

1. Personal Narrative

What do we think of when we ask ourselves about music? How have we developed the passion and how we have grown to be so expressive about our favorite artists and bands? My love for music is influenced by my Latino cultural upbringing. I grew up around Latin inspired music, rhythm, and vibe. My grandmother also inspired my love for music at a young age, and since then, my love for music has only flourished. With that said, I feel that I was born to love music. I listen to all types of music, but my music of choice is Hip Hop.

Everyone has a story about his or her favorite song, and what sparked that interest; and mine started in a pick-up truck at the age of four. My family and I were prepping for dinner later that evening, so my mother asked my father to run his usual errands at the grocery store. My older sister and I went with him to the grocery store. We were all fighting for the radio, when we finally picked a station, and the 1994 hit single “Gin and Juice” by rapper, Snoop Doggy Dogg was on. Even though neither my sister nor I knew much about what he was actually rapping, all three of us gravitated toward the style of the song, and immediately started dancing. That was the day that Hip Hop influenced my life.

From that night in 1994, until now, I have always unconditionally loved Hip Hop. It has a continual influence in my life. However, I never had much interest in the lyrical meaning behind these songs. When I listen to Hip Hop, I gravitate to how the melodies and beats make me feel. Growing up, I correlated a Hip Hop song with how it made me feel as I was dancing, and to this day, I have the same notion. Now that I am older, I still love the songs ultimately because of the beat implemented; however, I listen to the lyrical content differently than I did when I first started listening to Hip Hop. When listening to

lyrics of music today, I take it with a grain of salt. The majority of mainstream music now is geared primarily toward drugs, sex and alcohol. Although I listen to these types of songs, they do not have the same influence and impact for me as Hip Hop. I am more interested in the lyrical artists that talk about their struggles, and how they reached their dreams and aspirations. Although these artists rap about sex and drugs, it is in a different context than what is mainstream and the persona of a rich and famous celebrity. Overall, I enjoy the passion and true meaning behind the music, not the flamboyant perks of how these artists express their money and laundry now. The ample amount of money, taking drugs, and having various different sexual partners every night does not increase my interest in the music. My love for music is what purely comes from the soul of the artist. Now that I am more attuned and aware of the power that music has, I have started to challenge the foundation of Hip Hop. It is difficult to support an industry where exploitation of women seems to be what is needed in order to gain recognition. These sorts of insights have lead me to a desire to dig into these issues for this project.

My first quarter at Cal Poly was very significant in my constant struggle with Hip Hop. I had just transferred from Sierra College, a junior college in Rocklin, California, and was eager to delve into a real college experience. My first class at Cal Poly was Interpersonal Communication, taught by Dr. Shea. Interpersonal Communication was a very interesting subject because Dr. Shea tackled people on a more intimate and individual level. She discussed a different conception of how people are treated and viewed on a critical level. Following Interpersonal Communication, I decided to take Gender Communication. Although the foundations were the same, Gender Communication has a completely different way of looking at communication between men and women. We learned about just how differently society categorizes men and

women, and how it is continual and internalized. There was an assignment we had to complete, and that primarily dealt with women in the media. We had to find an article, video or any other type of social media where women were being portrayed negatively. Sadly, this was an easy task because virtually everything I found tied into women in a negative light. In fact, it was more of a challenge finding something where women were not seen as being beneath men or inferior to them. As I did research, I saw a pattern in the way women are portrayed that became bothersome. Women are strictly being used for their image, and to be honest, it disgusts me how much they are exploited in everyday life and media.

Young females are subjected to see these types of images at a very young age. They start to internalize and believe these images to be true. Now these distortions of images have transferred over to social media sites such as *MySpace*, *Facebook* and *Instagram*. Repeatedly, several women post provocative pictures of themselves on these sites, and it saddens me that this is how women choose to gain recognition and attention. They are ultimately doing what the media has taught us all throughout our entire lives. It is a never-ending cycle, and this is why I chose to analyze a very famous Hip Hop song for my paper. “There is now growing empirical support for the proposition that idealized portrayals of women in the Western media have a negative impact upon how adolescent girls and adult women see themselves” (Clay 453). Clay and a few other authors test the sociocultural factors of adolescent girls in the subjects of body image and self-esteem.

