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Anti-Video Girl: Empowering Parents and Adolescent Females to Defy the Misogynistic Images of African American Women in Hip-Hop

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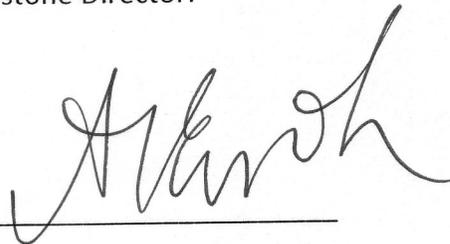This is to certify that the Capstone Project of

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Executive Summary

Traditional media depictions of African American women have at times been demeaning and derogatory. Slavery produced many of the negative images that continue to influence the contemporary portrayals of African American women. Today, a new plethora of racial stereotypes about African American women are bombarding this generation with equally disastrous implications. The relatively recent emergence of rap music and rap videos into the popular culture has transcended racial, geographic, and cultural barriers. The pervasive accessibility of hip-hop music and videos has enabled its misogynistic lyrics and images to be broadcast throughout the world. This hip-hop culture is dominated by African American males and most of its hypersexual lyrics and imagery are either expressed or implied about African American women. These disturbing new images are shaping the self-esteem and interpersonal relationships of today's youth that are seduced by the rhythmic beats and extravagant lifestyles that hip-hop purports.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the adverse portrayals of African American women in both a historical and contemporary context, and to explore solutions for parents and advocates to balance and dispel those images. The Anti-Video Girl website intends to equip parents, teens, advocates, and educators with the information necessary to combat the onslaught of negative images of African American females in hip-hop videos, music, magazines, and movies. This website will contain articles, interviews, links, strategies, spotlights, message boards and forums to engage teens, parents, and advocates in productive dialogues. In addition,

the Anti-Video Girl website seeks to promote girl-serving organizations that are already established in communities, but lack exposure. The researcher believes that by creating a website that organizes relevant data on this subject, and by providing a platform for existing programs to reach decision-makers into a one-stop-shop, it will be simpler for busy parents and advocates to access and implement the knowledge gained from the site.

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Introduction

The purpose of this study is to analyze the adverse portrayals of African American women in both a historical and contemporary context, and to explore solutions for parents and advocates to balance and dispel those images. By examining the foundational stereotypes of African American women, the researcher believes that the current sexual scripts that dominate popular and hip-hop culture can be easier to understand and challenge. Although hip-hop music and culture is largely controlled by men, its impact upon the images of African American women has only recently been studied. It is the researcher's belief that a more proactive, solutions-oriented approach must be taken by parents, advocates, educators, and the community-at-large to offer a more unbiased perspective to the mixed messages sent to African American girls by hip-hop culture.

The information gained from this study will be used to create the content of the website www.antivideogirl.org, which will be geared specifically towards the parents, educators, and/or advocates of African American girls from the ages of 12 to 18. The website will focus on consolidating existing research on this subject, developing strategies parents and other child advocates can implement to combat the destructive stereotypes and sexual scripts that have arisen from hip-hop culture, and promoting exemplary organizations that already serve African American girls.

Role of the Researcher

As the mother of two African American girls, I have become increasingly concerned about the inundation of stereotypes about African American women in hip-hop music and popular culture. My children are not exposed to many television programs other than those offered on public television; but, I often question whether our family is the exception to the rule. For many households, total elimination of television, print, and radio is not practical. In researching ways to contradict the disparaging stereotypes, I was surprised by the lack of comprehensive information that was readily available in a streamlined and consolidated manner. The Anti-Video Girl website was conceptualized as a one-stop shop for teens, parents, educators, and advocates of young African American girls in need of relevant information, practical strategies, and positive images to balance the current depictions of African American women.

Research Questions

Since this analysis is exploratory in nature, instead of specific hypothesis testing, the present study sought answers to a set of general research questions:

1. Why is there a need for the Anti-Video Girl website?

2. What are the implications of the current sexual scripts regarding African American females in hip-hop and popular culture?

Methodology

This qualitative study was conducted as an exploratory research to investigate the significance of negative images in hip-hop to the psyche and esteem of African American girls. More specifically, the study examined existing research regarding (1) the historical context and

importance of the foundational stereotypes of African American women, (2) current sexual scripts regarding African American females in hip-hop culture, (3) implications of the current sexual scripts on the attitudes of adolescent African American females, and (4) practical solutions to counter harmful images of African American females in hip-hop and popular culture.

A case study approach was used to analyze and interpret data, subjects, programs, and statistics relating to the negative images of African American women in hip-hop culture. Case studies are useful in examining how and why a particular phenomenon occurred (O'Sullivan, Rassel, and Berner, 2003). Because case studies often utilize data from a variety of sources such as direct observation, interviews, surveys, and other methods, the information can be combined to enhance the completeness of the data (O'Sullivan, Rassel, and Berner, 2003).

Data Collection

A library study, which consisted of a compilation and analysis of data from secondary sources, was conducted as the primary research method for the Anti-Video Girl practicum. Data were collected from the Kennesaw State University database *Galileo,* the Inter-library Loan program known as *Illiad,* and the Google Scholar search engine. This method was chosen because the data are readily available, accessible and in many instances, peer reviewed. In addition, since these data already existed, it was less costly, more comprehensive, and more efficient than the researcher conducting the principal research (O'Sullivan, Rassel, and Berner, 2003). Primary data, as opposed to secondary data, are considered more reliable because they are generated by the researcher and in turn more germane to the researcher's subject (McNabb, 2002). These secondary data were reanalyzed to answer the earlier stated research questions.

Limitations of the Study

The researcher carefully considered the significant disadvantages of using secondary data. Since secondary data were collected by others for different purposes, the research and findings of this paper is reliant upon prior researchers' data collection techniques. Data accuracy issues may result from this lack of control in data procurement and gathering (O'Sullivan, Rassel, and Berner, 2003). Secondary data are by nature indirect, and consequently, they may not reveal the unique or personal reasons that shape the participants' responses (McNabb, 2002). Large sample sizes are advantageous to using secondary research, but huge amounts of data may be overpowering. Accordingly, vast statistical data may be important, but its enormity may make the data less meaningful (McNabb, 2002).

