enforcement in domestic disputes; in general, they asserted police did not protect them because of their race/ethnicity.

Squires, Kohn-Wood, Chavous, and Carter (2006) looked at Hip Hop music as a basis for discussing gendered violence. They used the platform of contemporary music culture to look at ways that youth understand inter-gender violence and gender roles in relationships. The youth in the Squires et al. study claimed the messages from the media did not affect them. However, their responses suggested they have learned from the media messages that some women are “nasty” and certain women “choose” to be abused.
Squires et al. (2006) used six focus groups with 35 African American high school students as participants. The authors (2006) stated that some of the participants were operating under the influence of the “strong black woman” myth. This stereotype is perceived as a “warrior” for justice for her family and community. Strong black women survive by making the right personal choices.

Within the student group they appeared to know that a women’s beauty and sexuality are valued, but they were unsure of how to actualize the expectations of sexiness, softness and strength, as expectations placed on women.

From their research, Squires et al. (2006) asserted that many adolescents are confused by the range of romantic relationships available to them. The creation of attitudes toward heterosexual relationships and gender roles may happen in unique ways for African American adolescents. They have to figure out their identities, as well as their social and interpersonal roles, all in the context of racial and gender oppression. The authors (2006) further discussed how sexualization of African Americans has historically been an entrenched part of racial oppression. Many times, African American women are treated as instigators, rather than victims of their own sexual abuse. Therefore, traditionally, in African American communities both men and women have been socialized to use self-defense strategies to guard against violence. African American girls, in particular, have been socialized to be self-reliant, yet they then find it difficult to balance between strength and independence with the culturally dominant image of “femininity” of being sexual or “soft”.
When discussing racial identities, a “stereotype threat” needs to be kept in mind. A stereotype threat occurs when there is a negative stereotype about a group to which one belongs (DeCuir-Gunby, 2009). This is usually an interpretation of something a group member is doing, an experience one is having, or explaining a situation one is in that has relevance to one’s self-definition (DeCuir-Gunby, 2009).

Therefore, black racial identity (BRI) and racial identity theory (RTI) need to be reviewed, especially the work of DeCuir-Gunby (2009) who looked at racial identity within an educational context. Identity formation is a complex negotiation process that seeks stability through a person’s present, past, and future. This formation process starts at birth, peaks during adolescence, and continues to develop throughout adulthood. This allows an individual to fully negotiate multiple identities. Adolescence is seen as a time when identity development peaks. This can be a confusing time and can become a crisis because adolescence has historically been characterized as a negative time.

Thus, a child’s identity formation is complicated if he or she is a member of a minority race. Helms explained (as cited in DeCuir-Ginby, 2009) racial identity theory intersects identity formation because RIT is described as the extent to which people of color perceive themselves as Black and share a common racial heritage with their recognized racial group. African Americans have a common racial heritage that includes shared physical attributes, as well as shared racial experiences, including social, economic, and political experiences. Cross (as cited in DeCuir-Ginby, 2009) was one of the first researchers to discuss the process of black racial identity development, which is the process of embracing a black identity and reaching self-actualization.
under oppressive condition. Basically, BRI can be explained as the beliefs that an African American has about his or her belonging to the Black race individually, the Black race as a group, and their perceptions of other racial groups (DeCuir-Gunby, 2009).

Another theory that is important to identity creation is self-determination theory (SDT). La Guardia (2009) used the perspective by Ryan and Deci (as cited in La Guardia, 2009) for SDT that each person has his or her own unique set interests and skills. SDT also looks at the basic psychological needs to understand the inherent tendencies toward the pursuit of built-in potential, and it looks at how support for these needs within the social environment influences the internalization of and motivation for important identity activities (La Guardia, 2009). SDT suggests that people are inherently prone to explore and commit much of their energies toward activities, roles, and relationships that support the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to actions that are self-initiated and regulated. Competence refers to the experience of mastery and challenge and is witnessed in curiosity, exploration, and the stretching of one’s capacities. Relatedness refers to the feeling of belonging and being significant in the eyes of others (La Guardia, 2009). People do have multiple identities, and the SDT perspective looks at how other people inform one’s self-concept, goals, and identity-related behaviors.

La Guardia (2009) asserted that social environment is a key determinant in how needs get met and how identity is structured. People’s self-concept is structured across important life roles, such as son/daughter, student, or friend. When people feel they can be “truly themselves,” they report having a greater overall sense of well-being. People adapt their self-identity to different situations and relationships. Some of those relationships may not be healthy. When a
person is in a non-accepting social situation, people will often create a false self in order to gain the acceptance and approval of others.

Hunter (2011) found that “black sexual politics” can be observed by people dancing in the Hip Hop music videos.

In these music videos, the dancers use “stripper moves” or “pole tricks” to draw attention to their vaginas and, as the Hip Hop songs put it, “getting low” to the floor. An example of such a song is “Rock Yo Hips” by Crime Mob in 2007. In the song’s video, the female dancers all wear “booty shorts” and tight white t-shirts with their midriffs showing. The female dancers dance seductively to the chorus: “I like it when she rock her hips, then wave and sip” (p. 27). In Hip Hop songs, women are encouraged to dance for men in a sexy way, all for the male gaze. As Hunter (2011) stated, “if women and girls’ new role in Hip Hop is to learn dance moves that mimic those done by strippers, then men and boys’ new role is to learn the behaviors of the ‘high rolling patron’ of the club” (p. 28).

Hunter (2011) extended his conceptualization of these ideas into the fields of psychology and public health. Hunter noted some noticeable increase in exposure to mainstream Hip Hop videos do have negative affects on the mental and physical health of African American adolescents. When adolescent African America females watch hours of Hip Hop music videos, they are more likely to “binge drink, smoke marijuana, have multiple sexual partners, have negative body image, get arrested, hit a teacher, and contract a sexually transmitted infection” (p. 31). Adolescents as a whole are more likely to condone domestic violence and rape myths, too, when they are exposed to these types of songs and videos.
Hunter (2011) also asserted that Adolescent African American males and females often use the sexual scripts such as “gold-digger,” “baby mama,” “freak,” and “gangsta bitch” to better understand their own sense of sexuality. Hip Hop is everywhere and it is a powerful influence on U.S. culture and the nation’s youth.

“How should women be represented in rap and how should they represent themselves” (p. 17)?

Hunter (2011) provided some much needed historical background on Hip Hop, noting that it started out as a cultural movement made up of four elements: “MCing (rapping), DJing, graffiti art, and breaking (break dancing)” (p. 16). Those four elements emerged from the South Bronx in the early 1970’s. By the late 1970’s and 1980’s, most of the people in Hip Hop were producing or participating in the one of the four elements. In the 1990’s, Hip Hop changed from cultural production to consumption. This shift was strengthened by the creation of gangsta rap, which relied on images of African Americans as criminals and as hyper-sexualized. Mainstream Hip Hop became more of a commercial enterprise, with the main target being the young, white buying audience.

According to Hunter (2011), Hip Hop made another shift in recent years to encompass the strip club and commercial sex work. Many recent Hip Hop songs have been entirely about women as sex workers; for example, 50 Cent’s 2003 hit, “P.I.M.P.,” was about pimps and prostitutes. Today, strip clubs are important for the Hip Hop industry because many potential Hip Hop singles are first tested out by DJs in strip clubs. Basically, if a single is successful in the strip club scene, it will more than likely move to regular club play and then to radio airplay.
In Hip Hop music videos, the video dancers are often called “hoes” or “vixens,” which supports the stereotype that women of color are thought of as sex objects (Hunter, 2011). As the women dance in the videos, women of color are shown as bodies that can be interchanged, and they do not have a voice.

There are many times the women in the videos are dressed only in swimsuits, lingerie, or other revealing clothing items. The women’s function is to increase the heterosexual, masculinity of the male rappers. Hunter examined forty-one of the best selling rap videos of 2007-2008 through a critical analysis of the videos and some lyrics. Music videos and lyrics exude sexual and gendered “scripts,” and adolescents internalize these scripts and use them to understand what is going on in their own lives.

Today, Hunter (2011) asserted, the music video is more than a commercial for a song, it is also a commercial for all the other products placed in the video. He pointed out things such as clothing lines, shoes, liquors, and items that the rapper either sells or endorses that appear in the videos. The market for merchandising Hip Hop is a big money maker, which shows how much this genre has gone mainstream in American culture. Much of this acceptance into mainstream is based on caricatures of being African American, in poverty, and a highly sexualized African American female. Basically, African American criminal culture sells in America, but African American intellectuals don’t. African American female dancers sell, but African American female rappers don’t.

**Hip Hop and Existing Research**
Hip Hop culture and rap music stem from a patriarchal, heterosexual view. African American female rap artists struggle to control their expression in an industry that is patriarchal (Shelton, 1997). While there has been growth in the entertainment industry to create more diversity, decision-making is still in the hands of a few men. Because of this, rap has evolved into a representation of masculine culture despite the popularity of female artists (Shelton, 1997). In Shelton’s (1997) study, the author looked at how female Hip Hop rap artists are effectively engaging in struggles over the “meaning” of African American womanhood through three “tactics” of representations.

- A particular identification/representation of urban space and class;
- The redefinition of gangsta culture along lines of gender; and
- The contemporary merger of hardcore rap and R&B performance. (p. 108)

Shelton (1997) explained that a rapper’s geographical location, or perceived location, is important because it links a rapper with a specific race and class politics and gives the rapper authenticity. Through the use of technology, often times a rapper’s urban location is not real, but constructed. This creates the appearance that the rapper is still “in touch and true to the street” (p. 110). This prevents the rapper from being seen as soft and out of touch with the daily urban life.