Sir Mix-a-Lot’s video, *Baby Got Back*, is the perfect example for my topic because of the messages he addresses about women, and his relationship to each of these women. My objective with this paper, then, is to help people realize that women are not

just objects, but that they should also be treated as equals. We, as a society, should take a step in the right direction toward fully and actually respecting women.

2. Introduction

Media and pop culture have a great impact on society today that tends to target specific identities, which mark into different social norms. In particular, the media has created several different stereotypes within the African American community. The media portrays certain types of groups of people based on their race, and this issue of race and gender factors into how women see themselves today. Specifically, the media rhetorically constructs African American women in stereotypical sexual ways. Consequently, these behaviors turn into habits for women seeking positive attention that evidently result negatively.

Over the years, rap music has become commercialized, and lyrics now focus on things such as money, clothes, cars, and sex. [...] More and more, male African American rap artists have begun to exploit African American women, including female rap artists, making hip-hop a battleground for African American men and women. This battle is a struggle for power (Connerly 1).

This quote explains a lot, because from a listener's opinion you see two sides of African American women in rap. You have women dancers for Hip Hop and female rap artists. It is already a struggle enough for female Hip Hop artists to make it, but it doesn't help when the majority of the female African American women choose to be exotic icons instead of vocally making it in the industry.

This paper will focus on the song and music video, *Baby Got Back* by Hip Hop artist, Sir Mix-a-Lot. There is a plethora of research about the over-sexualization of women in the Hip Hop culture. I was drawn to this topic because I felt that the over-

sexualization of women could be the downfall of such a good music genre. Hip Hop music has so much power it can be taken in such more of a positive direction. Over-sexualizing women is just the first big flaw because Hip Hop needs to set a better example how to treat women. Hip Hop has the power to make change, its just when and how they try to exercise that power positively. Therefore, the question expressed is why do women degrade themselves on a social media scale rather than seeking their ultimate value through their own standards, and this is because women choose to uphold these overly explicit stereotypes because it has been transcended through popular media and adapted to become the norm in these music videos.

3. Learning from Feminist Criticism

In order to understand the significance of feminism, we need to understand the history of feminism by its three waves—first wave, second wave, and third wave feminism. The first wave approaches the idea of suffrage, the second wave deals with women’s liberation, and the third wave is considered to be the “umbrella” for everything else. First wave primarily revolves around the Women’s Rights Convention for Seneca Falls in New York. This highlighted the notion for equality but ignored women of color. In the article, *Negotiating Spaces For/Through Third-Wave Feminism*, Amber E. Kinser states

The role of first nation American women and African American women in paving the way for Seneca falls in 1848 and its outcomes points to a major problem with the wave metaphor in discussing women’s movement; it highlights white women’s movement and ignores that of women of color (Kinser 367).

The first wave was thus primarily about equality and voting in early US history. However, feminism flourished throughout the years, and thus, the second wave of feminism was developed.

Second wave feminism focused on the women's liberation movement and how women started challenging the norms implemented upon them. Second wave feminism also focused on gender norms and started about during the 1960s. "The second wave attention to women's rights, and more importantly to women's liberation, emerged seemingly out of nowhere and needed to re-establish itself as neither particularly new nor fleeting" (Kinser 367). There were many accomplishments completed during the second wave, but there are always things to improve and change, and this is where third wave feminism comes into play.

Third wave feminism deals with things happening now and with how else women can make a positive impact and influence on our society. Furthermore, "third wave helps young women articulate a feminism that responds to the political, economic, technological, and cultural circumstances that are unique to the current era" (Kinser 124). Reviewing the history of feminism makes clear that women have gradually been making small efforts to increase their strength in society since the mid 1880s. Given, taking a look at Hip Hop from this perspective becomes important and interesting because it shows the consistent efforts woman have made forward. With time, women will be respected a lot in years to come.