Literature Review

Historical Context of the Negative Depictions of African American Women

The vestiges of slavery have had a profound effect on mainstream attitudes about the sexuality of African American women. Throughout American history, African American women were cast as the embodiment of promiscuity, depravity, and carnality, thereby justifying their sexual exploitation by White slaveowners (Higginbotham, 1992). Time has proven that committing and witnessing atrocities are easier on the collective American conscience when the recipients are regarded as subhuman. African American women were rarely depicted as virginal, pure or moral. These and other misconceptions about African American women excused White slaveowners of their crimes and further stripped African American women of any humanity or compassion (Higginbotham, 1992). English slave traders described African women as "making

no scruple to prostitute themselves to the Europeans…so great is their inclination to white men" (Littlefield, 2008, 678).

Africans were usually assigned to the bottom rung of the evolutionary ladder in terms of aptitude, moral character, potential, and life skills (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). In *African American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race,* the author describes how Winthrop D. Jordon wrote that Thomas Jefferson, a United States president that sexually oppressed his African American slave named Sally Hemming, and fathered her mixed-race children, conjectured that African American women mated with orangutans (Higginbotham, 1992). Scientists Georges Cuvier and Henri de Blainville wrote one of the first reports on the sexuality of African women (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).

Cuvier and de Blainville performed research on the Hottentot Venus, or Sarah, an eighteen-year-old African woman of the Hottentot tribe from the Cape of Africa during the nineteenth century. This African woman was paraded throughout Europe and endured poking and prodding by European crowds that were thrilled to see a "savage" African woman (quite literally) in the flesh. In 1815, she was examined in Paris for three days by zoologists and physiologists, who subjected her to a full body examination (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). At her death in 1816, Cuvier performed a complete analysis on her sexual organs and linked Sarah and her race to orangutans and their mating rituals (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Cuvier's study, which was wrapped in Darwinian theory, fueled the stereotypes of the African woman as wild, sexually deviant, and animalistic (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).

Slavery ushered in a socio-economic caste system that has placed African Americans in an inequitable and subservient societal position. African American slavewomen were treated as chattel, with no control over their minds, bodies, or sexuality (Higginbotham, 1992). The

sanctity of White women's bodies were defended by law and idealized by public sentiments of motherhood and purity (Higginbotham, 1992). These same privileges were not afforded to African American women who were subject to rapes, beatings, hard labor, and reproductive coercion (Higginbotham, 1992). Sojourner Truth succinctly posed the question of African American femininity to White America when she asked, "Ain't I a woman" (Higginbotham, 1992)? The United States legal system answered Sojourner Truth's poignant question with a resounding no. In the 1855 case, *State of Missouri v. Celia,* Celia was found guilty of murdering her master, Robert Newsome, despite her repeated rapes and beatings at his hands (Higginbotham, 1992). Notwithstanding her plea of self-defense and the laws on the state of Missouri books, which protected women from rape, the court determined that as Newsome's property, he was entitled to do with Celia as he pleased. Celia, as an African American female, was not considered a "true" woman; therefore, the laws meant to safeguard White women did not apply to her race (Higginbotham, 1992).

The ultimate designation for a woman of wealth, class, and status was to be deemed a "lady" (Higginbotham, 1992). Poor and working-class White women and prostitutes were not considered "ladies" by societal definition. However, no amount of education, lineage, refinement, or wealth would ever confer that status upon African American women (Higginbotham, 1992). Ultimately, both African American and White women are subject to and limited by the male sexual oppression of being labeled either whores or virgins. John R. Lynch, an African American congressional representative from Mississippi, argued in support of the Civil Rights Bill of 1875 and brought attention to the use of race in class distinctions. He remarked:

Under our present system of race distinctions a White woman of a questionable social standing, yea, I may say, of an admitted immoral character, can go to any public conveyance and be the recipient of the same treatment, the same courtesy, and the same respect that is usually accorded to the most refined and virtuous; but let an intelligent, modest, refined colored lady present herself and ask that the same privileges be accorded to her that have just been accorded to her social inferior of the White race, and in nine cases out of ten, except in certain portions of the country, she will not only be refused, but insulted for making the request (Higginbotham, 1992, 261).

African American women remained bound to the narrowly defined beliefs that Whites had constructed for them after the abolishment of slavery. The race-class-gender paradigm is characterized by the concept of female loaferism and the different work expectations for African American and White women (Higginbotham, 1992). Whites were incredulous that African American women desired to "play the lady" and leave the fields, tend to their homes, and raise their children (Higginbotham, 1992). Although this was widely acceptable for White females of all classes; in the immediate post-war South, societal norms demanded that African American women work outside the home (Higginbotham, 1992).

The Southern economy was largely based on agriculture; therefore, Southern plantation owners viewed this wave of African American female loaferism as a threat to their economic livelihood (Higginbotham, 1992). Both the Northern and Southern elites believed that all African American family members should pull their weight and bring an income into the household (Higginbotham, 1992). In reality, the idea of African Americans acting like Whites in either dress or behavior made Whites to question the soundness of their theories and practices of racial superiority.

The Five Foundational Depictions of African American Women

African American women are arguably in more forms of media today than in any other point in history. However, their current representations are often rooted in five historical themes that are steeped in misinformation and prejudice. The most prevalent foundational images of African American women in American society are the Jezebel, the Mammy, the Matriarch, the Welfare Queen, and the African American Overachiever (Taylor, 1999). These images form the basis of the racial and sexual stereotypes about African American womanhood while giving the wider culture a semblance of insight on the place of African American women in society (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).

The depictions are so pervasive that they even have a profound effect on the ways African American women receive healthcare. Healthcare practitioners may be ruled by these images as they encounter, diagnose, and treat African American women as patients (Taylor, 1999). The five foundational stereotypes of African American women are intertwined in cultural, sexual, economic, and gender beliefs. By casting African American women as "sexual others," they are misinterpreted, set apart, and maligned by society (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). The "Other" category perpetuates difference while insinuating that everything else is normal (Littlefield, 2008).

