THE WORDS HAVE CHANGED BUT THE IDEOLOGY REMAINS THE SAME
Misogynistic Lyrics in Rap Music

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Rap music emerged as an aesthetic cultural expression of the urban youth in the late 1970s. It has been denoted as the poetry of the youth who are often disregarded as a result of their race and class status. Since it first came on the music scene, rap has gone through a number of phases, and it has been used as a medium to express a variety of ideas, feelings, and emotions. Hope, love, fear, anger, frustration, pride, violence, and misogyny have all been expressed through the medium of rap. This article examines the use of misogynistic ideology in gangsta rap and traces the connection between its prevalence in rap and the larger cultural picture of how African American women have been characterized historically.

Keywords: *misogyny; hip-hop; rap music; women*

> The misogynist lyrics of gangsta rap are hateful indeed, but they do not represent a new trend in Black popular culture, nor do they differ fundamentally from woman-hating discourses that are common among White men. The danger of this insight is that it might be read as an apology for Black misogyny.
>
> —Johnson (1996)

Music historically has been a medium for human social expression. This social expression can take many forms, from triumph and hope to utter frustration and despair. Regardless of the catalyst that creates it, music serves to stimulate the mind, stir the soul, and

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elicit emotions. It has been said that music is a reflection of the cultural and political environment from which it is born. Rap music emerged as an aesthetic cultural expression of urban African American youth in Bronx, New York, in the late 1970s. It has been denoted as the poetry of the youth who are often disregarded as a result of their race and class. As Rose (1994) states,

> Hip Hop is a cultural form that attempts to negotiate the experiences of marginalization, brutality, truncated opportunity, and oppression within the cultural imperatives of African American and Caribbean history, identity, and community. (p. 21)

Since its emergence on the music scene, rap has undergone a variety of transformations. It has been used as a medium for expressing a variety of ideas, feelings, and emotions. Although rap music has been on the open commercial market since the late 1970s, overt misogyny in rap did not emerge in this genre of music until the late 1980s. Lyricists such as Ice T, N.W.A., and 2 Live Crew weaved such lyrics into many of their rap songs. Since its emergence in rap, misogyny has become a constant feature in the works of several artists. This article examines the use of misogynistic ideology in rap music and traces the connection between its use in rap and the larger cultural picture of how African American women have been characterized historically.

WHAT IS MISOGYNY AND MISOGYNISTIC GANGSTA RAP MUSIC?

Misogyny is the hatred or disdain of women. It is an ideology that reduces women to objects for men's ownership, use, or abuse. It diminishes women to expendable beings. This ideology is widespread and common throughout society. As Joan Smith (1991) has stated,

> Misogyny wears many guises, revels itself in different forms which are dictated by class, wealth, education, race, religion and other factors, but its chief characteristic is its pervasiveness. (p. xvii)

Misogyny in gansta rap is the promotion, glamorization, support, humorization, justification, or normalization of oppressive ideas about women. In this genre of rap music, women (specifically African American women)[1] are reduced to mere objects—objects that are only good for sex and abuse and are ultimately a burden to men. In rap, this ideology reveals itself in many ways, from mild innuendoes to blatant stereotypical characterizations and defamations. Whatever form the characterizations take—whether mild or extreme—provides the listener with derogatory views of women. These views ultimately support, justify, instill, and perpetuate ideas, values, beliefs, and stereotypes that debase women.

Much of what is considered to be misogynistic rap usually has one or more of the following six themes: (a) derogatory statements about women in relation to sex; (b) statements involving violent actions toward women, particularly in relation to sex; (c) references of women causing "trouble" for men; (d) characterization of women as "users" of men; (e) references of women being beneath men; and (f) references of women as usable and discardable beings. Although this list is not exhaustive, the categories capture the essence of the general themes expressed in this genre of music. The gist of these themes reflects how women in misogynistic rap are reduced to subhuman beings, subjects not worthy of respect, love, or compassion.