This paper will examine Hip Hop artist, Sir Mix-a-Lot's music video *Baby Got Back*, and how this music video is an example male dominance, which negatively affects African American women's sexuality and identity. Sir Mix-a-Lot's music video illustrates male patriarchy, and contradicts the rationale that third wave feminists have

tried to put into place for women by portraying women who thrive on sex appeal. What I mean by male patriarchy is that the video shows that men are more dominant than women. Basically men are on a pedestal and above women. This is a complete contradiction of the respect and equality women have fought to gain for almost one hundred years. The things that are broadcasted and communicated through the media have formed several different stereotypes throughout the recent years, and now these categorizations have become a subconscious thought process and reality within people who are invested in mainstream media. The representation of women in this music video are strictly highlighting physical attributes and invalidating women because of their image. Even though Sir Mix-a-Lot is attracted to all these women, he is doing it through a way that only displays the women as physical fantasies. Even though this music video became popular in the early 1990s, its message still resonates with audiences today. The women are primarily African American females, which is another unique factor when analyzing this type of music video.

African American women have internalized their specific role in Hip Hop music videos. Internalization occurs when a society has set certain norms for a certain group and people in that group are influenced by these sets of social standards. There are many deeply rooted issues attached because of the representation of African American women in the media. Furthermore, the idea that sexuality constructs their identity is tied to the notion of the “video vixen.” According to Timothy Vercellotti and Paul R. Brewer, “the role that the African American media have been known to play in the development of Black racial identity and consciousness further reinforces the need to study opinion toward the Black press” (Vercellotti and Brewer 233). There has been a racial identity formed through the media, and this particular identity has affected African American

social stigmas. The media plays a prevalent role and provides what is believed to be complete, true information to the public. It is thus important to understand the history and context of race relations and Hip Hop culture. All these negative and stereotypical images are intertwined in most music videos, which is why it is so important to understand third wave feminism, and the significance it continually has when understanding mainstream media.

Third wave feminism pushes for equality among different ethnicities, but the media presents and constructs these public images, which makes the idea of equality for women impossible. It is a given that the media perpetuates images, ideas, and beliefs that tie into African American cultural images. Because of this premeditated construction from the media, these images remain with the general audience, and thus are proven to be a powerful tool. In Chapter nine, *Readings of Rhetorical Criticism*, goes into detail about feminist criticism. She argues,

Women's liberation rhetoric is characterized by the use of confrontative, non-adjustive strategies designed to 'violate the reality structure.' These strategies not only attack the psychosocial reality of the culture, but violate the norms of decorum, morality, and 'femininity' of the women addressed (Campbell 515.)

Essentially, feminism is geared toward the equality among women and men. There is a misconception that feminists only acknowledge women's rights, but in actuality, feminists acknowledge the differences between race and gender and move toward a change for the better. In the article, "Third-Wave Feminism and the Need to Reweave the Nature/Culture Duality," Colleen Mack-Canty states,

The assumption by third-wave feminism that the understandings of the relative

importance of things in feminism should usually begin with women's situated and embodied points of view, begins to reweave the culture/nature duality whose political philosophy in the West is largely based on notions of disembodiment (Mack-Canty156). Feminism is about how to change the perpetuated norms, and although there is a dominant patriarchal Western perspective, the root of change begins with how women choose to perceive themselves and express their femininity.

Sir Mix-a-Lot's music video is a perfect example of how powerful music videos are impacting our society. This was such a popular hit, and even in the title, it explains women as just an amusement because of their physical attributes. This video is blunt, and the message of it comes across directly. Therefore, it is impactful to understand the different waves of feminism because even though women have paved such innovative ways for equality in the past century, it is still ultimately not being recognized. The culture in the media is turning women away from what they have learned to be like, and are learning how to act because of how they portrayed by their counterpart.