The Jezebel is characterized as the depraved and hypersexual whore whose single-minded obsession is sex of any kind (Taylor, 1999). African American women were labeled as Jezebels during slavery to rationalize their sexual abuse by White slave owners and to alleviate these slave owners of any guilt (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Surely, these Jezebels must have "tempted" their masters and forced them to have relations despite their vigorous protests! In reality, African American slavewomen were sexually exploited and raped, with their offsprings

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being added to the masters' human inventory (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). The Jezebel was often depicted as the light-skinned, longhaired, "tragic mulatto" that used her feminine wiles to lure men into her web of deceit (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). The popular culture continues to link sexual promiscuity as a character trait of African American females (Littlefield, 2008). Today this image is perpetuated in the numerous urban music videos, which further reduce African American women to only their hips, buttocks, and thighs.

The Mammy stereotype was most prevalent during the period when African American women transitioned from slaves to domestic workers. The Mammy is the gracious, appeasing, dutiful servant or slave who sacrifices everything in her life to care for her White employers (Taylor, 1999). This politically correct image fostered the belief that African American women were happy about their servile station in life. Typically portrayed as dark-skinned, obese, and sexually undesirable, the Mammy was always jovial but unattractive (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Nell Carter, the housekeeper on *Gimme a Break!* (Cooper, Lachman, and Parker, 1981), Mabel King as the mother on *What's Happening!!* (Orenstein, Turteltaub, and Yorkin, 1976) and Esther Rolle as the mother on *Good Times* (Manings and Lear, 1974) are more recent television characters that fit the Mammy stereotype (Woodward and Mastin, 2005). The Mammy is completely nonthreatening to both White women and men. Because she is unattractive and obese, the Mammy is likely to neither seduce the master nor usurp the position of the wife in the household (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). This subservient image is symbolic of the wide separation on the power spectrum between low-income African American women and wealthy, elite, White men (Taylor, 1999).

Matriarchs are typified as non-maternal, aggressive, combative, eye-rolling, neck-jerking, angry African American women that are neither feminine nor refined (Taylor, 1999). These

"Superwomen" are portrayed as highly independent, able to multitask with seeming ease, and are emotionally unavailable. Matriarchs or Sapphires are perceived as strong because they rarely ask for help, say no, or take time to care for themselves (Taylor, 1999). Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the then Assistant Secretary of Labor, actually coined the term "matriarch" when describing African American female dominated households (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). The federal government authorized him to conduct research on African American life during the Civil Rights era of the 1960s (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Moynihan's final report concluded that the African American family was plagued by the overbearing and emasculating nature of its African American mothers (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Furthermore, he stated that these female-centered households did not provide African American men with enough support or value to become positive members of society (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).

The Matriarch characterization is detrimental for the relationships between African American women, African American men, and their children (Woodard and Mastin, 2005). In addition, some scholars attribute African American poverty as an intergenerational transfer via values and upbringing; therefore, African American children must lack the basic care and nurturance that is standard with White children (Woodard and Mastin, 2005). Consequently, this deficiency in upbringing significantly limits the potential of African American children (Woodard and Mastin, 2005). This notion shifts the culpability from the economic, social, and political inequities that African American women and families face and instead imply that anyone can be successful if s/he was instilled with morals and character (Woodard and Mastin, 2005).

Tyler Perry as "Madea" in *Diary of a Mad Black Woman* (Perry and Grant, 2005), Eddie Murphy as "Rasputia" in *Norbit* (Davis et al., 2007) and Martin Lawrence as "Big Momma" in

Big Momma's House (Friendly, et al., 2000) are all recent depictions of the Matriarch stereotype with some of the physical Mammy traits. Even more interesting is the fact that each of these African American female characters are played by men. These stereotypical depictions continue to reinforce the belief that African American women are masculine and unfeminine.

The Welfare Queen seeks government support by any means necessary; even if it requires having multiple children, with multiple fathers (Taylor, 1999). Welfare Queens are averse to work or self-support of any kind while they greedily cash government checks (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). The Welfare Queen stereotype is a derivative of the "breeder" image that was introduced during slavery. Both Breeders and Welfare Queens shift the focus of poverty and inequity to the reproductive freedom and rights of African American women (Taylor, 1999).

The perception that the Welfare Queen reproduced indiscriminately and saddled society with her undisciplined offspring was widely disseminated during the presidency of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). The Welfare Queen image is seen as a threat to the sanctity of marriage and the concept of personal responsibility. Middle-class Whites were outraged that the government supported the Welfare Queen's lifestyle and demanded that their tax dollars be better spent (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Only when an African American face was painted as the face for government assistance, did it conjure up the wrath of the nation (Taylor, 1999).

The African American Overachiever is the professional, middle to upper-class woman that is outwardly successful, independent, and financially secure (Taylor, 1999). She may be marginalized and resented by both African Americans and Whites because of her status, income, and demeanor (Taylor, 1999). Whites will attribute her success to affirmative action. Fellow African Americans will discount her ascension by claiming that she is a "sellout." Whites

consider her "uppity," while African Americans think the Overachiever is "trying to be White" (Taylor, 1999). African American Overachievers in leadership roles may be denied promotions or opportunities if they are "too knowledgeable" or do not project the warm and fuzzy image that put their White counterparts at ease (Taylor, 1999).

The Influence of Media and Hip-hop on the Shaping of Sexual Scripts

With the passage of time and cultural shifts, some of the current mainstream images of African American women have changed. Television and music have had a tremendous impact on the accessibility and dissemination of American popular culture on a global level. Television was becoming more common in the 1950s and 1960s, just as civil rights and desegregation were emerging as national issues. At the same time, African Americans were becoming more visible in both news and entertainment programming (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). In addition, rock-n-roll music, which drew inspiration from the rhythm and blues genre, swept the country and slowly broke down some barriers to race relations.

African Americans were in the unique and precarious position of defining "cool" to the wider culture while being oppressed by that same culture (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Many of the African American women that did appear on television conformed to the foundational images discussed earlier in this research paper. However, the Civil Rights and Black Power movements caused African Americans to challenge the caricatures and images that the mainstream put forth (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).

Studies indicate that television is the major source of information for African Americans, especially entertainment shows (Peterson et al., 2007). African American women watch more television than any other race, according to comparative studies (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).