THE ROOTS OF MISOGYNISTIC IDEOLOGY

Misogynistic ideas expressed in music are not a unique or new phenomenon. The music world has been saturated with misogynistic imagery—from country musicians lamenting about how some "no good woman kicked him out, sold his truck, took his money, and slept with his best friend" to rock-n-rollers screaming about their latest groupie sexual conquest—misogynistic convictions have always had a home within the music industry. Like the misogynistic music before it, misogynistic rap has been accepted and allowed to flourish, generating wealth for some of the artists and the music industry as a whole. Lyricists that use misogyny get plenty of airtime on the radio, and their videos are often in heavy rotation on

music video television stations (i.e., MTV and BET). Although the expletives are often edited, the misogynistic overtones are overtly clear to the listener. Many of these artists are touted as great celebrities (i.e., Dr. Dre, Ice T, Snoop Dogg, and Ice Cube). The popularity of these individuals has opened the doors for lucrative careers in the film industry, with many rap artists starring in films in which they mirror their music personas.

There seems to be a definite trend among some rap artists (not all rap artists, of course), where misogynistic themes are used in a variety of forms, from mild innuendoes to extreme and excessively blatant defamations. In some rap songs whose overall theme is not misogynistic, artists often refer to women as bitches or hoes—Jay Z's "Money, Cash, Hoes" and Kurupt's "We Can Freak It" are two of many examples. Although the overall themes of the songs are not about women, these songs use derogatory terms to refer to women. Although music is powerful, music is only a reflection of social relations and culture; thus, misogynistic views have a cultural rather than a musical value. As Roberta Hamilton (1987) has stated,

> Misogyny is not a word useful simply for describing particularly nasty bits of behavior, but rather it directs us to a set of relations, attitudes, and behaviors that are embedded within all other social relations. (p. 123)

Thus, misogyny in its varied forms does not exist in a vacuum but is instead a part of a larger social, cultural, and economic system that sustains and perpetuates the ideology.

To properly analyze the cultural components, one must not look at small subsets of culture for answers; rather, one must look at the dominant culture that has an immeasurable influence on all aspects of society and subsets of the dominant culture. This leads one to question, What caused this development of misogynistic language in gangsta rap, and why is there such intense hatred for African American women in this genre of music? To understand this, one must understand the development of misogynistic values in correspondence with the history of the African in America.

In discussing misogyny in gangsta rap, we must not divorce ourselves from the history of misogynistic ideology, for this is an ideology that reaches far back into history. However, for the purpose of this article, there will be a limited discussion of the history of this phenomenon within the confines of the United States and its relation to African American women.

Misogynistic orientations have a long history in the United States—one intricately tied to racialized themes. The imagery projected in misogynistic rap has its roots in the development of the capitalist patriarchal system based on the principles of White supremacy, elitism, racism, and sexism. A system that is patriarchal not in the sense of family lineage being traced through the father, but patriarchal in the sense of domination and rule by men. This system was the blueprint used for the economic, political, and social structuring of the United States (hooks, 1981):

> Institutionalized sexism, that is, patriarchy—formed the base of the American social structure along with racial imperialism. Sexism was an integral part of the social political order white colonizers brought with them from their European homelands. (p. 15)

Within the confines of capitalism, the doctrine of misogyny has become a fine-tuned systematized ideology that has permeated all aspects of society and culture. This philosophy historically has been legitimated and perpetuated by the economic, political, and social structural institutions, which ultimately is reflected and supported in culture. These types of convictions have oppressed women of color, the poor, and women of all colors alike.