4. Learning from Communication Studies

There are many things to keep in mind when analyzing Hip Hop culture. Through the use of various communicative skills, Sir-Mix-a-Lot's music video *Baby Got Back* is one that set the standard of what Hip Hop music is today, and therefore built the tone of what Hip Hop came to be.

Communication Studies encompasses how we are with other people, the environment we are born and raised in, our communication patterns, our nonverbal messages, what we think about any issue, and also how we live on a day-to-day basis. Along with this thought, communication can be defined as sharing and expressing different ideas and thoughts between people. Communication Studies is being taught

through many different approaches. Some include, rhetorical, interpersonal and even health communication. All these different fields tailor to different areas, but all remain consistent, as communication is at the heart of it all. It is important to understand the role of communication because we are constantly exposed to different elements everyday—through the media, societal norms, and our interactions with each other.

Intercultural communication is imperative to the notion of Hip Hop because of its fast paced impact on the culture. Anthropologist and writer Edward T. Hall states in *Beyond Culture* that

Culture is man's medium; there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture" [...] The way [we] think [...], how problems are solved, how [our] cities are planned and laid out [...], as well as how economic and government systems are put together and function" (Hall 16).

Culture not only affects an individual, but also a society because cultural values shape our identity. There is a connection between the members of the same cultures, which creates a community distinct from other cultures. When studying culture, a person needs to understand all the elements including responsibilities, implications, and insights each culture offers, and in this instance, the impact that one music video had, and built that continuous trend to Hip Hop, not only as a genre of music, but as the culture. Culture is heavily impacted by what is believed to be the norm and appropriateness during a specific time, and is also impacted by the value systems within the society. Culture is learned, transmitted across other generations and incorporates language, social ideology, cognition (how we think), and how we connect it to the world.

Furthermore, in order to understand how the media affects various stories, there needs to be an understanding of the different communication techniques at work, such as the rhetorical framework. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, in *The Rhetoric of Women's*

Liberation: An Oxymoron claims, “feminist advocacy unearths tensions woven deep into the fabric of our society and provokes an unusually intense and profound ‘rhetoric of moral conflict’” (Campbell 510). There are several different rhetorical scripts at work. Not all are directly through the function of communication and how we speak, but also, through different outlets of communication. After analyzing the music video and breaking it down further with different rhetorical devices, I was able to execute an appropriate feminist perspective after implementing the different constructions of race, gender and patriarchy. The phrase, “Baby Got Back” has such a deep meaning in terms of its historical context and how it is implemented in the society. Rhetorical criticism in addition to feminist criticism challenges what beliefs and notions are at play. Everything that we are told to believe and see translates with how we challenge our subconscious. The purpose of rhetorical criticism is to see what communicative devices are at work, on a conscious and subconscious level.

Another component to be aware of is gender and communication because the more educated we are about the different gender roles present in our society, then the more likely we are to use what we learned in order to bring about social change. We need to be educated about the effect the media has with gender roles and norms before we attempt to make a difference.

It is important to understand these different communication elements because in order to learn the impact of *Baby Got Back*, we need to understand the different types of communication lessons. These perspectives allow us to understand how we think, what we do and how we respond to situations and why. Communication and how we adapt to an environment is based on all these different theories at play. Scholar and feminist, Jean Kilbourne, explains that the same messages are constantly being reproduced and shown

to us over and over again. We start to internalize these messages in our unconscious minds and this element of internalization taps into our thought process. The media, in a subtle way, skews our unconscious thought process by relaying messages to us that we could potentially be avoiding. Knowing this, we are more likely to find ways to remedy this issue by making these discussions more transparent to the audiences. If one can physically see the problem, then there is more opportunity to change. Bringing in examples of how the media has negatively affected the youth becomes another tool for the members of the general public to understand this issue on a deeper level.