Research suggests that television is influential in providing role models for adolescent behavior and identity development (Stephens and Phillips, 2005). A study conducted by Comstock and Scharrer (1999) purported that viewers identify with and scrutinize characters that are similar to them in either race or gender (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). African American youth are more likely to compare and contrast themselves with the onscreen characters and use those characters as a measuring stick in determining whether they are "good enough" (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). African American adolescents cite three major reasons why they watch television: "it is enjoyable, it is entertaining, and it keeps them aware" (Stephens and Phillips, 2003, 14). It is now theorized that the historical depictions of African American females of sexual subjugation have come full circle in the current popular culture and hip-hop music videos (Peterson et al., 2007).

Now young African American females face new "sexual scripts" that are media-driven and heavily influenced by hip-hop culture (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Hip-hop culture, with its music, politics, attitudes, and lifestyle has fought for and gained a measure of respect as an art form. On the surface, hip-hop has primarily been a forum for African American males to express their creativity, living conditions, viewpoints, emotions, and more. Hip-hop culture actually dictates the lifestyle, fashion, music, behavior, beliefs and values of many African American youth (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Stephens and Phillips (2003) note that unlike other forms of African American music, rap music is relevant to the youth only, and does not have cross-generational appeal.

Although African Americans are the face of hip-hop, this multi-million dollar industry is increasingly controlled and consumed by Whites. A recent study indicated that 70 percent of the customers of rap music and hip-hop related paraphernalia are White (Stephens and Phillips,

2003, 13). African American interpersonal relations and its dynamics have been exposed to the mainstream through hip-hop, thereby creating the contemporary sexual scripts about African American women. Littlefield (2008) suggests that the ability of the media to control information and thereby obscure its objectivity, validity, and bias has ushered in an era of "new racism." The media selectively circulates images of African Americans that reach a global audience, which further shape beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of the world at large (Littlefield, 2008).

Hip-hop videos are the most popular segments of African American Entertainment Television (BET) and MTV programming (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). African American adolescents may watch up to 3.3 hours of music videos each day, according to data sources (Peterson et al., 2007, 1158). In 2003, a content analysis of the music videos played on BET was performed and it was determined that 42 percent of the videos contained fondling and 58 percent of the videos portrayed women dancing suggestively (Peterson et al., 2007, 1158). It is here where the new sexual scripts regarding African American women are birthed, evolved, and maintained (Stephens and Phillips, 2005). "Strip club culture" is featured in many mainstream rap videos that focus on exotic dancers, stripper poles, and other typified sexual behavior (Stokes, 2007).

African American women are too often the casualties of misogynistic lyrics, demeaning roles in music videos, and the hyper-machismo of the hip-hop culture (Stephen and Phillips, 2003). The African American female body, with all of its explicit and implicit sexual connotations, is prominently on display in most hip-hop videos. As a result, African American women have been repeatedly exploited by White and African American males in powerful positions, the media, and other African American women who degrade themselves in these videos (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). The typical video vixen is African American, dressed

provocatively, and sexually suggestive in action. The sexual scripts acted out in these videos tend to exacerbate stereotypes, especially to viewers that have little contact with African Americans or diverse ethnic groups (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). More importantly, these images help to shape and guide young African American girls' behavior, self-esteem, and self-perception. The representation of African American women in rap videos highlights their achievements in broaching topics such as gender, class, and racial politics and their setbacks by perpetuating disparaging images (Shelton, 1997).

Current Sexual Scripts of African American Women in Hip-hop Culture

African American interpersonal relations and its dynamics have been exposed to the mainstream through hip-hop, which created contemporary sexual scripts about African American women. Simon and Gagnon (2003) define sexual scripts as forming one's "belief system" that is communicated and sustained through use (Stephens and Few, 2007a). Sexual scripts affect connections, self-imagery, sexual norms and behaviors, and experiences of African American females (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Because the hip-hop genre has normalized stereotypical portrayals of African American women, it lends greater credibility to these negative images to the popular culture (Peterson et al., 2007). Although the original intent of music videos was to market a particular song and artist, research indicates that the videos communicate and reflect the beliefs, views, and actions of those that consume them (Stephens and Few, 2007b).

The five foundational depictions of African American women that were discussed earlier have significantly influenced the present images of these women. Stephens and Phillips (2003) describe eight sexual scripts that are reminiscent of the foundational stereotypes, but have been reinterpreted to accommodate contemporary perceptions. The Diva, Gold Digger, Freak, Dyke,

Gangster Bitch, Sister Savior, Earth Mother, and Baby Mama are the new representations that describe the most recent metamorphosis in African American female imagery (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).

Divas are traditionally attractive, light-skinned, longhaired, shapely, and very high maintenance. They require lots of money to keep up their outward appearance, status, lifestyle, and other material possessions (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Divas are motivated by attention and adoration; therefore, they surround themselves with fawning admirers. They are always dressed expensively, coiffed exquisitely, maintained fastidiously and are reminiscent of a more subdued or demure version of the Jezebel foundational stereotype (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Divas work hard to perfect their inaccessible and unattainable demeanor. Consequently, they are often chastised for being "stuck up" or for having "attitudes" (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).

The Diva is rooted in middle-class values; therefore, she is never blatantly sexual, but instead coy. These middle-class roots influence the Diva's definition of success, wealth, and material necessities. It is of utmost importance to a Diva that others believe that she "has it together" or that she has "made it." Interestingly, Divas have been conditioned to believe that upward financial mobility is not usually possible with the average African American male (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Rhythm and Blues (R & B) singers Beyonce Knowles, Janet Jackson, and Brandy have all been marketed as Divas (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).

A Diva loves the attention she receives being the wife or girlfriend of a prominent doctor, lawyer, athlete, or music artist. The Diva sends mixed signals as to whether she esteems money or status the most in relationships (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). The Diva is independent and self-sufficient, but often only seeks men of wealth. Alternatively, she desires men of accomplishment that can increase her social standing and social equity (Stephens and Phillips,

2003). "No Scrubs" (1998) was an extremely successful crossover hit by pop group TLC. This anthem categorized men without money, jobs, or dwellings as "scrubs." The lyrics in part are:

A scrub is a guy that can't get no love from me. Hanging out the passenger side of his best friend's ride…trying to holler at me. But a scrub is checkin' me, but his game is kinda weak, and I know that he cannot approach me. Cuz I'm lookin' like class and he's lookin' like trash…can't get wit' no deadbeat ass (Briggs, Cottle, and Burrus, 1998).