Use of misogynistic ideology in rap is a result of widespread racist and sexist dogmas (for example, the images of the Sapphire, Jezebel, etc., which will be discussed later) colonizing the minds of African Americans and Americans in general. Racialized misogyny has permeated and become a part of America's consciousness, and it has had a profound effect on the inner psyche of African Americans as the ideology feeds off of not only hatred of women but also hatred toward Blackness, which serves as a two-edged

sword. These beliefs have their roots in the racially and sexually oppressive capitalistic patriarchal system (hooks, 1994):

> The sexist, misogynist, patriarchal ways of thinking and behaving that are glorified in gangsta rap are a reflection of the prevailing values in our society, values created and sustained by white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. As the crudest and most brutal expression of sexism, misogynistic attitudes tend to be portrayed by the dominant culture as an expression of male deviance. In reality they are part of a sexist continuum, necessary for the maintenance of patriarchal social order. (p. 2)

Whereas misogyny is present in various forms in cultures around the globe, to understand how it is related to the demonizing of African American women in America, one must realize how it was "racially loaded" in America in order to obtain maximum effectiveness. By racially loading misogynistic ideology, the African American woman has been hated for being both Black and woman (White, 1985):

> The uniqueness of the African American female's situation is that she stands at the cross roads of two of the most well developed ideologies in America, that regarding women and that regarding the Negro. (p. 27)

This racialized hatred and sexism has its roots in some of the myths that were used, and continue to be used, to stereotype and subjugate African American women. Since the beginning of the institution of slavery, African American women have been major targets of racial and sexual stereotypical and detrimental propaganda.

Since the founding of the United States, myths and stereotypes were created to legitimize the racial and sexual oppression of African American women. Being both Black and female, African American women became the ultimate "other," which allowed White patriarchy to use this difference as justification for their oppressive behaviors. In her critique of early American literature in *Playing in the Dark*, Toni Morrison (1993) explains how the presence of Africans created for the White American mind a broad

range of contract possibilities to uphold Whiteness in direct opposition to Blackness:

> Black slavery enriched the country's creative possibilities. For in the construction of blackness and enslavement could be found not only the not free but, also, the not-me. The result was a playground for the imagination. What rose up out of the collective needs to ally internal fears and to rationalize external exploitation was an American Africanism—a fabricated brew of darkness, otherness, alarm, and desire that is uniquely American. (p. 38)

Thus, Black women served (and continue to serve) as the ultimate other in the American imagination, whereby White women were exalted for their difference in the backdrop of their own oppression as women. This positioning provided the space for White women to feel auspicious in the face of their own oppression, while at the same time they felt free to ignore the oppression of their darker sisters under the guise of racial supremacy.

It was out of this process that racialized myths about who Black women are were created and accepted by the American masses. Images such as the Mammy, the Sapphire, the tragic Mulatto, the Matriarch, and the Jezebel were created to predispose the general American culture to the acceptance of the racial and sexual oppression of African American women. For the purpose of this article, we will discuss the Sapphire and the Jezebel stereotypes. These images are regularly found (in their modernized version) in many misogynistic rap lyrics.

The image of the Sapphire is analogous to the Mammy image. That is, the Sapphire grew out of the perpetuation of the Mammy image. The Mammy figure has a long history in the American mind, as she is perhaps the most notable stereotype. She is generally depicted as an overweight, dark-skinned woman who appears to be asexual. Her major mission in life is to please the White family she works for, and she enjoys tending to White children more so than she does her own. Morton (1991) refers to the Sapphire as the "post war Mammy"; she was the Black female figure in the popular radio and later television series, "Amos and Andy." Morton, in her book *Disfigured Images*, states (1991),

> With "colored folks" this caricatured figure became a bossy "black bitch," although remaining a faithful servant to the white family. Thus, the Mammy became an explicitly matriarchal figure who "wore the pants" in her own home and made a fool of her man. Although likened to the Mammy figure, the sapphire is not asexual. (p. 7)

According to this stereotypical view, the Sapphire (in rap, referred to as "the bitch") is an African American woman who dominates her entire household including her man. The Sapphire can be described as a socially aggressive woman who tries through manipulation to control her man. She is filled with attitude, has a fiery tongue, and she squashes the aspirations of her man or men in general.