5. Overview of the Genre of Hip Hop

In 1979, reputable Hip Hop group, Sugar Hill Gang, introduced the world to one of Hip Hop's most well-known songs, *Rappers Delight* (Anderson). Since 1979, Hip Hop has transformed into many different phases. In *Pimps Up, Ho's Down: Hip Hop's Hold On Young Black Women*, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting states that Hip Hop has now become, "a long history of sexual misconduct" (Sharpley-Whiting 68). Everyday we are seeing over sexualized explicit images through mass media more commonly associated with Hip Hop music videos. What once used to be use to be a form of self expression and outlet about current problems in society has now become a transparent way to talk about physical objectifications between men and women. In the book, *Can't Stop Won't Stop* by Jeff Chang he states,

Rap music has long been considered a form of resistance against authority. [Also], that message has also proven its appeal to the youth all around the world [...] Rap music is only apart of the movement and if you look beyond the stereotypes, its clear hip-hop culture has become one of the most far reaching art movements of the past three decades (Chang 56-58).

Hip Hop music has come a long way, however, has it really been moving forward or is it going backwards? The foundations of Hip Hop have changed so drastically, from Sugar Hill Gang's *Rappers Delight* to the more popular *Baby Got Back* by Sir Mix-A-Lot.

It seems that now Hip Hop is more concentrated on objectification of women and their physical appeal for men. In Stephens and Phillips article, "Freaks, Gold Diggers, Divas and Dykes: the Socio-Historical Development of Adolescent African American Women's Sexual Scripts", argues that "although there are more representations of African American females available for consumption in the mass media than ever before, the substance of these images has changed little over the past century" (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). Even though women have more opportunities and an outlet with Hip Hop music there is little respect for those women in the roles they are pushed into. In actuality, from a feminist perspective, these women are subjecting themselves to the norm, instead of liberating themselves from the stereotype, and women are succumbing to what is expected from them from societal standards. This is why there so much controversy built around Hip Hop music videos.

In the controversial documentary, *Dreamworlds 3: Desire, Sex and Power* by Sut Jhally, Sut establishes the concept of what is a false dichotomy and how that has become our reality. In order to control a man, a female must persuade him with the use of her body and cater to what a man wants. She explicitly degrades herself and this is what Hip Hop has come to be. What I took from the documentary, is that women are too fast to cater to a man. My thought would be that a woman should wait for the best respectful opportunity to be with a man. Unfortunately, Sut is explaining that it is not that easy for women to do when men see the negative abuse amongst women in Hip Hop media everyday.

Sir Mix-a-Lot's music video displays the notion of patriarchy. Omofolabo Ajayi-Soyinka defines patriarchy as "a system under which sexism, the weapon of patriarchal power and its various manifestations, politically, socially, and economically oppressed women. [There is] also a signifier of male dominance over another" (Ajayi-Soyinka 162). According to Teresa L. Ebert, "patriarchy naturalizes sexual identity, masking the cultural construction of the feminine, there by continually reproducing women in a subordinate position" (Ebert 19). Patriarchy is a false ideology, which many people believe to be true. It is the idea that men are superior to women, and that women should always subject to men. This is true in the work force, a relationship, and in the media. The goal of patriarchy is to explicitly and implicitly put women on a lower platform than men and this same idea is evident in Hip Hop culture today.

Internationally, Hip Hop has now become a big part of the mainstream landscape and is a very popular style of music. Hip Hop is heard in all seven continents, which has lead to international tours for these artists and opened up newer opportunities to make more money. "The first is hip-hop's increasing alliance with the ten billion dollar a year adult entertainment industry through the glorification of strip clubs in hip-hop oriented movies, videos and music" (Sharpley-Whiting Pg. 12). Noticeably, Hip Hop does play a big role in how men perceive women because the direct hardline of Hip Hop is ran by males and filtered into smaller groups of males all over the country. These images are being resonated to audiences, and are internalized. Internalized as in the consumers of music tend to act upon what they see on the TV screen. Overall, it is safe to say that Hip Hop is here to stay, but is it really the type of Hip Hop that consumers should continue to buy in to?