In rap, the gangsta culture shows people interacting while doing illegal activities and it primarily identifies with the masculine stereotype. Female rappers who represent gangsta women create images of women with a strong presence by wearing baggy jeans and works shirts. The gangsta style of clothing represents a lower class status and creates a sort of gender bending
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because the clothing is loose fitting and hides the female’s curves (Shelton 1997). Robbing, killing, and helping “their” man commit a crime defines her as a “gangsta bitch” (p. 111). The collaboration between female rap artists and male R&B artists has gained popularity. The blending of these two genres, in particular the songs being rapped by both male and female artists, creates a representation of heterosexual relationships.

Shelton (1997) found the representation of African American women in rap videos shows both the limitations and the progress of African American women. The author highlighted how the female rap artists have the ability to challenge the negative stereotypes in the music industry and in society.

Stephens and Phillips (2003) studied how African American women are flooded with messages and images of how to have sex, whom to have sex with, and where to have sex. They state that the problem with this information is that the women are not taught that sex is about emotional pleasure. This representation of sex promotes the existence of unhealthy heterosexual African American adolescents’ interpersonal relationships. Sex is seen as a sporting event where the game is about the males trying to score, while the women block the shot. Images of sex are seen through a male’s lens and that has a huge impact on females’ sexual self-concept, sense of self-esteem, and identity development.

African American women are shown in the media and culture as wild, sexually promiscuous, and amoral (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). These images affect the way others interact with African American women at different phases of their lifespan. Images of African American women being sexually, verbally, emotionally, and physically abused by their peers,
family and society during childhood and early adolescence are seen repeatedly. African American female adolescents are at the highest risk for adolescent pregnancy, early sexual interaction, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, multiple partners, and significantly older partners (2003). African American adolescent women’s sexual scripts and representations have changed very little over the last century.

The image of African American woman as sexually exotic was vital for the creation and maintenance of the political, economic, and social structure of America, mainly during and following the many years of slavery (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). Four images of African American women emerged during this time. The four images were: The Jezebel, The Mammy, the Matriarch, and The Welfare Mother (p. 7). These four images created a framework for African American women’s sexuality and, ultimately, the way African American women viewed themselves. These images and their definitions all reflect the male-dominant cultural beliefs about females and their sexuality (Stephens & Phillips, 2003):

- The Jezebel is described as a young, exotic, promiscuous, over-sexed woman who uses sexuality to get attention, love and material goods. She is seen as having light, African American skin, long hair and a curvy body. These women are shown as wanting to please men, and this is done by sexual gratification for the male and, perhaps, herself. She is said to have a voracious need for sex, which was used to justify the rape of slave women by their slave owners;

- The Mammy is portrayed as an African American slave or servant who is nurturing toward the white family. She is seen as putting the white family’s needs
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ahead of her own and her family’s. She is happy and docile. This image is asexual on both the physical and emotional levels. She is shown as overweight, dark-skinned, and unattractive by Western standards. The Mammy is non-threatening, and was able to work closely with the white family domestically without concern of causing any immoral thoughts;

- The Welfare Mother stems from the perception that African American women have children uncontrollably and these children become burdens on society. This image comes from the outcries from middle class white families being angry about African American women’s receiving monetary support from the government, which was originally intended for middle class white women who were widowed by war;

- The Matriarch came about in the 1960’s, and is seen as an African American woman who is emasculating, controlling, and doesn’t need a man except for childbearing. This image focuses on the female centered homes, where the women hold the power in the family. They use both sexuality to dominate and gain control of their homes and society (Stephens & Phillips, 2003).

With the groundwork and foundation of the imagines of The Jezebel, The Mammy, The Welfare Mother, and The Matriarch, the representation of African American women has evolved to represent current political, economic, and social changes (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). From the original four images stated by Stephens and Phillips (2003), eight new images have emerged. These new images are: The Diva, The Gold Digger, The Freak, The Dyke, The Gangster Bitch,
The Sister Savior, The Earth Mother, and The Baby Mama. These new images and sexual scripts are now entrenched within the African American youth culture known as Hip Hop and in the music of rap. “Hip Hop culture encompasses a deeper understanding of cultural expression of body language, language usage, clothing styles, value and belief systems, racial/ethnic identity, and general behavioral expectations” (p. 12).

Hip Hop is reflective specifically of African American youth beginning in the 1980’s. Hip Hop was developed as a music outlet to express the rappers’ feelings of anger, fears about their lives, and their unknown futures.

How have those eight new stereotypes been defined? Stephens and Phillips (2003) have defined them in this way:

- The Diva is an African American adolescent female who has an “attitude.” She sees herself as someone who is adored and worshiped. She surrounds herself with people who will worship and adore her, not caring about the substance of the relationship. The Diva is always in competition with other Divas to maintain the non-stop attention. The Diva is shown in media images through the lens of her willingness to put lots of money into self-maintenance. Her appearance typically includes long, straight hair, not too dark of skin, a slender body, and The Diva wears clothing that is revealing, but not skimpy. She is seen as high-maintenance, demanding material things to remain happy and keep her social status. The Diva’s sexuality is sultry and tempting, she shows her sexuality through her walk, her glances, body revealing clothing, and her kept-up
appearance. The Diva is not overtly sexual, and she reflects middle-class beliefs about women’s sexual roles. She chooses men who can enhance what she already has; his status must help The Diva maintain her attention.

• The Gold Digger is a woman who trades sex for material and economic rewards. Sex is The Gold Digger’s article of trade, because it is the only valuable thing she has in society. The Gold Digger is not seen in society as being successful in education or employment. She is aware that sex can be used to trade for basic needs like groceries, paying rent, and household bills. She also uses sex for luxury items like pedicures, clothing, and vacations. Within the image of The Gold Digger are elements of The Jezebel and The Welfare Mother. The Gold Digger is viewed as looking for the “ghetto fabulous” life and selects men based on their lifestyle or affluence. For The Gold Digger, the man’s value is based on his bank account balance.

• The Freak is sexually aggressive. She is seen as simply loving sex without any emotional attachment. The Freak is also known as a slut, ho, hood rat, or floozy. They are thought of as being willing to have sex anywhere, any position, and with any person. She engages in high-risk sexual behaviors and enjoys testing limits of what is considered morally acceptable. The Freak uses sex as means of gaining
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sexual control over her partner, while fulfilling her own sexual needs. She dresses in tight clothing, short skirts, and walks with a strut in the mall. The freak is considered to be like a stripper. The Freak by day is seen as a good girl, but in the nightclubs or in bed she fulfills her sexual desires. Once a woman has been called a freak, it is difficult to shake the label. Men are most comfortable with this hypersexual image, but have very little respect for the girl behind it.

- The Dyke is known to keep men out of her sexual interactions. Women who decide to resist sexual advances are labeled as dykes. Heterosexuality is seen as natural in the African American culture, thus women who go against this norm are seen as deviant, pathological, or emotionally and sensually deprived. The Dyke is perceived as simply acting out of bitterness toward men by not giving them sex, and it is believed her pleasure comes from rejecting men. There is a belief they have been hurt emotionally or physically by a man, and that they have not had “good” sex with a man. “Since she is not interested in the male penis, the Dyke undermines males’ sexual control over her” (p. 23). Her sexuality is seen as repulsive, abnormal, and contrary to the African American community. The Dyke label is usually placed on a woman when a man is confronted with a confident, self-determined, in-control woman, no matter what her sexual orientation actually is.

- The Gangster Bitch embodies aggression, emotional strength, and active participation in Hip Hop culture. The term “gangster” is of the culture that his
woman operates in and “bitch” is a label for an aggressive and self-sufficient attitude. She has heterosexual relationships and supports the daily struggle for survival in the urban American culture. She lives in the same poverty-stricken, drug-infested, violent environment as their male counterparts. Men value The Gangster Bitch because she embraces the toughness and cold-bloodedness that is a part of the Hip Hop culture. The men respect the woman who will fight alongside them and not just be a woman they can have sex with.

The Gangster Bitches provide alibis, take blame for crimes, and help commit crimes as active participants with their male peers. They can also use sex to help the male—participating in a sex act as a distraction or to lure an opponent into a dangerous situation. This can also be used to spy on or gather information from rivals. The Gangster Bitches don’t expect long-term love; they have become emotionally hardened by their environment and they use sex as a stress release and to feel good for the moment. The Gangster Bitches earn protection from their male friends, and many males follow an unwritten code of not allowing harassment, physical or sexual abuse of these women. However, relationship violence is usual for The Gangster Bitch, but she does not fear fighting back.

- The Sister Savior is unique to African American women and does not involve a male connection. She is not asexual; in fact, sexuality for her exists on a higher plane. Sex is to be avoided due to moral and religious issues. Her decision-making processes are separate from the Hip Hop culture. She projects a demure,
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obedient attitude towards men. The African American adolescent female who attends a religious institution is less likely to interact in a sexually permissive way and is more likely to wait longer before having sex for the first time. The religious institutions traditionally spread ideas about sexuality from a patriarchal perspective and inculcate a belief that women should harbor feelings of guilt and shame about sex.

- The Earth Mother is also unique to African American women, and she has a more developed sense of self and sexual identity than Sister Savior. The Earth Mother does have a presence in Hip Hop culture. The Earth Mother celebrates diversity of body sizes, natural hair textures, and skin colors. Her consciousness removes her from the sexual context that is present within the Hip Hop culture. She has an ability to understand the link between the spiritual, emotional, and physical and is frightening to those with a more materialistic orientation. She has a strong sense of herself and expects the same from others who are close to her. These expectations can be intimidating to men. The Earth Mother projects self-empowerment a part from Hip Hop, and she rejects the exploitation based on sex and gender.