In the entertainment industry, Diva status is only graced upon women of a certain economic class and social standing. "Hood," "street," or "ghetto" female artists are rarely promoted as Divas (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Only after mainstream success and the resultant makeover into refinement and style can these former lumps of coal be transformed into diamonds (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Mary J. Blige, Queen Latifah, and Alicia Keys are examples of artists that were initially marketed as hard-edged and later repackaged as sophisticated during the course of their musical careers.

The Gold Digger, unlike the Diva, exchanges sex for money, not status. The Gold Digger is singularly focused on money; how to obtain it, how to spend it, and how to get more. Sex is her weapon of choice and she will offer herself to the highest bidder (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). She places a premium on her sexual prowess, because it is her sole source of value. Not known to be particularly educated, career-oriented, or of a privileged socio-economic class, the Gold Digger is all about survival. Economic class ranking distinguishes the Gold Digger from the Diva because she is usually from a lower wealth bracket than her middle-class Diva counterpart (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).

Gold Diggers trade sex for rent, groceries, electric bills, car payments, or new clothes and hairdos. This new sexual script has the elements of the hypersexual Jezebel and the Welfare

Queen because of the sexual and economic ramifications of their lifestyles (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Many prominent African American males are warned by family, friends, and even rap songs to avoid women that are only after their bank accounts. E.P.M.D. was a popular rap group in the 1990s that first penned an ode to the legendary Gold Digger with their appropriately titled song "Gold Digger" (1990).

> I have no files on all the money she spent. She has a car; nineteen-ninety brand new jaguar. Fly kit, with chrome rims that's five star. That she bought, when I was away on tour. Hittin' my bank account, gettin' more and more money. She got paid, it wasn't funny. Talkin' to myself - oh you big, big dummy. Just my luck, that I'm stuck with a marriage. And a baby, who lays in a gold carriage. Now I can't leave, if I do she gets half (Sermon and Smith, 1990).

The Gold Digger sells her body to fund her short-term needs. When her source of cash dries up, she disappears and moves on to her next victim. Ironically, Gold Diggers never seem to have a shortage of men in their arsenal. It has been argued that men prefer women that can be controlled (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). In the context of African American relationships, these interactions rarely involve love, friendship, or emotions. African American men resent this sexual script because they are being used strictly for financial gain (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).

Robin Givens, rightly or wrongly, is in the Gold Diggers' Hall of Fame because of her marriage and subsequent divorce of heavyweight boxer Mike Tyson. Although Mike Tyson had a history of physical, mental, and sexual abuse, Robin Givens was demonized in the African American community and accused of using him to increase her fame and bank account (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Both Robin Givens and her mother were painted as Gold Diggers that manipulated the supposedly naïve and gullible boxer. Robin Givens, twenty years after her

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divorce from Mike Tyson in 1989, is still being negatively referenced in recent rap music. John Legend's song, "Green Light" (2008) contains a verse by rapper Andre Benjamin that says, "I got you gigglin' like a piglet, Oh that's the ticket. I hope you are more like Anita Baker than Robin Givens. No, I don't know that lady so let me quit it" (Stephens et al., 2008)

The Freak is the full embodiment of the Jezebel foundational stereotype with a modern twist. She is all about fulfilling her voracious sexual needs with any available partner (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Either the Freak engages in high-risk sexual activities to control her partner or she seems to be a willing accomplice in her manipulation. The Freak is never at a loss for suitors despite her reputation, but is often despised by other women who may be threatened, envious, or disgusted by her actions (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Hip-hop music often refers to Freaks in jest, praise, or contempt. Scantily clad video models that gyrate incessantly and touch themselves provocatively fall into the Freak script.

Several students at Spelman University, a historically Black, all-female college, took a stand against the images of women in hip-hop videos, particularly the Freak stereotype in 2004. Nelly, a popular rapper, initially collaborated with Spelman University to raise awareness and also sponsor a blood drive for his charity (Reid-Brinkley, 2008). However, several students protested his appearance because of his misogynistic hip-hop lyrics, music, and videos. Nelly released a video in 2004 named "Tip Drill" that scandalously showed women imitating sex acts with each other, men tossing cash at the women, and a credit card being swiped through the buttocks of a woman (Reid-Brinkley, 2008).

This video was played on Black Entertainment Television's (BET) late night, adult program called "Uncut," which is geared to mature audiences (Reid-Brinkley, 2008). Nelly finally cancelled his Spelman appearance, but the controversy reignited the debate about the

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portrayal of African American women in hip-hop videos. Zenobia Hikes, Vice President for Student Affairs at Spelman University stated that, "Black entertainers have become the new myth makers, showing gangsters and bikini-clad women with hyperactive libidos. For non-black children it creates a gross misrepresentation of the black experience" (Reid-Brinkley, 2008, 237).

Hip-hop has not been welcoming to those women who want power without the confines of sex appeal and traditional male-female roles. Dykes are viewed as an anomaly in hip-hop (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Sexuality, especially homosexuality, is often a taboo topic in the African American community. Open sexual dialogue is not encouraged by African American parents, pastors, or teachers, resulting in rampant HIV and AIDS transmission rates in the African American population. Dykes are not subject to the masculine dictates that insist that women in hip-hop must be groupies, "ride or die" chicks, or Gold Diggers (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Accordingly, a woman "becomes" a Dyke only because she has been repeatedly hurt by men and therefore has rejected all men (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Women that are assertive, unwilling to be controlled by men, or exhibit any male-associated characteristics are labeled as Dykes (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). The authors assert that it is not uncommon for African American males to believe that female achievements are a direct assault on their power (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).

Queen Latifah is a successful rap artist, businessperson, and actress known for her female empowering lyrics and projects. Queen Latifah is also repeatedly dogged by rumors and subjected to questions that insinuate that she is a Dyke. To date, she has neither confirmed nor denied her sexuality (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Interestingly, Queen Latifah seems to be typecast as the Mammy or the Matriarch in most of her movie roles. Asexual, feisty, and domineering are the usual attributes associated with her onscreen characters (Stephens and

Phillips, 2003). Perhaps her limited character options have been indirectly influenced by her association with the Dyke persona.