When looking up definitions of Hip Hop, I decided to go directly to the source: mainstream media. The website *Urban Dictionary* is not an average type of dictionary. This is an outlet and source compiled by youth who are interested in slang and mainstream terms that are constantly being used in music and now incorporated into everyday life. Appropriately, their definition coincides with what Hip Hop listeners believe in. *Urban Dictionary* defines Hip Hop as,

A culture and form of ground breaking music and self-expression with elements that consisted of the elements of graffiti art, DJing, MCing, and breaking. Today Hip-Hop is considered to be dead in the mainstream because so called mainstream Hip-Hop doesn't have elements to true Hip-Hop and therefore, there is no meaning to it (urbandictionary.com).

Although this is a more liberal and unorthodox way of looking at Hip Hop, its unconventional source is directly linked into that of the Hip Hop genre.

6. Description of the Artifact

Hip Hop singer and songwriter Sir Mix-a-Lot released his music video, *Baby Got Back* in 1992. There is a predominantly African American cast with the exception of four Caucasian actors who are only shown three times in the entire music video. The story line of the video is about Sir Mix-a-Lot's sexual fantasies that he has with other women. The video's setting is at an enclosed area with women everywhere dancing provocatively, and the main aspect of the video is Sir Mix-a-Lot's portrayal of himself. In the music video, the outfits of the women are nothing more than tight gold one-piece jumpsuits. All the background dancers are African American women wearing suggestive clothes. The choreography is in sync with the lyrics of the song. As Sir Mix-a-Lot sings the chorus, all we see are the different types of gyrations that the women do.

The song initially starts with two young Caucasian females, who are observing an African American female and state,

Oh my God, Becky, look at her butt, it is so big. She looks like one of those rap guys' girlfriends. Who understands those rap guys? They only talk to her because she looks like a total prostitute. Okay, I mean her butt, it's just so big. I can't believe it's so round, it's like out there, I mean, gross, I mean look, it's just so black." (Sir Mix-a-Lot *Baby Got Back* – *YouTube*).

Ironically, these two women are expressing the perceived notion about African American women and their role within Hip Hop music videos. Throughout the entire music video, the main element of a female being shown is her butt. We rarely see the dancers' faces. It is obvious that the only thing that appeals to the audience's eye is what Sir Mix-a-Lot wrote about.

Sir Mix-a-Lot also uses food to represent both women and men's body parts. For example, he is literally standing on a giant pear, which is symbolizing the female behind. In another segment of the video a dancer has a belt on with bananas around it, which symbolizes the male penis. Sir Mix-a-Lot is attempting to draw attention away from the vulgarity of the song through the use of props and color scheme in the video. For example, he uses bright colors such as orange, yellow and peach which are known to be inviting colors that create a warm feeling. The only people that interact with the dancers are part of Sir Mix-a-Lot's entourage consisting of only African American males.

When he does talk about Caucasian women he refers to their body types, which is presented in a negative way because of their lack of curves. He also refers to these women as "plastic" and compares them to Barbie dolls. To add to this, Sir Mix-a-Lot uses lyrics such as "and I'm long, and I'm strong, and I'm down to get the friction on [...] so ladies, turn around, stick it out. Baby Got Back!" This particular aspect of the

video turns the women into a tool to be used when the man wants to penetrate a woman. This is an example of Sir Mix-a-Lot objectifying women throughout the entire video because he only needs them for sex, and he makes this goal very clear from the start of the video to the end. Women who watch this video will get negative messages of how a woman should act for a man and therefore internalize a stereotype that should not have even existed in the first place. By contrast, men will look to this video and further reinforce what patriarchy means to them and think that is acceptable for men to act and think in this way. In addition to the music video, the song's lyrics have an impact on how women are portrayed.