The Jezebel (referred to as the "ho" [whore] in rap) represents a loose, sexually aggressive woman. The Jezebel wants and accepts sexual activity in any form from men, and she often uses sex as a means to get what she wants from men. This image provides a rationale for the history of sexual assaults on African American women. Lerner (1972) states,

> To sustain it (sexual exploitation), in the face of the nominal freedom of black men, a complex system of supportive mechanisms and sustaining myths were created. . . . A myth was created that all black women were eager for sexual exploits, voluntarily "loose" in their morals and, therefore, deserved none of the consideration and respect granted to white women. Every black woman was, by definition, a slut according to this racist mythology; therefore, to assault her and exploit her sexually was not reprehensible and carried with it none of the normal communal sanctions against such behavior. (p. 163)

The Sapphire and the Jezebel images (along with other derogatory images of African American women) have blended together to create a mythology that has cast African American women as the enemy of African American men, White women, and the general American public. These images serve the purpose of not only justifying the actions of the power elite, but they also have the power of casting blame for economic, political, and social subordination on

the victim rather than the perpetrator. That is, the racist, sexist, and elitist capitalist system is not viewed as the core perpetrator of the living conditions of many African Americans, but instead African Americans themselves are blamed for not fitting into the proper structures of society (Collins, 1990):

> By meshing smoothly with systems of race, class, and gender oppression, they [negative images and stereotypes] provide effective ideological justifications for racial oppression, the politics of gender subordination, and the economic exploitation inherent in capitalist economies. (p. 78)

The Sapphire and the Jezebel images, along with other depictions, have seeped into the consciousness of America (in both the past and the present) and are accepted as truths by many. Although individuals may say, "I don't buy into stereotypical ideologies," some aspect of their consciousness taps into this mythology.

The acceptance of these myths and stereotypes is evident throughout dominant American culture and literature. For example, drawing on the stereotype of the matriarch, E. Franklin Frazier (1948) and Patrick Moynihan (1965), in their famous studies on the Black family, suggest that the deterioration of the Black family was due in part to the Black woman's dominance in the family and her failure to fulfill her traditional womanly duties, thus placing the blame for certain problems in the African American community on the shoulders of African American women. Another example of the acceptance and usage of stereotypical characterizations of African American women is witnessed in William Julius Wilson's book, *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987), which was touted as a seminal work in urban sociology among many scholars and the American press. In this examination of the African American urban poor in Chicago, the portrayals of poor inner-city African American women and their "ghetto specific" behaviors rely heavily on stereotypical depictions of African American women as welfare queens.

Evidence of the continued perpetuation of the stereotypical propaganda about African American women can be found when one dissects the political attack on the welfare system in the late 1990s. This attack largely rested on the myths of both the welfare mother

and the Jezebel—the face placed on that issue was that of a single unemployed African American woman who has had a number of children born out of wedlock. Various mediums depicted a preponderance of African American welfare recipients despite the fact that Whites accounted for the majority of individuals on welfare at the time of the attack on the system. The depictions mentioned here are only a few of the many possible examples of how stereotypical characterizations of African American women have tapped into America's predisposition to accept racist and sexist ideologies about who African American women are as a group. Thus, the negative and stereotypical images of African American women are still pervasive—and they continue to carry a great deal of social and political power.

RAPPIN' TO OPPRESS: MISOGYNY IN RAP MUSIC

Current illustrations of racist and sexist myths can be seen in various forms of literature, music, television programming, and general social interaction. Although the terminology and presentation have changed, the content of the original idea has remained the same. These myths came from outside the African American community and serve the purpose of empowering those who created them. As a result of the great shaping effect the dominant culture has on all components of society, many in the African American community have internalized these myths and stereotypes. Rodgers-Rose (1980) states,

> It is easy for Black people to internalize and use such false definitions of themselves. To the extent that an individual has internalized these definitions, his/her mode of interaction with the opposite sex will be affected. (p. 253)

Thus, we see these internalized myths and stereotypes in gangsta rap.

Myth versus reality has been a battle that African American women have had to contend with for ages. Steadily, the Jezebel and

the Sapphire images have been replaced by the terms *bitch* and *ho* in the use of language and imagery as a means of oppressing African American women in misogynistic rap. These terms have been around for ages, but their use has increasingly become a means of defining women.