- The Baby Mama exists the moment a baby is born an African American adolescent female. Single motherhood is not abnormal in the African American community, in many cases it is viewed as a respected role. Pregnant or parenting adolescent teens are many times given positive attention from peers and adults.
Having a baby for the male is sometimes seen as proof of her love for him; the pregnancy can make her seem “bonafide” in the male’s life. Once pregnant or once the baby is born, a male makes the assumption that he always has sexual access to his Baby Mama, no matter what his relationship status. The title of being a Baby Mama takes on the description of the female, no matter why she had sex or the context of the encounter. She is seen as only a mother to a baby.

There is an idea that the girl only got pregnant to maintain the relationship the male, to take his money, or keep some part of him with her. It is assumed that The Baby Mama desires being with the man so much that she will sacrifice all her life plans and will even become pregnant in unethical ways (Stephens & Phillips, 2003).

Women can move among these stereotypes depending on the contexts they are in. Sometimes they are able to combine them together (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). How a woman projects herself at a night club may be different than how she projects herself at school, at church, or playing sports. Other people’s attitudes and the adolescent girl’s beliefs about her identity do have direct impact on her sexual decision-making processes. “Their understanding of the power associated with their sexuality and the devaluing of their physical appearance, intellectual prowess, and emotional value has clearly impacted the sexual identity development and health experiences of this population” (p. 35). By participating in the Hip Hop culture, adolescents learn their roles, so they have their needs met and can be accepted by their peers. Within this culture, many are presented with sexual scripts and images without having a strong
sense of themselves and their sexual selves, and they will rely on their peer acceptance to dictate their behavior (Stephens & Phillips, 2003).

Walcott (2005) described how rap music was created out of the racism in America. It is a postmodern art form that can sustain market manipulation. It should not be surprising that there would be white rappers, for there are rappers from a wide range of racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds within the Hip Hop culture.

The determination of racial thinking and its impact on the ways postmodern human life is lived is evident in rap music. The cross-racial identification is marked by the largely male publics’ attraction to the rhythms and the story that concerns the persistence of race in music and the larger culture (Walcott, 2005). The inventive beats of rap and Hip Hop culture is invested in post-civil rights economic, education, and cultural policies that left the urban black poor.

This created a nightmare as far as Martin Luther King Jr.’s dream, because it simultaneously created and sustained certain racial stereotypes that have surfaced as the most important signifiers for the cross-racial marketing of rap and Hip Hop culture. The most apparent of those racial stereotypes have been criminality, rampant sexuality, and a kind of machismo that puts Black men in a position of being an on-going menace. This then creates a notion of Black primitivism. As Walcott (2005) wrote:

Black boys and White boys hold hands in the production and reproduction of ongoing raciallogical thinking in the debasements that populate much of commercial rap music, the multicultural dream as nightmare is highly marketable and profitable. (p. 6)
Walcott (2005) asserted that by engaging the centrality of racialogical thinking the project of music scholarship might find itself centrally involved in the side of knowledge production that seeks to remake human kind.

Myer and Kleck (2007) reviewed the history of Hip Hop and rap through the rise of the Billboard charts. They noted there are several definitions of rap music. Some associate a definition of rap with pop music that includes talking or rapping to a musical beat. Others include the content and lyrics, which discuss inner-city hopes and dreams, aspirations, and realities of Black youth. Others look at historical and ethnic origins of rap, saying that rap stems from the West African storyteller tradition (Myer and Kleck, 2007).

Myer and Kleck (2007) revealed that the Billboard charts label Hip Hop as a music “genre,” not as an actual style of music. Instead, Hip Hop is used to refer to culture, language, and behavior. Rap is the musical form that has emerged from the Hip Hop culture. Hip Hop has become popular among those in the music industry and has had influence over other genres like pop, rap, and R&B. The researchers looked at the Billboard music industry charts from 1990 to 2005 and studied how the ownership of rap labels has changed as the industry has become more concentrated. Billboard became a household name for the music industry, and it is the most popular source for ranking music. In 2006, Billboard produced 39 music charts; these charts serve as a marketing tool for the music business and the radio stations use them to create playlists. Myer and Kleck (2007) found that the Billboard charts label Hip Hop as a music genre, not as an actual style of music. Instead, Hip Hop is used to refer to culture, language, and behavior. Rap is the musical form that has emerged from the Hip Hop culture. Hip Hop has
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become popular among those in the music industry and has had influence over other genres like pop, rap, and R&B (Myer and Kleck, 2007). Music charts are seen as an important link for relationships among business, musicians, music, and the consumers. Producers and consumers use charts to compare, contrast, and rank musicians and song titles.

Myer and Kleck (2007) found several trends in their analysis of the music charts they sampled. In 1997 they found a rise in the presence of major record labels that started buying the independent rap labels. That same year, 1997 Hip Hop and rap’s presence grew on the charts. In 2002 there was another increase, because the titles, genres and artist became more homogenized, the authors asserted. Another trend Myer and Kleck found was the naming of the genres themselves. Hip Hop and rap were separate genres according to the *Billboard* chart from 1990 to 2005. Hip Hop was described as collaborative songs with dance beats, while the rap genre consisted only of songs considered gangsta rap. Myer and Kleck stated that corporate influence over rap music slowly changed the genre to conform to the parameters of the mainstream culture; thus, rap music lost the value of its message, social urgency, and authenticity because it is being watered down through formulaic corporate control. The profit-driven corporations are compromising rap music, which challenges diversity. Ultimately, the music suffers.

With rap topping the charts and being infused in the identity development of adolescents, Kirkland (2008) wrote about how Hip Hop taught adolescents for a long time by “captivating their minds, agitating their souls, and touching their hearts” (p. 42). Kirkland (2008) noted that
Hip Hop has given youth a type of style—a swagger—and aided in creating youth identities. Kirkland (2008) admitted to wondering why Hip Hop has become so essential in youth’s lives and why educators aren’t using Hip Hop to learn more about their students. Kirkland (2008) said Hip Hop can be used as a way to teach media literacy in a classroom and to inspire youth to be advocates of social and political change.

Kirkland (2008) went into a Midwest high school English classroom and observed the teacher using Hip Hop to help educate his students. Kirkland (2008) worked with an English teacher from September 2005 until June 2006; he met with the teacher and his class two times a week. The teacher blended Hip Hop with the daily lessons. The class looked at Hip Hop’s critical language and the voices of the people involved, as well as how Hip Hop has been viewed historically. Kirkland reported that the teacher’s goal for using Hip Hop in his classroom was to help his students see how they could transform society into a better place. The teacher believed that by funneling the daily lessons through Hip Hop, it could help give his students the tools to help with their academic competencies and to improve their quality of life.

The teacher used the artist Tupac Shakur’s (also know just by his first name, Tupac) lyrics to various songs to help his students think critically about difficult social issues. This was known as teaching Tupac and during the lesson the students listened to, read and discussed Tupac’s songs “Changes,” “Me Against the World,” “Keep Ya Head Up,” “I Ain’t Mad At ‘Cha,” and “Dear Momma” (Kirkland, 2008). The goals for using Tupac’s lyrics were:

- To have students make critical connections among themes in Tupac’s songs, and

*The Scarlet Letter*, and their lives;
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- To have students use the emergent themes to find meaning in their worlds and locate points of inequity;
- To have students develop a language of critique to name and speak to and against the social inequities that exist in their world. (Kirkland, 2008, p. 44)

The students became aware of social injustices, and Hip Hop helped to give the students a voice and to speak about creating social change. Kirkland (2008) believes when Hip Hop is used as a tool to teach about media literacy, it “calls attention to those deep feelings which are shared across boundaries of class, gender, and race, and which could be fertile ground for the construction of empathy” (p.45).

Nieolson (2009) discussed the election of Barack Obama and how there has been hope for a change in lyrics of rap music. Starting in 2007, socially conscious rappers have begun to talk about Obama. In 2008, more well-known artists have started to include lyrics inspired by Obama in their music. Al Sharpton has even taken on the role of a music critic, taking a stance against the violence and misogynistic lyrics that perpetuate the harmful stereotypes of African Americans. President Obama himself has expressed his concerns over the misogyny and materialism of a lot of rap lyrics. Obama has said he would like rappers to use their fame and talent to help shape attitudes in a positive way.

Nieolson (2009) sought to know whether Obama’s presidency could serve as a catalyst for the kind of change that he and others, like Sharpton, have called for? Can there be an “Obamafication” of rap, allowing the genre to embrace lyrics that serve the African-American community rather than exploit it? To answer those questions, Nieolson (2009) looked at Young
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Jeezy’s popular track “My President” as an example of how the introduction of Obama into mainstream rap has not taken the place of the gangsta-type themes. Instead, it has affected a dynamic of rhetoric of gangsta rap and politics.

In Young Jeezy’s June 2008 track, “My President” he says “My president is black, my Lambo’s blue/ and I’ll be goddamned if my rims ain’t too.” It is important to note that Obama is written in the lyrics along side his “Lambo” (Lamborghini) (Nielson, 2009). The automobile, in African-American culture, has been an icon of wealth; it is observable in Black music and popular culture leading up to Hip Hop. The automobile has also been a symbol of not just wealth, but of mobility. With the presence of Obama, this successful political figure gives some new meaning to the Black culture--there is no bigger example of upward mobility for African Americans that Obama. So the car, coupled with Obama, provide a fitting metaphor to describe Obama’s political rise to the presidency and the elevation of Black culture (Nielson, 2009).

Also, within Young Jeezy’s June 2008 track, “My President,” there was an emphasis on the first person. The words “we” and “us” are spread throughout the song; this shows an attempt to give a sense of communality, Nielson (2009) wrote. However, the songs do become overpowered by language that favors “I,” “my” and “me.” This first person use of words, like “my president” places Obama alongside Jeezy’s other possessions, and changes the meaning of the sense of the political as the subject to the political as the object. Thus, Nielson observed, this gives little hope for a socially conscious message to emerge.