The Gangster Bitch is the perfect companion for the African American male that lives in a rough, poverty-stricken, urban environment. Since the Gangster Bitch and her man are both in survival mode, they are accomplices, hustlers, and coconspirators in the daily hardships of life. The Gangster Bitch differs from the Dyke because she upholds her man above all things—the law, societal norms, and even herself (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). A 1991 study indicated that girls that participated in the street lifestyle were more likely to come from single parent homes where unemployment, physical, sexual, drug and verbal abuse were common (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).

Stephens and Phillips (2003) suggest that the "gangster bitch" persona is a facade used by these girls to deal with the harsh realities of their lives and their poor economic conditions. Gangster Bitches use sex as a means of satisfying their men and proving their devotion. This sexual devotion may also include sleeping with an adversary to gain information for her man (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Sadly, the Gangster Bitch may be alternately protected and pummeled by her man—indicative of the cycle of protection and victimization at the hands of her partner (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).

Hip-hop embraces the Gangster Bitch image because many fans view this script as a mutually supportive relationship. The Gangster Bitch script draws on the Matriarch and Sapphire foundational images with her unflinching support for her man and her tough, aggressive demeanor (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). The Gangster Bitch is the ultimate "ride or die chick" that will take the fall for her man in any circumstance without regard to her own circumstances. Rapper Notorious B.I.G. "warmly" describes his Gangster Bitch in his song, "Me and My Bitch"

(1994). The song describes the qualities and characteristics a "down" female must exhibit to be elevated to Gangster Bitch status. The lyrics in part are:

> Moonlight strolls with the hoes, oh no, that's not my steelo. I wanna bitch that like to play celo, and craps. Packin' gats, in a Coach bag steamin' dime bags. A real bitch is all I want, all I ever had (yeah, c'mon). With a glock just as strong as me. Totin' guns just as long as me; the bitch belongs with me…

> It didn't take long before the tears start. I saw my bitch dead with the gunshot to the heart. And I know it was meant for me. I guess the niggaz felt they had to kill the closest one to me (uh, yeah). And when I find 'em your life is to an end. They killed my best friend... me and my bitch (Notorious B.I.G., 1994).

Sister Savior is the naïve, quiet girl that is rooted in the African American church with all its religious accoutrements. Sister Saviors are motivated by their faith in God, their commitment to church, and their church community (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). She is outside of the hip-hop culture; therefore she is not defined or controlled by it (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Although the Sister Savior script is not affected by hip-hop, it is fashioned by the male-dominated, patriarchal attitudes and beliefs of the church. The Sister Savior sexual script is one of chastity and virginity—because those are the values promoted in the Bible (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).

Suggestive clothing, sexual actions, and profane language are frowned upon by the church; therefore, Sister Saviors do not outwardly exhibit such behaviors. The more fundamental denominations do not allow women to wear make-up, pants, or hold any positions of power in the church (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Stephens and Phillips (2003) also note that the image of Eve as the temptress responsible for the fall of man is indoctrinated not only in

the African American church, but religion as a whole. This basic concept has had tremendous influence on the creation of the Sister Savior sexual script.

Fear tactics rather than open dialogue about sex seems to be the method of choice for the religious sect, resulting in this unique sexual script. African American churches historically do not discuss sexual issues with its members, despite the staggering HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy rates in the African American community. According to the Centers for Disease Control, African Americans make up forty-nine percent of all persons diagnosed with HIV/AIDS in the United States (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007). This statistic includes children and is based on information from thirty-three states. In addition, sixty-four percent of women living with the HIV virus are African American (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007).

The avoidance of sexual discussions in the church has led to Sister Saviors relying on their own very limited knowledge of sexual development, exploration, decision-making, and responsibility (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Two separate studies suggest that African American teenagers that attend church are less likely to condone permissive sex and are more likely to postpone sex. However, these teens are confronted with shame, guilt, and blame when they do admit to sexual feelings or wish to discuss sex with an adult (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Other information gained from the studies indicated that African American female teenagers that were heavily involved in the church were less likely to use condoms or protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. In addition, their partners were usually much older and the African American female teenagers felt they had less control of the situation (Stephens et al., 2001).

Unlike the Sister Savior sexual script, the Earth Mother is more spiritually attuned with herself, her sexual identity, and her self-esteem. The Earth Mother is a sexual script that does have its place in hip-hop culture (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). She is politically conscious, Afro-centric, and "natural" (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). India Arie penned a song extolling the virtues of being and looking outside the norm. Her song "Video" (2001) muses that even though she does not look like, dress like, or act like a typical video girl; she is still worthy and valuable. India Arie wears her natural hair, does not wear form fitting attire, and speaks with eloquence and a strong sense of self. India Arie, Erykah Badu, Jill Scott, Goapele, and Angie Stone are current examples of the Earth Mother sexual script (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).

Although Earth Mothers are respected and considered to be attractive because of their self-awareness or political consciousness, they are also perceived to be removed from the sexual context of hip-hop culture (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Their ability to think outside of the box and not be defined by the cultural norms of hip-hop is frightening for those with more mundane, materialistic, or less lofty aspirations. Men may be intimidated by Earth Mothers and feel unable to compete with their heightened self-knowledge. The Earth Mother usually seeks out a partner with similar views and that is willing to live outside the cultural norms of being male and African American (Stephens and Phillips 2003). Young girls usually have not reached this level of insight in their adolescent years, but the Earth Mother sexual script gives them a unique female perspective in which to aspire.

Any of the preceding scripts can potentially become the last script, which is the Baby Mama. The Baby Mama script contains all four of the foundational stereotypes—Mammy, Matriarch, Jezebel, and Welfare Mother (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Baby Mama status is highly desired by some because with it bestows title and preeminence over all the other women

in a man's life. Although a man may have side relationships, it is assumed that he will always have sexual access to the Baby Mama (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Because marriage is becoming less frequent in the African American community, the Baby Mama status is viewed by many as the next best thing to matrimony. Teenage pregnancy is viewed as a rite of passage into adulthood by many adolescent males and females; hence the reason for the wide acceptance of this sexual script in the hip-hop and African American population (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).

As United States teenage pregnancy rates increase for African American females to 128 per 1,000 births, young African American women are finding numerous Baby Mama examples in their own families and communities (Centers for Disease Control, 2007). The Baby Mama believes that having a baby for her boyfriend is the ultimate proof of love; forever uniting her with her partner. However, Baby Mama status is only of importance if the male values having a relationship with the child (Stephens and Phillips, 2003).