Today, the Sapphire concept, represented as the bitch in misogynistic rap, takes the form of a money-hungry, scandalous, manipulating, and demanding woman. The bitch is a woman who thinks of no one but herself and is willing to do anything to obtain material possessions. Currently, the Jezebel concept is represented as the ho. In rap, the ho is very much like the bitch. These images are often synonymous. The ho is illustrated as a sex object that can be used and abused in any form to satisfy the sexual desires of a man. The ho's entire self-image is wrapped up in doing anything for a man, often for the attainment of material possessions. She is generally depicted as a person with no conscious, no self-esteem, and no values.

Rap artists who use misogynistic imagery in their music probably do so for a variety of reasons. First, misogynistic lyricists, like other Americans, have been influenced by the dominant culture's views about who African American women are as a group and, particularly, about who they are sexually. As stated earlier, many have internalized negative stereotypes and images of African American women. Using such lyrics allows the male artists to boost themselves while degrading their female counterparts. The subjugation of African American women allows these artists to exalt themselves in a world that constantly oppresses them. Thus, the degradation of African American women lyrically provides these artists a means for asserting their masculinity. As stated by Zora Neal Hurston (1995), "[Black women] are the mules of the world." African American women have been and continue to be the means by which others assert their sense of importance. As hooks (1981) states,

> In patriarchal society men are conditioned to channel frustrated aggression in the direction of those without power—women and children. (p. 15)

It is also evident from the sales records of such artists as Jay-Z, Snoop Doggy Dog, and Kurupt (who use such lyrics in their music) that this ideology is lucrative in the music industry. Some artists may use such lyrics to gain status, recognition, and high volume sales—when they may not personally believe in what they espouse.

CAN YOU FEEL THE PAIN? EXAMPLES OF MISOGYNISTIC RAP LYRICS

The following are excerpts from misogynistic rap songs. These lyrics provide examples of how misogynistic ideology manifests itself in rap. Whereas the lyrics are highly controversial and offensive, they display the type of material that has been and is currently being produced by major recording studios. It should be mentioned that often in rap music, as with the historical usage of these characterizations, the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, such that the Jezebel/ho and the Sapphire/bitch have shared characteristics. So what is important is not how well these characterizations fit a particular definition but rather how they reflect misogynistic ideology as a whole.

Although the terms *bitch* and *ho* and their definitions are being used to describe a certain type of woman (as some artists claim), their use and the images they create oppress women as a group. This is because the blurring of the lines between bitch and ho can also lead to the blurring of the lines of varying female personalities. There is a double standard for men and women, and what is acceptable for a man might label a woman in derogatory terms.

The first excerpts come from N.W.A.'s last and final release, *Niggaz 4 Life*. N.W.A. was one of the first celebrated groups to use misogyny in their lyrics, and they became synonymous with "hardcore" lyrics. Although we will only deal with one of N.W.A's creations in this article, the CD in its entirety is a dedication to murder, rebellion, and misogynistic ideology. The first example is an excerpt from a song entitled, "She Swallowed It" (N.W.A., 1991). The entirety of this song discusses women in terms of humiliating, degrading, and violent sexual acts:

This is a bitch who did the whole crew . . .
And she'll let you video tape her
And if you got a gang of niggaz
The bitch'll let you rape her

The woman depicted in this song is characterized as a Jezebel/ho, as the lyrics describe a nymphomaniac who can be used and abused sexually. Furthermore, it suggests the idea that women (or arguably, some women) are subhumans, who willingly perform degrading acts. Last, the lyrics suggest that rape is an activity in which women voluntarily participate.

The next excerpt from a more recently produced song entitled, "Head in Advance," from the CD *Juve the Great*, performed by Juvenile (2003), is another example of the celebration of misogyny, as the lyricist boasts about using violence against women. This example illustrates the use of violence against women as a means to confront what is deemed improper behavior. It should be noted that the lyrics of this song also have sexual overtones, another example of the fusion of sex and violence.