Whatever changes that may be occurring in rap, they are taking place in a post-gangsta environment, which means any reformulations of mainstream rap as a political vehicle will find
some challenges in the recoding industry. This is an industry that is used to promoting a “sub-
style” of music based on hustling, crime, sexual domination, and drug dealing (Nielson, 2009).

The evolution in rap will also have to change fans’ mindsets that have come to associate rap with
the themes promoted by the recording industry of “keeping it real.” The Young Jeezy’s “My
President” track is affecting the change, the author asserted. This track uses Obama to
reinvigorate the tired stereotypes and images of commercial rap by introducing a new and
productive political significance. This is a small but meaningful step in what can become a
broader process of political engagement in rap as a whole (Nielson, 2009).

The lyrics in rap also can describe the intimacy and commitment between Black men and
women in close relationships. Chaney (2009) looked at the intimacy and commitment language
that was used by African-American men and women in a book titled *Trapped in a Closet* written
by R. Kelly. Chaney (2009) found four major themes within chapters one through five of
Kelly’s book. The four major themes were:

- Marital infidelity
- The Secret Revealed
- Homosexuality and the Black Church, and
- Martial Distrust

Chaney (2009) discussed how Hip Hop has been influential in showcasing the
experiences of Black men and women. Hip Hop highlights race, age, class and social
boundaries, it addresses issues such as poverty, unemployment, racial inequity, and racial pride.
It also relates messages about the complex nature of Black male-female heterosexual
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relationships. A large number of lyrics and music videos have forced attention to the sexualized nature of Black women in music videos.

These videos show abuse of Black women and/or Black males as both aggressors and victims. The music videos minimize Black female bodies by showing them as objects of degradation, pleasure, and satisfaction for men.

Chaney (2009) found several things in his research:

- The language patterns related to intimacy were based on love between men and women, sexual satisfaction, and the implicit and explicit rules that rule romantic relationships;

- The language patterns related to commitment were based on words of marital commitment, the level of loyalty the couples have to one another, their desire to make their relationship work and the interest to keep the relationship strong.

- The language patterns related to commitment were related to terms that were indicative of marital commitment, attachment to one’s partner, and the willingness to stay married through good and bad times.

Chaney (2009) found the commitment and intimacy language were predictors of relationship stability. This is essential because it can keep couples together when one or both of them may want to leave the relationship.
Bell and Avant-Mier (2009) sought to answer the question of how the rap discourse of love has changed since the music genre’s emergence in the cultural mainstream around the mid to late 1980s.

They looked at the generational shift in rap music’s language of love by comparing 1987 rap ballad “I Need Love” by L.L. Cool J and the 2007 single “Soulja Girl” by Soulja Boy Tell ‘Em (also known as “Soulja Boy”). Bell and Avant-Mier’s (2009) analysis looked at:

- The literature and discussion about the intersection of Hip Hop culture, interpersonal relationships, and love;
- The role of the rap ballad in Hip Hop’s love discourse;
- The complexity of language and meanings in rap ballads; and
- Analyzed the hegemonic moments related to gender roles in the songs, as well as their correlation to other social-cultural trends. (p. 42)

The two songs, “I need love” and “Soulja Girl” were chosen for that study because they were a comparative snapshot of two generations in the concept of love in the rap ballad genre (Bell and Avant-Mier, 2009).

Bell and Avant-Mier (2009) found a significant change in the culture’s language of love in that 20-year gap between the rap ballads they studied. They were “tempted to conclude that contemporary perceptions of love are ‘worse,’ ‘sad,’ or perhaps more simply that things were just better ‘back then,’” (p. 47); however, they wrote that they could safely say that some
changes were made and are consistent with hegemonic language practices and relationship
patterns. Their study did shed some light on the hegemonic nature of the discourse in Hip Hop
in which women are supposedly empowered through language, but their very empowerment is
attached with systemic constructions of being “do-ers” for men.

Even with the generational gap and the strides women and feminism has made, such discourse
shows how the women of both generations lack being anything more because they do not have a
voice. Since the beginning of Hip Hop, there has been an outcry about the lyrics in rap music.

Beaver (2010) examined the policies and actions of the major record labels, and how they
have responded to the individuals and groups who feel they have had a social obligation to lessen
the negative effects of rap lyrics. Beaver (2010) reviewed different opinions about gangsta rap
and looked at how the industry has responded. Basically, Beaver (2010) found the record labels
have ignored the individuals who have asked for change, all while continually marketing and
creating gansta rap. For the recording industry, rap is highly profitable.

Beaver (2010) argued that the companies must meet the “moral minimum” to stay away
from harm and correct social injuries by censoring certain offensive lyrics. Beaver (2010) stated
that some critics have said that young black males lack role models and are somewhat bored;
they accept gangsta lyrics as gospel. There are some who say that gangsta rap is not just an issue
of freedom of speech, but also an honest portrayal of life in crime-ridden neighborhoods. Rap,
they assert, is caused by poverty, racism, and police brutality. One rapper said, “His Hop is sick
because America is sick” (p. 109).
The music’s popularity is said to have peaked in 2000 and since that time, sales of the albums have dropped from 100 million to 20 million in 2007, making it the largest decline of any music genre (Beaver, 2010). Record labels are unwilling to remove the offensive lyrics because they have shown to be profitable in the past.

When record labels and major corporations started to become heavily involved in rap, there was more emphasis placed on violence and sex, which has already had a proven track record for success.

Adding to the drop in record sales is the fact that record stores have also closed, due to the increase of consumers downloading music from the Internet. This leaves more of the big chain stores as the ones selling records, and they are more restrictive about types of music they will carry (Beaver 2010). These stores won’t stock albums with “parental advisory” stickers, and they will only sell certain albums if they are edited. While record labels do create versions that are appropriate for television and radio outlets, there is only so much editing and censoring gangsta rap can endure and still be considered gangsta rap. Beaver (2010) stated that the behavior of the record labels shows a classic case of putting profits over people. The only factor that has had any impact on rap music has been the declining sales. It seems the record labels will not change to alleviate the impact of the offensive lyrics. Beaver (2010) asserted there will need to be government regulations imposed in order to stop the gangsta rap, but this would create considerable political and legal challenges.

In Brunson’s (2011) research, the author stated that since the global emergence of the Hip Hop culture almost 40 years ago it has become the predominant culture of the global youth. In
2001, *Ebony* magazine reported that Hip Hop was a $10 billion business. Brunson (2011) wrote, “hip hop images reside within media the way organisms reside in a habitat” (p. 7). And, like organisms, rap is able to move from one media environment to another.

Brunson (2011) discussed ways of teaching about Hip Hop in a classroom of middle or high school students, making clear how Hip Hop images treat students as spaces or bodies, landscapes or figures, all the while creating ambivalence in the viewer.

The author also discussed how Hip Hop has become a pertinent field of education and education research in three distinct ways:

- Teachers are increasingly using culturally responsive teaching and educating students how aspects of their lives are subject to manipulation and control by capitalist demands;

- Hip Hop and the songs’ messages are intertwined with the process of constructing identity for youth; and

- There are more courses, research, and conferences being offered by higher education institutions around the world.

Brunson (2011) noted that Hip Hop images have expanded from visual mediums such as fashion, performance, and electronic technologies to more traditional artistic forms like painting, photography, film, magazines, and comic books. The author found an activity called “Showing Seeing” that has been useful in the classroom. This activity is taken from the elementary activity of “show and tell.” “Showing and Seeing” is where students are asked to select an object of their
choice and to talk about the object like they are from another planet full of beings who do not know the concept of Hip Hop. It provided students with opportunities to engage in self-expression and “deconstruct the Hip Hop culture.”

An important lesson that can be learned from the “Showing and Seeing” activity is the visual construction of something that is familiar and how it can awaken the sense of wonder. The author notes that we take so many things for granted, and this activity can reframe ideas. Hip Hop represents a voice of a generation, and in a classroom, subtle nuances from the Hip Hop culture can be magnified. By using the “Showing and Seeing” activity teachers and researchers can bring a means of accessing the urban student culture out of the classroom (Brunson, 2011).

It was this teaching of the culture to urban adolescents and an attempt to help them “see” what Hip Hop culture says to them that prompted the MOCSA study in 2007.

**MOCSA Study**

From 2005 to 2010, the author of this thesis worked for the Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (MOSCA). With a colleague, we were asked to develop research concerning Hip Hop music and how the lyrics influenced urban, adolescent African American females’ view of themselves and their sense of their place in the world. We completed the study in 2007. More specifically, this research was focused on learning what the girls thought of themselves in comparison to the stereotypes in Hip Hop lyrics, then perhaps to gain some insight into how to prevent their further hyper-sexualization. Once a better picture of these young girls’ worldview was made clear, then MOSCA employees could better communicate with the girls and perhaps redirect some of their negative self-image. The study carried out was part of a larger
grant to develop information for Education and Outreach Services (EOS) team and its Clinical Services team as they worked with urban core female adolescents who were exhibiting sexually reactive behavior (SRB). This study also assisted in creating a more socially and culturally aware programming to better react the youth in the urban core.