I like big butts and I can not lie
 You other brothers can't deny
 That when a girl walks in with an itty bitty waist
 And a round thing in your face
 You get sprung
 Wanna pull up tough
 Cuz you notice that butt was stuffed
 Deep in the jeans she's wearing
 I'm hooked and I can't stop staring
 Oh, baby I wanna get with ya
 And take your picture
 My homeboys tried to warn me
 But that butt you got
 Make Me so horny
 Ooh, rump of smooth skin
 You say you wanna get in my Benz
 Well use me use me cuz you ain't that average groupie

Sir Mix-a-Lot's verse from *Baby Got Back*, from his 1992 album goes into detail about how women are seen at first glance. In addition, all men are supposedly thinking the same explicit notions. The men all analyze her body and immediately think of how they can take advantage of her sexually. It is ironic that she is not established as "groupie," even though that is how they view her. There are many different communicative roles at work with this particular verse. Gender communication is exemplified—there is a distinct role that the woman portrays and her relationship with men. In a study done by Susan Shaw and Janet Lee in *Women's Voices, Feminists Visions*, they argue, "Most music videos are fairly predictable in the ways they sexualize women" (Shaw & Lee 507). What they are inferring is that even though women are participating in an active role like a music video, the way they choose to do it is counter-feminist, and repeatedly upholds the social norms of Hip Hop song lyrics. By participating in this music video, women have accepted Hip Hop's cultural values toward women. These women have adapted to the cultural standards, and therefore disregarded what really matters. Another set of song lyrics that also stuck out include:

I wanna get you home
 And Uh, double up Uh Uh
 I ain't talkin' 'bout playboy
 Cuz silicone parts were made for toys
 I wanna 'em real thick and juicy
 So find that juicy double
 Mix-a-Lot's in trouble
 Beggin' for a piece of that bubble
 So I'm lookin' at rock videos
 Knockin' these bimbos walkin' like hoes

You can have them bimbos
I'll keep my women like Flo Jo
A word to the thick, soul sistas
I wanna get with ya
I won't cuss or hit ya
But I gotta be straight when I wanna—
Till the break of dawn
Baby got it goin' on
A lot of pimps won't like this song
Cuz them punks lie to hit it and quit it
But I'd rather stay and play
Cuz I'm long and I'm strong
And I'm down to get friction on

In the middle of this verse, Sir Mix-a-Lot states all the things he will do to these women. He is only utilizing them as tools and objects for his affection and attention. From a cultural communication perspective, we need to focus on what verbal and nonverbal patterns are at play. Culture encompasses how we are with other people and can be defined as sharing what our values are. It is important to be aware of different cultural roles in a working environment because these messages adapt to our understandings and impact of song lyrics like this. Instead of having these messages relaying back in our brain, we learn that the critical insight is it creates awareness. Women are subjecting themselves to what these lyrics are about. They are accepting what Sir Mix-a-Lot's message is and this becomes the identity that African American women portray. Hip Hop music is based on the culture of a woman's physical seductiveness, and her prevalence when catering to men. Furthermore, as Patricia A. Turner states,

The African-American woman's image is crafted as to suggest that any sexual appeal she has will be evident only to [men] [and...] whenever these females possess physical attributes that might be perceived as alluring, they are usually in the [other] men (Turner 24).

All of these different social scripts are translated with what is believed to be the Hip Hop culture. The media, then, helps create different stereotypes, and Turner argues that African American women are still overtly sexualized, especially among their own ethnicity. African American women are sexually objectified in popular culture and the media today. What this means is that we, as a society, have constructed a false identity, and a false sense of Hip Hop culture, which has manifested into a distortion of the social norms. There are several confictions in these lyrics, and that is why Hip Hop culture is becoming so misconstrued.

The Hip Hop genre for African American women presents a type of "counter-feminism." They transcend explicit messages to the viewers then they participate in videos, media, etc. Due to the fact that women are succumbing to what is believed to be their social scripts, a false reality is created. American culture is impacted by society, and therefore, how we portray ourselves and express our sexuality become extensions of culture and society. This means that we are impacted with how we relay the message through popular media outlets.

7. Lessons to Understanding Hip Hop Music

The methodology, feminism, is supporting my claim that this artifact promotes patriarchal ideological norms and rejects any notions of femininism as a movement. There is an obvious contradiction in how African American women are viewed in media.