I like having relations
I punch a bitch in the head for playing with my patience
I make a local hoe turn hashin had me at the station
They hating saying that I violated my probation

The third example is from a song entitled, "Bitches From Eastwick," from the CD *Money, Power, & Respect*, performed by the group known as The Lox:

From the Jacuzzi to the bed
We fucked until be both got woozy . . .
I smelt breakfast in the kitchen but where waz the bitch
I walked in there it was cheese eggs and grits on the table . . .
With a note sayin sorry I had to rob you baby but
I need cash like you I ain't no ordinary slut . . .

The woman described in this song is depicted as both a Jezebel/ho and a Sapphire/bitch. She is a Jezebel/ho because her sexual values

are placed into question as she is depicted as having sex with a man she hardly knows; at the same time, she is also a Sapphire/bitch because she uses this encounter to steal money.

The last example, "Bust a Nut," from the CD *Uncle Luke*, is performed by the late Notorious B.I.G. and Luke Campbell (1996, also known as Uncle Luke)—who was at the forefront of the debate over the right to freedom of expression in musical content in the early 1990s (as his lewd and misogynistic lyrics came under attack by political activists and politicians):

> I got a bitch that suck my dick 'till I nut
> Spit it on my gut and slurp that shit up
> Ain't that a slut, (hell yeah) she even take it in the butt
> Fuck for about an hour, now she want a golden shower
> You don't know that we be pissing on hos, bitch . . .

In this example, the African American woman is not only something to be used sexually, but she is also the recipient of degrading acts, disrespect, and violent behavior. The woman in this song is characterized as a Jezebel/ho who is an object to be passed along to other men, to be used and abused, as the lyrics describe using women sexually until they are physically injured.

The aforementioned lyrics are but a few examples of the many in the music world. Although it is necessary to show the offensive nature of the misogyny expressed in rap, it is important to note that the hatred and disrespect directed toward women in rap music is only an outgrowth of the cultural acceptance of misogyny at-large, particularly when it is directed toward African American women. It is therefore imperative to differentiate between the source of misogynistic ideas and the manifestation of such ideology in gangsta rap. Although this genre of music has been embraced by a wide variety of consumers, it is important to emphasize that it can have negative effects on young people who in general tend to be the primary consumers of rap music.

THE POWER IN THE MUSIC: POSSIBLE EFFECTS

Although the possible effects misogynistic music can have are numerous and questionable, music is a powerful art form that has the potential to be influential, particularly when it is supported by a structural system and cultural ideologies. In this article, we will deal with three effects that misogynistic rap can have in conjunction with a system that makes such an ideology viable. These effects are the devaluation effect, the defining gender relation effect, and the desensitization effect.

The contemporary use of derogatory images of African American women in rap music serves to perpetuate historical myths and stereotypes about African American women. The usage of the negative imagery and characterizations of African American women in gangsta rap cuts African American women deeply, as the crafters of this attack are their male counterparts, who should be cognizant of the detriment of negative images because they have also been under a similar ideological attack. Misogyny in rap music serves to support the ideological and social systems that have historically placed African American women at the bottom of the social strata.

It has been said that "rap has become a forum for debating the nature of gender relations among African-American youth" (Lusane, 1993). However, what also needs to be added is that rap has the potential of becoming a means for defining gender relations among the youth. That is, one must consider the potential shaping force that misogyny in rap may have on how young people may view themselves and the relations between the sexes. For many young people who do not have what some may call "positive socializing agents," outside influences (such as "the streets," other peer forces, or the mass media) sometimes become the replacement agents of socialization. If what an impressionable youth sees and hears is negative, society should not be surprised to see the youth act accordingly. Young women can internalize these views, incorporate them into their consciousness, and act out in self-destructive ways. Young men may also internalize these characterizations and

incorporate sexist and misogynistic ways of being into their own way of life.

As Alix Dobkin (1987) stated,

> Even though large numbers of women are victims of violence by husbands and lovers, the culture, especially this music [misogynistic pop music], encourages men to beat up women, to control women, to dominate women. People are taught that dominance is a man's right. Some boys may not want to dominate, but feel they ought to, in order to measure up to the culture. And they've got the music to back them up.