Sexually reactive behavior (SRB) is when one child takes power over another child. Fifty percent of the time the child who is taking power over the other has experienced sexual abuse and 97% of the time the child has experienced some sort of trauma, often it is domestic violence or neglect (K. Mills-Trowbridge, personal communication, December 18, 2011). It is uncommon for a child exhibiting SRB to commit sexual crimes as an adolescent. Those who commit crimes as adults, commit crimes that cross another’s personal boundaries, such as breaking and entering or a type of physical assault (K. Mills-Trowbridge, personal communication, December 18, 2011). The best treatment for a child exhibiting SRB is family therapy. The parents need to increase warm, loving family interactions, the child needs to feel safe and comforted. If the child does not receive the family support the child does no better in therapy than if they did not receive any therapy at all (K. Mills-Trowbridge, personal communication, December 18, 2011). With this knowledge MOCSA wanted to know how girls were impacted by Hip Hop music and culture, particularly those girls who were exhibiting SRB or another type of sexually inappropriate behavior.

The participants for the present study were 5th, 7th and 8th grade female students from a range of family circumstances, economic stability, and academic performance. There were no 6th grade students who chose to participate, thus the skipping of that age group. The students all
came from a magnet school located in midtown Kansas City, Missouri. The school was tuition free with an enrollment of 750 students from kindergarten through 8th grade. The majority of the students enrolled in the school were low-income and African American.

The MOSCA study used as its methodological foundation some research done by Stephens and Phillips (2003) titled “Freaks, Gold Diggers, Divas, and Dykes: The Sociohistorical Development of Adolescent African American Women’s Sexual Scripts,” which was reviewed above. Their study described the sexualized constructs of African American women as emerging from two periods, one prior to the 1950s and one post 1950s. The 12 sexual, stereotypical scripts by Stephens and Phillips (2003) are described on page 27 through page 34 of this study.

With these stereotypes by Stephens and Phillips (2003) being used as the core of the study, the girls identified for the MOSCA study were given a pre-test during the first session. They were asked to express how they believed Hip Hop portrays women, identifying and defining in their own words what the stereotypes mean, and reviewing a storyboard of images from Hip Hop. Then we debriefed their impressions and opinions. The pre-test used questions that MOSCA’s counselors and members of the EOS team have used in their youth education programs, which often identify gender stereotypes, sexual harassment, and dating violence.

In the second session, the girls watched a series of Hip Hop videos and discussed the images they saw while considering Stephens and Phillips’ (2003) stereotypes. In the third and final session, the girls viewed 10 Hip Hop music videos while reading the lyrics. Each video was discussed with an emphasis on Stephens and Phillips’ (2003) stereotypes to help them “talk”
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about what they saw and heard. The discussions were framed around the question “so what does that say about me?” At the end of this session the participants were administered a post-test to measure any change in attitude.

From the focus group data, we found that the girls all believed that the lyrics and images in the videos were about other women and girls, not them—“they’re not talking about me.” The girls truly felt that they were not the object of the misogynistic messages that were being expressed. The quantitative data demonstrated that during the three sessions with the participants, there was a small growth in awareness about how they are affected and how they view their world, as it was defined by Hip Hop. However, no significant changes in the measurements appeared. Overall, this study demonstrated that the girls indeed were the focus of the misogynistic messages; yet, they didn’t perceive themselves as such. This study definitely brought home the complexity of identity development and of interpretation.

This study done while the author was at MOSCA was such an intriguing experience; I wanted to continue to study the issue. What I originally wanted to do was find the girls again and do the same study to see if they had changed their opinions after being exposed to this information some time ago. However, I couldn’t find the girls to restudy them—a sad statement in and of itself. Thus, what seemed a natural extension of this study was to do a critical analysis of lyrics sung by the same singers as in the original MOSCA study. As can be seen in the Methodology below, I have selected two songs from the original MOSCA study and two songs popular today, all performed by two artists, Beyonce and Gym Class Heroes. It is my intention
to assess whether or not the stereotypes that emerged in the original MOSCA study still hold true today in some very popular Hip Hop songs.
Chapter 3
Methodology

Clearly, Hip Hop culture is a part of African American female adolescents’ identity formation. Hip Hop has evolved since its creation in the 1960’s and 1970’s where it impacted the Black Arts Movement and was a source of identity formation and social status for African Americans (Brunson, 2011). It appears that once the major corporations and record labels became greatly involved in rap music there was a more specific emphasis placed on sex and violence (Beaver, 2010). This is troubling, given how much the lyrics have become full of violence and female objectification. And, given some cultural mirroring, it is interesting to note how much rap lyrics has affected our culture over all. An example of such cultural mirroring can be seen when radio personality Don Imus referred to members of the Rutgers women’s basketball team as “nappy-headed hoes” on his radio and television shows. Imus “wouldn’t have known what a ‘ho’ was if it weren’t for rap records” (Beaver, 2010).

In order to better understand the connection between identity formation and Hip Hop music, the goal of this research project was to draw attention to the MOSCA study and its focus on Hip Hop lyrics and music videos and what impression they leave on adolescent African American girls. Because the girls who originally participated in the project could no longer be located to update the MOSCA study, the author choose to focus on the music videos and their lyrics to see if things had changed over the past years—changed, that is, in the wording of the rap songs’ images and lyrics.

This project, then, conducted a critical analysis of four music videos to see how young African American girls may be negotiating their place in current society.
This critical analysis was based on the stereotypes reported in Stephens and Phillips’ (2003) work, and enriched by a brief summation of the girls’ interpretation of these stereotypes in the MOSCA study.

The original MOSCA study used more than a dozen songs; this project will use two of the original songs from the study and then select two popular songs of 2011 by those original artists. From the MOSCA study Beyonce Knowles’ “Naughty Girl” was selected because Knowles continues to be leader in the genre’s charts. Also, “Cupid’s Chokehold” by Gym Class Heroes was selected, also because that group continues to be popular. Both of the songs from the MOCSA study were released in 2007. This researcher then selected a current, popular song from Knowles—“Party”—and one from Gym Glass Heroes—“Stereo Hearts.” Each of the four songs had great popularity and was a part of the Hot 100 songs on the Billboard during either 2007 or 2011. A song earns a Hot 100 Billboard ranking from radio play and sales of the songs (Billboard Hot 100, 2011). The researcher wanted to make sure the songs selected were listened to by the MOCSA participants and that the artist were still popular and relevant today.

**Definition of Key Terms**

Thus, the first step, developing definitions of key terms, will be anchored in the Stephens and Phillips’ (2003) twelve stereotypes of African American women. For this study, the definitions will be:

The Jezebel:

- Light skinned, having long hair and a shapely body
- She is portrayed with an insatiable sexual appetite
• She appears to want to please men and achieve personal, sexual gratification at the same time

The Mammy:

• Nurturing
• Putting others needs before her own
• Asexual, both physically and emotionally
• Overweight, and having dark-skinned, African features

The Welfare Mother:

• Breeding children uncontrollably
• The children are unwanted and a burden on society
• The woman is lazy and collects government checks

The Matriarch:

• Controlling, emasculating and contemptuous
• Does not need a man, expect to help get her pregnant
• Dominant

The Diva:

• Having an attitude
• Surrounding herself with others who worship and adore her, attention is important
• High-maintenance, needing many material resources to be happy and to maintain social status by getting her nails manicured and buying top of the line clothing
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- Pretty, with long, straightened hair, light skin, and a slender build
- Immodest, but does not wear skimpy clothing
- Sultry and tempting, never explicit
- Attractive, but unattainable
- Looking for a man who will boost her image and status

The Gold Digger:

- Seeks material and economic rewards for sex
- Knows sex is her more powerful commodity, and is willing to trade for it
- Will resort to any and all sexual means to gain whatever financial rewards she wants or needs
- Will be available to men if money is available
- Uses men

The Freak:

- A representation of male desires for women’s sexuality
- Sexually aggressive
- Loves to have sex without any emotional attachment
- Having no sexual inhibitions or hang-ups
- Someone who will have sex any place, in any position, with any person (or number of people)
- Someone who will participate in high-risk sexual activities
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- Will use sex to gain sexual control over partners while fulfilling her own physical sexual needs
- A bad girl who gains male attention
- Who appears empowered
- Someone who may be an Everyday Freak; she will be seen as someone who
  - Dresses in tight clothing, shirt skirts
  - Is assumed to be a stripper
- Or someone who is an Undercover Freak, seen as someone who
  - By day represents a good girl image
  - At night, in a nightclub or in bed will engage in “unconventional” sexual games for personal physical pleasure

The Dyke:

- Not letting men have a role in their sexual interactions
- Too decisive, resist sexual overtures
- Not really so concerned about being lesbian, but not giving her body to men
- Seen as acting out of bitterness toward men, having been badly hurt by men
- Not experiencing “good” sex with men, so they deny men sex
- Her appearance is mannish

The Gangster Bitch:

- Embody aggression and emotional strength
- Have become hardened and has stopped feeling pain
- Use sex a means to release stress and feel good for that moment
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- Value men as partners in their struggle for daily survival in urban American culture
- Live in the same filthy poverty-stricken, drug-infested, violent environments as men
- Support their men under any condition, no matter the outcome
- Become alibis, take the blame for crimes, and carry illicit substances or weapons for their man
- Spy or gather information, distract or lure a rival opponent of her man’s, by using sex
- Earn a degree of protection from the males
- Have relationships that are often violent
- Use violence to control others’ behavior

The Sister Savior:

- Have male-defined involvement
- Her sexuality is located on a higher plane
- Her sexuality is based in a spiritual, communal framework
- The church defines her understanding about sexuality
- Avoid sex for moral issues
- Be demure, obedient, submissive and oppressed particularly towards men

The Earth Mother:

- Has a developed sense of self
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- Embraces natural hair, doesn’t use chemicals, wears deadlocks, afros or other alternative styles
- Celebrates all body sizes, natural hair textures, and skin colors
- Doesn’t have a sexual context within the Hip Hop culture
- Understands the link between the spiritual, emotional, and physical
- Has a strong sense of self and expects the same from others
- Intimidating to others, especially men

The Baby Momma:

- Any one can easily move into this role, purposefully or by accident
- When a girl child is born, she becomes a Baby Mama
- A symbol of an African American girl entering womanhood
- Is seen as a “bonafide” female in the man’s life
- Man assumes to always have sexual access, no matter relationship status
- Thought to get pregnant to maintain relationship with male, to take his money or keep a part of him
- Thought of as plotting and lying to entrap man

As noted above, two songs were chosen from the original MOSCA study that were performed by artists who are still particularly popular, Beyonce Knowles and the Gym Class Heroes. Knowles’ song used in the MOSCA study was “Naughty Girl.” The Gym Class Heroes performed “Cupid’s Chokehold.” For these artists’ current, popular videos, I selected “Party Girl,” a 2011 song Beyonce recently released. Gym Class Heroes’ contemporary song selected was “Stereo Hearts,” another 2011 release. All four of the performances will be described, then
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The findings of the critical analysis will be provided. This analysis answered the questions: Has Hip Hop changed its tune?