Baby Mamas also have to deal with the widespread belief that they purposely got pregnant to trap their men into eighteen years of financial and/or emotional support. In many circumstances, the Baby Mama may be entirely dependent upon the father for the resources to care for the child. This dependence often leads to unconditional tolerance and acceptance of mistreatment at the hands of the child's father (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). Baby Mamas are also accused of lying about paternity because of embarrassment about not knowing who the father actually is with certainty (Stephens and Phillips, 2003). It is hardly surprising that Maury Povich's most popular show topics on his show *Maury* center on paternity testing (Faulhaber, 2010). "You are NOT the father!" has become such a trendy catch phrase that it has been emblazoned on T-shirts and parodied by late night talk show hosts.

Influence of Sexual Scripts on the Attitudes and Beliefs of African American Adolescents

Adolescence is marked as a time for self-discovery and self-questioning with the transition from childhood to young adulthood. Peer interactions, approvals, and comparisons are significant in this identity development as well as influence from family members and the greater community (Stephens and Few, 2007b). The social comparison theory states that people continuously compare themselves to images that are similar to them and that they consider within reach (Zhang, Dixon, and Conrad, 2009). However, an experiment conducted by Zhang, Dixon, and Conrad (2009) that measured the effect of rap music videos on African American women's body image found that African American women's perceptions of body image were directly influenced by the level of their identification with their culture as opposed to the amount of exposure to rap videos riddled with thin-bodied African American female images.

A groundbreaking study published by Wingood and others (2003) found a positive correlation between rap music consumption and detrimental health consequences for African American females. Those that reported watching more rap videos were more likely to test positive for sexually transmitted diseases, and engage in riskier behaviors, such as drinking, drugging, and having sex with multiple partners than those girls with less exposure to rap videos (Wingood et al., 2003). A 2006 longitudinal study by Martino and others found that adolescents of both sexes that listened to sexually degrading music were more likely to begin intercourse and more likely to move to more intimate levels of non-coital sexual behavior (Stokes, 2007).

Many adolescents gather cues about body image, perception of beauty, and expected behaviors directly from media images. It is very common for teenagers to model and to identify with the behavior that they see, especially if the model is perceived as appealing and comparable and the behavior is practical and doable (Peterson et al., 2007). The hyper-sexualized images of

African American women in hip-hop videos may be models for young African American females to pattern by choosing adverse behaviors (Peterson et al., 2007).

Deconstructing the harmful aspects of hip-hop videos is an approach that will be utilized and discussed on the Anti-Video Girl website. This approach can be used by adults to inject balance into conversations with adolescents about this subject. Most parents cannot dictate the music choices that adolescents make outside of their sphere of influence or control. Music and videos of questionable merit may be used as teaching tools or a starting point for dialogue about negative imagery in hip-hop for adolescents and adults. The music videos can be analyzed and interpreted in relation to the beliefs, values, and self-identities of the teenagers that consume them (Chung, 2007). Adults should help highlight the questionable video scenes and explain all the obvious and hidden messages that the video illustrates. Chung (2007) suggests a myriad of questions that can be used by adults to engage children in a beneficial dialogue:

- Why is this scene important?

- Were there any sexist scenes in the video? Which scenes?

- How are women portrayed in this video? Does it leave you with a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the women?

- Do you believe that most girls look, dress, dance, or act like the females in the video?

- How does the portrayal of the women in the video affect societal views about African American women?

- Are there any stereotypes that you noticed in this video? What are they? How did you know they were stereotypes?

- Are there any implicit messages in this video?

- Do any of your female relatives act similar to the women in this video? Would you be proud if they did?

- What can you do to defy the negative stereotypes in this video?

There are several interactive ways that current rap videos or lyrics can be made positive. Imaginative youth or adults can create their own rap lyrics and videos that disprove the sexist representations of African American women in popular culture. Teachers and students can critically examine particular hip-hop videos and work together to produce their own videos (Chung, 2007). Groups can be established to produce, script, perform, analyze and discuss student videos. Feminist rap may also be another way to change perceptions of women in hip-hop.

Some female rappers challenge and disrupt the male hierarchy by promoting self-esteem, respect, and equal rights for women (Chung, 2007). While not perfect, some feminist rap videos do portray strong women that are in direct contradiction to the typical video model. Through dialogue and expression exercises such as these, adults and teens can understand gender stereotypes, make informed decisions about music, and potentially change the perceptions of the wider culture in the process.

The misogynistic culture of hip-hop has exposed the prevalence of gender inequality. Risky behaviors are praised while responsible, positive behaviors receive little credibility by hip-hop "authorities." Although links have been found to correlate increased exposure to rap music with deleterious behaviors in both male and female adolescents, it is difficult to conclude with certainty that other factors did not produce those results (Stokes, 2007). Alvin Poussaint (1974) presented research suggesting that media images in which violence, sex, and drugs are glorified pose a significant threat to African American youth because of their limited exposure to positive

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role models in the media (see Wingood et al., 2003). Nevertheless, due to the small number of research in this area, there are limitations on the ability to generalize and to apply the findings to the universal population (Stokes, 2007).

Social Entrepreneurism and Community Service Organizations

Governments have become increasingly reliant upon nonprofit organizations to initiate and deliver social services. This expanding interdependent relationship has been greatly influenced by the devolution of government services and welfare reform. Since the government has never been nor can ever be the cure-all for the world's many problems, nonprofit organizations are strategically positioned to contribute their unique brand of services. In turn, social entrepreneurs and community service organizations are also creatively filling the voids left by some traditional nonprofit organizations. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is the government agency charged with enforcing the Communications Act. It is a direct violation of federal law to broadcast obscene and offensive materials. Unfortunately, some aspects of indecency are entirely subjective. I believe that there is a definite gap in the services that the FCC provides. In view of this, I decided to create Anti-Video Girl as a mechanism for African American girls to combat negative stereotypes. The interests of this demographic may not rank highly on the priority list of society-at-large; however, as a future social entrepreneur, I feel compelled to change and improve society by creating a community service organization as a vehicle to achieve my philanthropic aspirations. I believe that political activism and advocacy is necessary to insure the needs of marginalized members of society.