Wade and Thomas-Gunnar (1993) report that more than half of a sample of young educated adult males "agreed that rap accurately reflects at least some of the reality of gender relations between black males and females" (p. 58). Thus, the influence of music, and particularly this genre of rap music, must be taken seriously as it continues to dominate the music scene. The embracing and use of such myths and stereotypes by African Americans and the American public, in general, create false definitions of who women are as a group, ultimately operating as a divisional force between the sexes (Rodgers-Rose, 1980):

> Such myths, then, have functioned to divide Black men and women, and they have served as rationalizations for the status quo. Myths keep the individual focused on criticism rather than on the interplay between the critical and the creative aspects of any male-female relationship. (p. 253)

Last, misogynistic music also serves as a means to desensitize individuals to sexual harassment, exploitation, abuse, and violence toward women. In addition, it serves as an ideological support mechanism that legitimizes the mistreatment and degradation of women. Although the terms *bitch* and *ho* speak to a specific type of woman (so some rappers claim), their use and the images they create oppress women as a group.

Every time an artist who uses misogynistic overtones is given a platform (e.g., T.V. award shows) to spout misogynistic ideas, this ideology is furthered legitimated—and the listener or viewer is further desensitized. Furthermore, each time music critics or the like refer to misogynistic rappers (e.g., Dr. Dre) as "an innovator in the music industry," further legitimization and desensitization is given to this ideology. Although the verdict is still out on the direct effects of lewd rap lyrics, some social scientists contend that this medium of music can have a negative effect on individual attitudes. Wester, Crown, Quatman, and Heesacker (1997) report that after respondents with little prior exposure to gangsta rap music were exposed to the music, they exhibited greater "adversarial sexual beliefs" than those who were not exposed to such lyrics.

Because of the aforementioned, it is easy to conclude that the rap artists and record producers must assume complete responsibility for the lyrics they produce. Although this is true, it only holds up to a point. As Reebee Garofalo (1993) has stated,

> While rap should not be let off the hook for its sexism, it should be noted that sexism has never been a stranger to any genre of popular music or, for that matter, any aspect of life in America. (p. 115)

The ultimate burden of responsibility must be placed on the social structures of society and the dominant culture, which created, supports, and makes this ideology viable. Only through challenging and changing these aspects of social life will misogynistic ideology be able to be dealt with in a realistic and truthful manner. If misogyny continues to be ignored, it will only continue to manifest itself in all arenas of social life. Rape, spousal abuse, and other violent acts against women are all manifestations of misogynistic ideology.

CONCLUSION

Misogyny has been and continues to be a constant force in American culture. The misogynistic ideology directed toward African American women has been particularly insidious, as a whole

system of myths and stereotypes was developed to justify the exploitation of African American women. These stereotypes have seeped into the consciousness of the general American public and the African American community itself.

The words have changed but the meanings stay the same, as negative images about African American women have materialized in their modernized versions in rap music. Whereas the myths of the Jezebel and Sapphire are commonly found in gangsta rap, these as well as others can be found in various aspects of American social life. Artists who incorporate misogyny in their music act as individual agents, but the lyrics they create are a reflection of the unconscious acceptance of negative categorizations of women and, in particular, African American women by the general American public.

It is imperative that we as a society move beyond the beat and seriously consider the effect that negative imagery produced in misogynistic rap can have on the African American community and society at large. Scholars and activists alike must continue to confront the issue, and expose and critically analyze the vehicles that are used to express this ideology. Continued scrutiny of these mediums as well as continued dialogue on the relevance and prevalence of negative and detrimental characterizations is important to dismantle the hold these myths, and the practices they engender, have on American society.

NOTE

1. Although the misogyny in gangsta rap is degrading to all women, the characterizations of women in this genre of music specifically target African American women, as the images of women portrayed in the songs, on the CD covers, and in the music videos are most often that of an African American woman.

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