Are adolescent African American girls today hearing and seeing the same stereotypes in the vast sea of music and videos, or are they being exposed to a more mature, socially conscious set of lyrics?
Chapter 4
Analysis

Beyonce’s “Naughty Girl” was recorded on her studio album, *Dangerously in Love*. The song was released in 2004. Knowles, Scott Storch, Robert Waller, and Angela Beyince wrote the song, then Knowles and Storch produced it. On June 5, 2004, “Naughty Girl” peaked at number three on the *Billboard* Hot 100 (Re: Naughty Girl, 2011).

This song’s music video takes place in a nightclub where Beyonce is performing. It starts out with her dancing behind a wall where the audience can see a silhouette of her and the other dancers as they take their clothing off. Once Beyonce starts singing, all eyes are on her and she has everyone’s attention. As the video progresses, Beyonce and the other dancers are seen in various costumes. At one point in the video, Beyonce is dancing in a larger-than-life champagne glass that is filled with bubbles, and as she is dancing champagne glasses are being filled for all the nightclub patrons. During the video we see Beyonce witness a fight between two men outside the nightclub. Once her dance set is over, Beyonce notices one of the men who was in the fight (played by Usher) and she begins to dance seductively with him.

When the female participants from the MOCSA original study heard this song, watched the video and read the lyrics, they called Beyonce a Diva. They said Beyonce’s Diva was as a cleaned up Freak. They knew every word to this song and sang along as the video played.

Using Stephens and Phillips’ (2003) definitions, we see a representation of The Jezebel, The Diva, and The Freak. Beyonce fits the appearance of The Jezebel and The Diva with her long hair, curvy body, and light skin. She is very erotic in the way she dresses and dances.
While Beyoncé is dancing, her movements and costumes are very sultry and tempting. The lyrics also portray Beyoncé as The Diva and The Freak. For The Diva, it is important to make sure she is a part of everyone’s attention and this plays out when Beyoncé begins to sing, all eyes turn to give her their attention. In the lyrics, Beyoncé is the one calling all of her female friends to get them involved. There are also hints of Beyoncé being represented as The Freak because of the choice of words. According to Stephens & Phillips’s (2003) study, The Freak stereotype can be a part of the Jezebel stereotype. In the video and the lyrics, Beyoncé doesn’t know the man who she begins to dance with. Her words are sexually charged with phrases like: “You can feel my burning flame, I’m feelin’ kind of n-a-s-t-y.” This type of language is indicative of The Freak stereotype of being sexually aware, comfortable with her sexuality, and fulfilling her own physical needs. She is also shown as The Freak in the video because she becomes a representation of the male’s desire for women. This is given credence by Beyoncé stripping her clothes off and dancing in a giant champagne glass. With her dance moves and going after the victorious man from the fight, Beyoncé is shown as being empowered and has no sexual inhibitions or hang-ups. Overall, Beyoncé is shown as the “everyday” Freak in this video—someone who dresses in tight clothes with a slim body and who is probably a stripper at night.

Also taken from the original MOSCA study was the Gym Class Heroes’ song “Cupid's Chokehold,” featuring Patrick of Fall Out Boy and the lead singer of Gym Class Heroes, Travis McCoy, who wrote this song. Throughout this video the lead singer, Travis McCoy, was not the center of the attention; it was the stereotypes the girlfriends represented. McCoy was dressed in stereotypical Hip Hop style clothes throughout, meaning he wore baggy pants and shirts with large gold chains around his neck.
The video for “Cupid’s Chokehold” starts out with an African American child dressed as a cupid dancing to the beat of the music. The cupid has brown linen draped on him like a toga, with an Afro and white wings. The arrows the cupid shoots throughout this video have a heart on the end and hit McCoy in his buttocks. Cupid also only shoots McCoy at a park in the same location as women walk by. When the cupid shot McCoy for the first time in the park, McCoy watched a woman talking on the phone as she is walking by. Right away this woman carries herself as a Diva, for she is talking with someone in order to be the center of attention. McCoy and this woman fall in love, making her girlfriend number one. The video leaves the park and goes to McCoy’s home, which looks like a home in a lower income part of town.

This first girlfriend dresses like The Diva. She is in sexy clothing and is well put together with her nails and hair fixed. She is pretty with long straightened hair, and slender build, which certainly fits into the stereotype of The Diva. Her clothing choices are immodest, but not overly skimpy. The first girlfriend is shown to take care of the man by brushing out his hair and cooking a stack of pancakes for his breakfast. She is seen putting him before her, by not only cooking but also taking care of the house, doing the grocery shopping and paying the bills. These actions fall into The Mammy role; however, her appearance contradicts the role. In Stephens and Phillips’s study (2003) The Mammy is not seen as a sexual being.

Up until this point we had only seen the interactions between these two as cuddling, dancing together, having fun or her taking care of him in some way. The couple begins to fight. We witness several fights between the two; these are all seen inside the house.
A sign of trouble in the relationship is displayed when he is served a burned pancake, instead of the large stack of perfectly cooked pancakes he received in the beginning of their relationship. The relationship ultimately ends when she walks in on him gambling and partying with his friends. When she enters the house her arms are full of grocery bags and the house is very smoky from whatever it is Travis McCoy and his friends are smoking. As McCoy’s friends leave the gambling party from the front door, this girlfriend is yelling from the front yard at them. The partiers look like they cannot get away from her and the house fast enough as they exit.

Once this relationship collapses, Travis McCoy is back at the same location in the park and the same cupid shoots him with another arrow. This time a beautiful woman is walking alone with a swagger of confidence. This woman right way seems to be empowered and strong.

Girlfriend number two dresses very well and she wears more expensive clothes than the first girlfriend. She is shown driving a Bentley Arnage and lives in what looks like a very nice loft space. At first glance, girlfriend number two appears to be a Gold Digger with all her nice belongings and her lovely appearance. However, she seems to have nothing to gain by dating Travis McCoy, her appearance makes her higher status than him. The way girlfriend number two dresses and carries herself fits in with being a representation of the male desire for women’s sexuality--she is empowered and sexually aggressive. She fits the stereotype of being an everyday Freak, where her true sexual prowess comes out at night, but during the day she still carries herself with a sense of empowerment and strength.
Thinking back to when we first saw this girlfriend walking alone it makes sense with her fitting into The Freak stereotype, because most woman do not like other woman who are a Freak because women sense competition or feel a fear about their own unexpressed sexuality (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).

Girlfriend number two also fits into The Jezebel stereotype, with her light skin, long hair and shapely body. She has an insatiable sexual appetite. She is shown as also wanting to please men and achieve personal sexual gratification at the same time. The majority of the time we see girlfriend number two and Travis McCoy kissing. The relationship with girlfriend number two begins to unravel when McCoy is shown eating fast food French fries in her expensive car; she has a look of disgust on her face. Then the next problem of the relationship occurs when she invites him to a very formal party. He then invites his friends. McCoy and his friends are dressed in fancier clothes than we had seen with the first girlfriend, however, the clothing is still not to the standard of everyone else’s appearance at this party. The friends begin to rap and act out, apparently upset about this upscale shindig. Girlfriend number two is visibly upset by this outburst of rapping, she is seen standing alone with her arms crossed shaking her head. The next scene of the video McCoy is walking down a hallway with two suitcases to girlfriend number two’s loft, he looks happy and excited to be arriving at her place. The cupid is seen in a different part of the hallway, dancing and looking happy about the relationship between McCoy and girlfriend number two. When he opens the door he finds her dressed very provocatively and straddling a man who is lying on his back on a bearskin rug with a mask on. The man on the rug looks confused about McCoy walking into the loft. Girlfriend number two’s expression is one of spite, she is not upset. Perhaps this behavior is to retaliate for his behavior at the party.
Travis McCoy goes up to the masked man and punches him in the face. We then see McCoy quickly grabbing his suitcases as he leaves as fast as he can down the same hallway.

At this point the video shows the cupid in the hallway with his ear to the wall and is visibly surprised when he hears McCoy punch the masked man, then the cupid sits on the floors and puts his face in his hands while he shakes his head back and forth.

The next scene of the video is of Travis McCoy alone at a club, sitting at the end of the bar when a woman (played by Katy Perry) who comes up to him and begins a conversation. The cupid is not present and does not shoot McCoy when he meets girlfriend number three. We see McCoy and girlfriend number three talking, then the video cuts to McCoy performing on stage with the cupid dancing in the background. We see girlfriend number three dancing in the audience, she is shown with light shining on her like an aura and everyone else is in darkness. She is dressed very sweetly and as the video progresses with her storyline, she is seen wearing pin-up style clothing and hair. McCoy is then shown to be staring at girlfriend number three while they sat on a park bench, like he is in awe of her beauty. We see girlfriend number three roller-skating at a park as McCoy is following her on a bicycle. This relationship is represented as being idyllic.