Feminists desire to promote the female image without over-sexualization, while societal norms, as presented in artifacts such as Sir-Mix-a-Lot's song and video, reinforce sexual objectification into our culture. It is important to understand how prevalent popular and mainstream music videos are. Sir Mix-a-Lot's *Baby Got Back* was an instant sensation, and was heard by millions throughout the world. However, when really listening to the lyrics, do we really want to condone the message that he is discussing? Looking at music like this it is essential to pay attention to all factors and how intricate such seemingly simple lyrics become because of the impact they have on people.

Margaret Hunter, in *Shake it, Baby, Shake it: Consumption and the New Gender Relation in Hip Hop*, discusses many issues of race and feminism that deal with the genre of music. This is one of the most popular forms of mainstream media, and there is a lot of attention geared toward the Hip Hop genre of music. The media, it can be argued, is the most prevalent form of how we view African American women and their representation in the media. Furthermore, "the central aspect is that women have to present themselves as sexual beings [and] the pressure [...] conform [is] relentless" (Hunter 56). The media has the power to portray anything. African American women should use the media to their advantage by engaging in shows/episodes that represent women in a better fashion. For example, lately the media has good shows like "Basketball Wives and Real House Wives."

Once we understand all aspects of Hip Hop we can then take a deeper look into other communicative vices at work. There will always be someone who will look at things differently, but it is important to be aware of what is occurring. Instead of arguing with what is being presented to the public, we need to educate ourselves, and learn the importance of teaching the significance of what we learn in this process of self-education

to others. With that said, as listeners, there are several things we can do to promote awareness. I have come up with a few suggestions that people supporting the Hip Hop community could do to help active listeners steer in the right direction. Although there are not concrete ways to showing everyone what the main objectives are with Hip Hop, it is essential to have exposure of its impact early on. The more we understand, the more we are learning instead of judging. For example, in high school, there should be a curriculum taught about the importance that media has, and should be a highly discussion based class. By planting the seed early on, and creating an opening environment, there will be more opportunity to be heard and will engage younger audiences to want to express themselves. Instead of bashing what the industry's about, we need to create opportunities for those being impacted at such young ages in order to make a positive change.

8. Conclusion

Because of this premeditated construction, these images remain with the general audience. This is an example of how popular culture images and the use of rhetorical devices affect the audience. Socially constructed norms dominate images that become rationalized in contemporary life. We see things in the media, such as music videos, which reinforce, both subconsciously and consciously, ideas of and about African Americans. In other words, *Baby Got Back* resonates with audiences everywhere. By learning about different perceptions and ideologies from a feminist perspective, we are learning about the social constructions of the media and how important it is to be aware of the different persuasive techniques at work.

Women are upholding these stereotypes because they resonate in the media. All they see are these explicit images and accept these images by implementing it upon

themselves. In turn, the media has created more of a swayed insecure world within women by using their bodies. Instead of representing their sexual appeal, there needs to be positive reinforcement in place because, unfortunately, the norms now are videos such as *Baby Got Back*. Now that we know why women degrade themselves on a social media scale, rather than seeking their own standards, as a student of communication, it is important to create and promote awareness of the different communication devices at work.

Tying women degrading themselves on a social media scale back into culture and communication, everything is learned based on our environment. We are taught how to act and feel by our peers, and the same goes for Hip Hop when listening to it. We listen to music on a daily basis, and we learn different mannerisms and styles from that. Once again, if we are aware of these different cultural implications, it is more effective to be conscious of what is being heard. Going back to rhetorical communication, different language styles impact our psyche, and how we translate it over to our daily lives. Hip Hop is a different form of language. With its incorporation of rhymes and beats, it helps us listeners hear things differently than normal dialogue on a daily basis. Finally, gender and communication, help us understand the different roles that are placed upon women and men on a dichotomy. All these different tools help us understand what is going on with a more clear and concise way. The more we understand the impact of communication studies, the easier it becomes to analyze everyday artifacts, and helps us become better, more aware people.

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