Social entrepreneurship embodies all the innovative, motivational, visionary, and management skills necessary to thrive in the dynamic nonprofit sector. This "new" frontier is

being shaped by social entrepreneurs who do not always use traditional methods to create new organizations, generate operating funds, and shape policy. Social entrepreneurs use nonprofit organizations to articulate their beliefs and ideas. This ability to express themselves in their work usually provides both monetary and intangible satisfaction for the entrepreneurs, donors, and staff.

The ease of entry into the nonprofit arena begs the question whether there are too many nonprofits that duplicate services, compete for the same finite dollars, and over-saturate the market. Many theorists believe that the supply approach may lead to an overproduction of nonprofits that cater to a certain population/economic segment or only take up the most "popular" causes (Frumkin, 2005). It is my contention that social entrepreneurs will participate in or create organizations that they are passionate about without regard to whether the need is currently being met or not. Social entrepreneurs are not duly bound to only create organizations that address unpopular causes. In other words, the tangible gain or loss to disadvantaged nonprofits is zero if a social entrepreneur creates a nonprofit serving a different demographic; because s/he never intended to serve that disadvantaged area in the first place. Therefore needy areas will remain underserved if they are in jurisdictions where social entrepreneurs are not interested.

Why Anti-Video Girl?

I coined the term Anti-Video Girl after watching a string of hip-hop and R & B videos on a popular B.E.T. video countdown show. I was shocked at the mature content of the videos, but was even more appalled at the slick packaging used to sell sex to African American youth. I watched the entire program, hoping to see videos that balanced or countered any of the sexually explicit lyrics and images, but saw none. Where was the antithesis of the video model? I

eventually found more positive portrayals of African American women on an alternative R & B video station geared towards adults aged thirty years and older.

This paper was conceived as an attempt to address the lack of alternative and positive imagery of African American females in hip-hop videos. Conceptually, the Anti-Video Girl has drawn a line in the sand to distinguish herself from her video vixen counterpart. She is by no means perfect, but the Anti-Video Girl has enough self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-awareness to know that her sum is greater than all of her "parts." She is focused on academics, sports, family, friends, and her future. The Anti-Video Girl is not immune to peer-pressure, but is confident enough in herself and her abilities to accomplish goals. I wish to create a sense of urgency in parents, advocates, congregations, and communities to stand up for *our* African American girls and to value them as much as our African American boys. Despite the "generation gap," adults must be educated on how to uplift and support African American girls during their most impressionable years of self-development and discovery.

The Anti-Video Girl website will serve as a clearinghouse of information for teens, parents, advocates, healthcare practitioners, educators, and others that seek information necessary to counter the destructive images and media depictions of African American females in hip-hop music and videos. The site will contain articles, strategies, links, and forums for adults and teens to encourage productive discourse, participation, and solutions. The Anti-Video Girl website will showcase positive African American females, and girl serving organizations/programs/events in a monthly feature that highlights their contributions, achievements, and goals. The "Spotlight" recommendations can come from parents, students, teachers, and the community at large. The site will also contain a database of national

organizations, programs, and events for African American girls that will be sorted geographically and alphabetically for convenience.

The Anti-Video Girl website will champion the cause for removing the barriers and limitations placed on African American girls by the misogynistic hip-hop culture. The mission of the website will be fulfilled by using a four-pronged approach:

1. Provide adults and youth with critical information to defy negative stereotypes. Research articles, links, and forums will be used on the site to streamline and consolidate information for site users.

2. Compile a database of contact information for national organizations and programs that empower African American girls. Organizations that focus on self-esteem, health, academics, sports, entrepreneurial endeavors, among others, will be encouraged to submit pertinent information to post on the site.

3. Feature positive biographies of African American girls and adults on the website to serve as role models. It would be beneficial for teens to read stories about women and girls like them that have succeeded despite any obstacles.

4. Partner with schools, advocates, businesses, and organizations that uplift and support African American girls. There are existing programs that are already serving African American girls, but parents may not be informed of their services.

Hopefully, after viewing the information on the website, users will experience several short and long-term impacts such as:

- Gaining an understanding of the negative images and stereotypes that affect African American women in some hip-hop images and lyrics.

- Having easier access to information that will enable them to make decisions, to find programs, and to initiate advocacy.

- Engaging in discussions about imagery in hip-hop music.

- Thinking critically and interpreting the underlying messages in hip-hop music and lyrics.

One of the studies noted earlier in this paper contends that prolonged exposure to rap music videos may have a grievous effect on the self-esteem, perceptions, sexual habits, and behaviors of African American adolescent females. As a result, I believe that the detrimental images of African American women are not consistently balanced by alternative positive images. These negative portrayals must be proactively addressed by adults and tactical solutions must be provided for adolescents to filter through the negative sexual imagery. A multi-faceted approach to health and sexual education must be used to assist African American girls in building healthy sexual scripts and in steering the murky waters of conflicting sexual messages (Stokes, 2007). African American women are now disproportionately suffering from the adverse health consequences associated with the unintended effects of hip-hop culture; thus making this a public health crisis (Peterson et al., 2007).

Health practitioners are poised to teach the communities about the dire current and future statistics of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), teenage pregnancy, and domestic violence that are prevalent amongst African American young adults (Peterson et al., 2007). Specialized media literacy training to deconstruct and dispel harmful sexual labels must be conducted and implemented on African American girls (Peterson et al., 2007). Record companies, media outlets, radio and video programmers, to mention but a few, must be held accountable for the harmful images they create, perpetuate, and exploit throughout the world. In addition to these

steps, parents should turn off the televisions, radios, and IPods, and engage in an open dialogue with their children about sexual stereotypes, and sexual realities. African Americans must regain their self-help traditions, which created a generation of persons that desired to uplift the race through education, business, and community involvement.

African American girls must be challenged and charged with defining themselves and be proactive in creating their own media and representations (Stokes, 2007). Moreover, the site will also promote *positive* hip-hop and shout out artists that fortify constructive African American female images. Both African American men and women in the hip-hop industry must realize their roles in perpetuating sexist, racist, and misogynistic stereotypes for the sake of fast cash (Littlefield, 2008). Hip-hop is an extremely powerful tool for communicating with the youth and tapping into youth culture; therefore, not all hip-hop should be vilified. Hip-hop did not invent misogyny and sexism; rather it gleaned and exploited those aspects from an already patriarchal, classist, racist, and capitalistic society.

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