The final scene of the video is back at the same spot in the park. We are shown two beautiful women walking in the park and the cupid who is about to shoot another love arrow into Travis McCoy. The cupid stops when he sees McCoy walk up to girlfriend number three and gives her a kiss on the cheek. She is shown sitting on a park bench reading a book, and when McCoy approaches she seems very happy to see him. The cupid refrains from shooting McCoy.
When the cupid lowers his bow and arrow, McCoy is then shot in the buttocks with a heart-shaped arrow. The video focuses on a female African American cupid who looks to be the same age as the male cupid; she also has an Afro and is wearing the same brown toga and white wings. She is smiling at the male cupid and lowers her bow. Next we see both cupids begin dancing in the park and the video fades to black as the song ends.

When the female participants from the MOCSA original study heard this song, watched the video and read the lyrics, they called the first girlfriend a Sister Savior and a Freak, because she started out playing like she was good. Then she freaks out and throws him out of the house. They called the second girlfriend a Freak, too. They did not mention anything about the third girlfriend.

In this video the three girlfriends get lighter skinned as the video progresses. The first girlfriend is clearly African American, the second light skinned enough to be questionably African American, and the third girlfriend is white. There are not enough stereotypical activities for the third girlfriend to put her into a stereotypical category by Stephens and Phillips (2003); thus, the girls may not have had a “category” to put the third, white girlfriend into. In Stephens and Phillips’s (2003) original work, they discussed how the media represents white females as innocent and virginal, this image is shown as unattainable for African American females. It is no surprise then that the third girlfriend is shown as the one McCoy wants to be with most because she fits within this construct of being a white women and being innocent.
African American women are not able to be innocent; in fact, in the media they are portrayed as being wild and sexually promiscuous. Certainly, media stereotypes of African American and white women played out in this video.

The current performances to be analyzed were "Party" performed by Beyonce and “Stereo Hearts” performed by Gym Class Heroes. Both of these songs came out in 2011 and were popular on the *Billboard* charts.

“Party” is a 2011 song recorded by Beyonce featuring rapper André 3000, Kayne West can be heard on this song as well. Knowles and others in the Hip Hop world composed the song. The video for “Party” starts off at a trailer park on a sunny, summer day. We see evidence of a party the night before with colorful streamers and confetti on the road. The camera pans across a few people who are out and about starting their day. Then we see Beyonce in one of the trailers, starting to cook breakfast as we hear Kayne West rapping about “you a bad girl and your friends bad too, You got the swag sauce she dripping swagu.” Kayne West is referring to how sexy Beyonce and all her friends are. Swagu talks about how the women carry their personal style with confidence. From Kayne’s words it sounds as if Beyonce and her friends acted out sexually in some way or another. We then see Beyonce in a revealing, yellow tank top with two ice cream cones that create a shape of a heart as the shirt says, ‘I (heart) summer’. She also has on black panties with her garter straps showing and a hot pink fanny pack around her waist. As she cooks breakfast, she begins to sing, “I may be young, but I’m ready to give you all my love, I told my girls you can get it.” As Beyonce is singing these lyrics the video changes scenes to Beyonce at a beauty parlor, her hair is getting colored.
She is dress provocatively, but not explicit. The way she is dressed and the location of a beauty parlor are both representations of The Diva stereotype. Part of Beyoncé’s outfit while she is at the beauty parlor is a candy ring pop she is wearing. She is also blowing bubbles. Both of these items are designed for kids, which depicts her as young and immature.

The next scene we see is Beyoncé at a block party; the day appears to be sunny and warm. There is a large crowd with a turntable and everyone dancing as a group, which is made up of African American and white partygoers. Everyone is dressed in bright colors and their clothing brings back the style of the 1980’s. It appears this party is a good time because everyone is dancing and smiling. This is a party anyone would have fun at. Beyoncé is seen in the center of all of the groups and leading the dancing, which is true Diva fashion of needing to be the center of the attention with people watching her.

The next scene is another party located around an above ground swimming pool. Beyoncé is seen wearing a bright pink bathing suit that is sexy, but not explicit. She is the only one on a raft as everyone is dancing around her, there are people dancing in the pool and outside of the pool. Then the video cuts to Beyoncé sitting on a lawn chair next to a child’s pool in a faux, green fur vest and thigh-high, high-heeled black boots. Then the video shows us Beyoncé in a sexy two-piece swimming suit, on a different lawn chair sucking on a candy sucker of some kind.

The next change of scenery is when André 3000 starts his portion of the song. The video takes us to a motel as André 3000 drives up in a Bugatti. As he parks his expensive car we see a snake slithering by.
This is an interesting addition, since the lyrics André 3000 spout out are slimy and violent. In André 3000’s lyrics, his words are highly sexually charged and do not refer to love at all. In fact one line “You talking to me, Girl why you fucking with me, Move on there ain't nothing to see” is referring to wanting her to leave after sex. Another line of André 3000’s is “Brain Brillo,” brillo is referring to the brillo pads that is used in cleaning kitchen counter tops, so this phrase is referring to brain washing. Stephens and Phillips (2003) pointed out that there is a high percentage of sexual abuse among African American women as opposed to other ethnic groups. This line in the lyrics is disturbing for that reason, and places Beyonce’s character in The Jezebel stereotype because in reality this stereotype was sexually abused and used to fulfill the masters’ sexual and economic needs back in the time of slavery (Stephens & Phillips’s, 2003).

Beyonce also fits The Jezebel stereotype because of her physical appearance. The Jezebel has light skin, long hair, and a shapely body. She also has an insatiable sexual appetite, while wanting to please men and achieve her own personal sexual gratification at the same time. Beyonce also falls into the Freak stereotype because of her clothing, she appears to be a representation of the male’s desire of a women’s sexuality. Her clothing is tight and revealing. She has various different outfits in this video and each one is sexually suggestive and is designed to capture the male gaze. This also goes for all the women shown in this video, their clothing is worn to get attention from men. The lyrics in the song back up The Freak stereotype. For example, Beyonce sings: “I may be young, but I’m ready to give you all my love. So in love, I’ll give it all away, just don’t tell nobody tomorrow. So in Love, I don’t care what they say, I don’t care if they talking tomorrow.” These phrases from the song teaches young African American women that their sexuality is a commodity, Beyonce talks about giving it all away, too.
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This is a powerful statement of how she is willing to be with André 3000 and to give him everything sexually. The two phrases of the song that state “just don’t tell nobody tomorrow,” and “I don’t care what they say” is an interesting dichotomy. At one point she doesn’t want the word to get out that she is being promiscuous, but then once she is getting into the moment with André 3000 she doesn’t care.

She explains in the lyrics how André 3000’s touch drives her crazy and her attention is focused on that one man. In the video Beyonce isn’t just shown in The Jezebel and Freak role. She is also shown participating in typical Diva actions. For example in multiple scenes in the video Beyonce is seen putting make-up on or fixing her hair. The primping and attention to detail for appearance is typical high-maintenance behavior of The Diva. Also, the multiple references in the lyrics to Beyonce’s friends is also The Diva type cast; consider for example the reference Kayne West makes at the beginning and ending of the song, “you a bad girl and your friends bad too, You got the swag sauce she dripping swagu.” Also, Beyonce is shown throughout the video surrounded by people giving her attention. On the surface this video has a good beat and looks like everyone is having a good time, but at a closer look at the lyrics and what is actually being shown, it is representing the typical stereotypes of The Freak and The Jezebel—in full blossom for the young African American girls.

"Stereo Hearts” by Gym Class Heroes is from their 2011 album *The Papercut Chronicles II*. Adam Levine, the lead singer of Maroon 5, is featured on this single. The song was released on June 14, 2011. In this music video, the band members walk around streets in a city with no women paying any attention to them, except as people walking by. The colors for everything in the video seem to be muted; nothing is a crisp, bright color.
This gives the feeling of a dreary day, and this is supported with leaves blowing in the wind. A main component in the video is the use of shadows; they take on their own characters, as they not only follow the band members but at times they move independently. By using shadows it gives the feeling of Travis McCoy and the rest of the band as being alone, it is just them and their shadows. When the shadows act out separately from the people it is to highlight a word or point in the lyrics. For example, Travis McCoy says, “It's just the last girl that played me left a couple cracks,” and at this time McCoy’s shadow cracks down the middle. The streets in this video are also not kept, they are all cracked and run-down. The feel of the video is depressive both from the representation of loneliness and the disrepair of degrading streets around them. The setting of the video never changed, it was the band on the streets that were never very busy with people.

The women that were shown this video were not used as back-up dancers or exploited; they were just non-descript women who could be seen walking to work or to a friend’s place. The song is about Travis McCoy finding the woman of his dreams, and how he wants to be close to her. The lyrics talk about wanting to be his girlfriend’s radio, in today’s youth culture they always have their music on hand and near, which is how he wants to be for his love.

He sings about being hurt by women in the past and having to get over the pain. In the lyrics this is discussed as he sings about being a dusty record: “I apologize for any skipping tracks, It's just the last girl that played me left a couple cracks.” This is referring how DJ’s use to use records on their turntables and after so much use and scratching the records would crack and break. Stephens and Phillips (2003) go into detail about how Hip Hop does not promote healthy relationship interactions. Hip Hop does not teach about love and communication.
McCoy explains how he wants a woman who wants to be with him and to stay with him. Ultimately, he is expressing a desire to be in a healthy relationship. What is sad is that this is a dream that is not realized in this video.

We know from the lyrics that the lead singer, Travis McCoy, is looking for a healthy relationship, but within the parameters of the stereotypes by Stephens and Phillips’s (2003) is that possible? The Jezebel represents nothing about a healthy relationship, just about a sexual appetite, as well as being a victim of rape. The Mammy is asexual and only puts others first. The Welfare Mother is only about having babies to receive the government checks. The Matriarch only has a need for a man to impregnate her.

