Blaine Killen

**Unit 3 Synthesis**

The fly girl trend led to an even more powerful sense of independence for female rappers, and thus the sista with attitude identity was born. Artists such as Lil’ Kim and MC Lyte were seen as sista’s with attitude, and contrasted the “fly girl” persona by being the “bad bitches.” These artists used heavily sexual techniques to grab media attention, and led to the emergence of another category in the late 1990’s. The “queen mother” came along to control all of these “sista’s”, and comprised themselves of being African American icons. The most prominent queen was Queen Latifah, and she was seen as a mature, maternal artist early on in her career at age 21.

The author uses the progression through time from category to category to defend his argument. Black women went from slightly challenging norms with the “fly girl” to strongly challenging them with the “sistas” and the “queens”. This is a valid argument as she wrote the article in 2000, where she was able to analyze from a spectator’s view the change of the female MC through the decades.

A common theme from the transition through categories was that they arose based on a need in the industry. Whenever a group got too big or out of control, there needed to be artists that contrasted or controlled that group, and conformed to the new decade’s norms. The decades preceding the 2000’s were described by the major category of female MC’s that were prominent. However, the late 90’s and 2000’s had major female MC’s that fit into each of these four main categories.

Nicki Minaj would be considered the modern “fly girl”, and with her challenging sexual norms, at times a lesbian. This contrast in category helped her gain the public eye when it was focused on the male “thug” for so long. Beyonce would be considered a queen, as she is a role model for many of her fans. Beyonce created this image with a stellar voice, contrasting lyrics between being an angel and a bad girl. M.I.A. is seen as a “sista” because she challenges norms that exist in her culture. The most evident is a music video that she produced where the women were lightly clothed compared to Middle Eastern standards and were driving around in gaudy cars. Then there were artist that challenged the norms, to create newer ones.

In “Unladylike Divas”, Haugen argues that challenging dominant norms can create new ones. The author uses logos to defend this argument, and provides examples of the artists’ lyrics or actions to explain how they are “unladylike divas.” This scholarly article written in 2003 discusses how Mia X, Lil' Kim, and the Lady of Rage construct identities that challenge social norms to differentiate themselves from the categories of female rappers listed above. The article, however, is set before the breakout of Nicki Minaj, and therefore it still is only examining the beginning of the decline of mainstream MC’s.

“There are multiple axes of normativized behavioral expectations for women in any society. These include kinds of discourse that one can engage in and on the things that can be talked about, including aspects of one's own personal narrative. There are also limits on the kinds of social activities that one can engage in, including the participation in violence and in sexual situations. The failure to engage in any of these activities in the appropriate ways (or, to the same effect, success in engaging in these activities in inappropriate ways) could lead one to be deemed "unladylike" ” (Haugen).

Haugen uses the flashpoint of “unladylike ladies” to mock idea that norms exist to make a women “ladylike.” Through showing how these artists broke out onto the music scene, the author defends his main argument. He uses examples of the contrasting styles of Mia X and Lil’ Kim to strengthen his claim.