These original stereotypes do not lend room to a caring and equal relationship. The additional stereotypes created by Stephens and Phillips’ (2003) are more of the same. The Diva is only concerned with material and status gain. The Gold Digger only wants money and will use her body to get it, she only wants the man for the money. The Freak is only concerned with sex and wants nothing to do with a long lasting relationship built on love and communication. The Dyke does not want a relationship with a man; whether or not she is a lesbian, she rejects men and wants nothing to do with love. The Gangster Bitch is in a relationship with a man, but this relationship is one sided where she is giving all the support and this relationship is violent and abusive. The Sister Savior doesn’t have time for male involvement; she is involved with the church, which reinforces a message of her being submissive and oppressed. The Baby Mama is thought to get pregnant in order to keep the relationship and take the man’s money.
The Earth Mother is an interesting stereotype by Stephens and Phillips’ (2003), and this could perhaps be the woman who McCoy is looking for, if he is looking for a stereotypical woman. Earth Mother is a strong woman with a developed sense of self and sexual identity and she expects the same out of the people around her. Many times men are intimidated by her. She doesn’t play the games, play out the sexism or the hurtful acts that come from the other stereotypes. Is the lead singer able to keep up and step up to an Earth Mother? He sings: “If I could only find a note to make you understand, I sing a song for you… Keep me stuck inside your head, like your favorite tune, and know my heart's a stereo that only plays for you.” Perhaps he wants to try.

In the video for “Stereo Hearts” we see Adam Levine singing on TV’s located in a pawnshop. This is a sign of the times right now, with so many people having to pawn off their processions in order to make ends meet. It is a representation of what is going on economically in America. Hip Hop was known to highlight and represent the social conditions people lived in on a daily basis (Nielson, 2009). The lyrics about wanting to be in a healthy relationship and the representation of walking the city streets and seeing pawn shops in the video is socially conscious. He appears to be looking back into the pre-gangster rap era of Hip Hop. In 1994, there was a surge and excitement about rappers blending politics and entertainment, and then gangster rap took over the scene (Nielson, 2009). Perhaps with the popularity of this song there will be an insurgence or at least a trend back to social conscience and embrace lyrics that will help the African American community. But, as the video depicts, there aren’t any good women out there worth loving, at least for this fellow.
As the new songs from 2011 are reviewed there is a different vibe in the videos. Both videos draw from the mid 80’s in appearance of the locations and props that are being used, for example the large boom boxes in “Stereo Hearts” and turntable in “Party.” The late 1980’s to early 1990’s have been referred to as the “golden age” of conscious rap (Nielson, 2009). This was before the rise in gangster rap and before the lyrics became misogynist and materialistic. "Stereo Hearts” by Gym Class Heroes has lyrics that promote a healthy and positive relationship, one where both parties want to be in. The video not only represents the dire economic situation many Americans are in, but it takes us back to the 80’s when people put cardboard down to break dance. And when people carried large boom boxes around and required many “D” batteries. It was a time of positivity and hope.

However, just like the third girlfriend in “Party” that the MOSCA subjects couldn’t see or find a category for her, the woman mention in the “Stereo Hearts” is no where to be found. There doesn’t appear to be a category for her, an image of her, a place for her on the streets of this singer’s world.

Clearly, little has changed from the 2007 study of the urban African American girls—they are still stuck growing up in these stereotypical roles, or, as “Stereo Hearts” indicates, non-existent, unseen and unknown.
Chapter 5
Conclusion

While adolescents in general are working to form their identities, African American females are working to form theirs with the stuff of Hip Hop culture. This research study looked to see if Hip Hop has changed its tune? Are adolescent African American girls today hearing and seeing the same stereotypes in the vast sea of music and videos, or are they being exposed to a more mature, socially conscious set of lyrics? From the information gleaned in this study, these African American adolescents are visible only in roles that neither fulfill them nor encourage loving relationships. Or, they are invisible. Love and happiness may only belong to the white girls. This study sought to decipher the difference in women’s images between Hip Hop music videos of 2007 and 2011.

The study by Stephens and Phillips’s (2003) was chosen because it does an excellent job of explaining and defining stereotypes of African American women that are present today. Their definitions made it easy to categorize what was being viewed in the music videos and what was said in the music lyrics.

When I performed the original MOCSA study in 2007 I knew that Hip Hop was misogynistic, but I have never really sat down and read the lyrics to the songs. I was disturbed when I read the lyrics to the popular songs with the participants, who didn’t even need the lyrics printed; they knew the words by heart. It was disheartening to hear them say the words that are negative representations about women but to not see how it affects them.
I was also saddened to see these young, soon to be women dancing like the women in the music videos; they knew the movies and easily replicated them. These dance moves coupled with the lyrics seemed normal to the girls and were not a big deal, but when all of the rap music that is being produced sounds and looks like the ones the girls are seeing, I guess it is normal. How sad.

With my current study I wanted to look at two artists and their songs. I choose two artists from the 2007 MOCSA study, then I looked at the charts today and chose the same artists and a current song from each. I found it was more difficult to find the male artist the girls listened to in 2007 with the song on the charts today. Many of the male artists the girls listened to do not have a popular song on the charts today. Gym Class Heroes was the only group that fit my criteria. For the female artist it was easier; Beyonce is still hugely popular today as she was then. I don’t know if I had more trouble with the male artist because they cycle through popularity faster as new artists emerge, or if it was just coincidence of timing that the artist didn’t have a song on the charts.

In answering the first part of my question, has Hip Hop changed its tune, I will have to say no. I was hoping there would be a change with the election of President Obama, but perhaps it is still to soon to see the positive change in the Hip Hop community as represented through rap music. As I read articles on Hip Hop, the oldest being by Shelton (1997), they all shared the same undertones of how the Hip Hop culture and rap music have patriarchal, heterosexual, misogynic views, and I found this to be the truth in the songs I reviewed for this study.
As I listened to, read and watched the video for both Beyonce’s songs I was saddened by what I was learning. Her persona in the media is a Diva, the participants in the original MOCSA study referred to her as such. However, when a closer evaluation is given to “Naughty Girl” and “Party” the Diva stereotype was there but so was the hyper sexualized Freak. Young girls are watching Beyonce and wanting to emulate her, and the messages they are receiving are not positive for their identity development, for the message is to use men for sex and for social and monetary gain.

The lack of positive representation of women was also true when Gym Class Heroes was reviewed. African American women were seen to fit into the narrow stereotypes addressed by Stephens and Phillips’ (2003). The songs by Gym Class Heroes did not portray any healthy representations about relationships even though the theme of both songs was about relationships. The white woman in “Cupid Choke Hold” represented the healthy relationship and the healthy relationship was nowhere to be found in “Stereo Hearts.” This leaves African American women without a role to play in a healthy relationship.

With the statement about brainwashing and domestic violence by André 3000 in the song “Party” it makes me sad how domestic violence as a whole seems to be normalized in the Hip Hop culture. It is scary to hear lyrics where the woman is expressing love and wanting to do anything she can sexuality to please a man. Then in return we hear the man wanting her to leave as soon as they have had sex and how he was to take power and control over her, which is what brainwashing and domestic violence is.
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While the backdrop of the videos changed, the women didn’t. They are still a stereotype identified by Stephens and Phillips (2003) or they are non-existent for the man who wants true love. I am disappointed by the lack of change. I was hopeful when I did my initial viewing of the video for “Party” and “Stereo Hearts.” Both of these videos seemed upbeat, they both encourage you to sing along and dance. Also these videos took the viewer back to the 1980’s when everything seemed happier. Once I started reading the lyrics I realized the songs fall into the same stereotypes as the 2007 songs.

To discuss the second part of my research question—are adolescent African American girls today hearing and seeing the same stereotypes in the vast sea of music and videos, or are they being exposed to a more mature, socially conscious set of lyrics—I would say they are not exposed to a more mature socially conscious set of lyrics. I do believe after reviewing “Stereo Hearts” by Gym Class Heroes that they were on the fringe of being more socially conscious with showing pawnshops in their video to depict the economic times of today. But, they did not go far enough to make a change or show a positive image for females.

With all of this being said I am concerned for adolescent African American females, just as I was concerned in 2007. As stated by Arnett (1995) the seven principal sources of socialization for a person are family, peers, school, community, media, legal system and their cultural belief system. All of these social arenas assist a youth in creating her identity. With the increasing presence of the media, teens are surrounded by the stereotypes at all times of the day. Adolescents use media for entertainment, identity formation, coping and youth culture identification (Arnett, 1995).
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When I look back at the original MOCSA study and how the participants dance and sang with the songs without realizing what the songs actually meant, it showed me how it was entertainment for them. They were not looking at the songs in a deep way; they liked the beat and the way the music sounded. These participants were at a time in their lives that they were learning who they were as individuals and by conforming to the songs of the popular culture it gave all of them common ground and a group, other than their family, they could relate to.

There are clearly some limitations to this study. Finding the girls who originally participated in the MOSCA study would have made this study significant. However, the real point was the images these young women see. And it is clear, from only four videos that the images and concomitant stereotypes haven’t changed. Perhaps using more videos would have been helpful, too, but that would have addressed a more expansive research question. With only using two songs from two artists it limits what is being represented in the Hip Hop culture.

This type of study lends itself to further research. A longitudinal study would be perfect to track the stereotypes over time. Gathering a group of adolescent African American girls together today to flush out their understanding of Hip Hop music, then to restudy them every five years would be an interesting and enlightening process. To follow, too, their children or grandchildren . . . how much will or can change in two generations?
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