

Asia Murray
MUSI4843: Hip Hop Musicology
Final Paper
01 May 2024
Analysis and Cultural Impact of Emerging Female Rapper: *Sexyy Red*

Background

Janae Nierah Wherry, professionally known as “Sexyy Red,” is a black American female rapper from St. Louis, Missouri. Her 2023 release, “Pound Town,” catapulted her to fame, leading to collaborations with Drake and Nicki Minaj on tracks like “Rich Baby Daddy” and “Pound Town 2.” These songs, along with her solo releases, achieved high rankings on Billboard’s Hot 100, earning her the title of “one of the biggest breakout artists of summer 2023” by the charting agency (LastFM, 1). Hip hop’s narrative depth and emotional storytelling make emotional sentiment analysis a vital tool for understanding the genre’s artistic and cultural dimensions. In particular, considering lyrics described as “fun p***y rap” by some and “dangerous and poisonous” by others, this methodology offers valuable insights into the rapid success of this female rapper.

By analyzing the sentiment of Sexyy Red’s complete discography, this study drew conclusions that were then contextualized within the broader landscape of American hip hop culture. Surprisingly, the boldly “sexual and boisterous” rapper was found to have an almost equal distribution of songs categorized as “positive” or “negative,” arguably highlighting a dissonance between her portrayal of black women and her impact on young black youth, especially girls (LastFM, 1).

Methodology

The methodology involved scraping metadata from Sexyy Red's complete discography using the Genius API, as outlined in Appendix A. Each song's lyrics underwent sentiment analysis using R Studio code (refer to Appendix A for details). The sentiment analysis tool, developed by mathematician Daniel Soper, provided scores on a scale from -100 to 100. Scores from -100 to 0 were classified as "negative" with a serious tone, while scores from 0 to 100 were categorized as "positive" or generally enthusiastic.

Data Analysis

The collected sentiment scores were then grouped into positive and negative categories, and a statistical analysis was performed using an Equal Variance T-Test, as outlined in Appendix A. The resulting p-value, found to be less than 0.05 (8.42416E-13), indicates a statistically significant difference in sentiment between these two categories of music. Detailed findings are provided in Appendix A.

Discussion

For reference and further discussion, below are lyrics found in Sexyy Red's discography reigning as the "best" and "worst" sentiments:

Positive Sentiment (+)

Song Title	Sentiment Score	Lyrics and Themes Explored
"My Bitches"	+76.9	"5'5, super fly, and I stand real tall" "I love every one of my bitches" <i>Self-Acceptance, Self-Esteem</i>
"Sexyy Walk"	+57.6	"Hit that sexy walk, I love a bitch with confidence" "I don't give a fuck if you skinny or you thick" <i>Body Positivity</i>
"Nachos"	+60.1	"Quit callin' this mother***** phone after 9 o'clock, I'm sitting here with my son" <i>Enforcing Healthy Boundaries</i>

Negative Sentiment (-)

Song Title	Sentiment Score	Lyrics and Themes Explored
"Hellcats SRTs"	-90.3	"I don't do insurance for my whips, this ain't Geico" "You drunk? You Swerving', I'm Sexyy, he so nervous" <i>Reckless Endangerment, DUI</i>
"Shiesty"	-70	"He got a bitch? I need hush money (shut up), Took it, he still ain't get nothin' from me" <i>Extortion</i>
"Face Down"	-26	"Wrong hole, n****, that's my butt" "Beat this coochie up, like you mad at me"* <i>Sexual Assault Normalization</i>

Surely, by a quick glance one can assess a general grouping of these themes Sexyy Red explores in her "p***y rap" verses. It was clear to see that her songs had a somewhat correlation in the negative and positively sentiment categories, as the higher sentiment range of her music explores topics such as: *body positivity and enacting agency* in male female relationships. Conversely, we see highly provocative lyrics in her negative sentiment category, boasting subjects including: *normalizing DUIs, extortion, and even sexual aggression/ assault*. The contrast between positive and negative sentiment songs underscores the complexity of Sexyy Red's discography, showcasing a range of themes and messages that contribute to her artistic expression.

While these findings hold statistical significance, they also reveal underlying issues when viewed in a broader context, particularly concerning young black audiences exposed to such emotionally charged storytelling. Throughout history, America has grappled with hyper sexualization, seen in examples like Marilyn Monroe's "red lipstick" symbolizing sexual receptivity in Hollywood films. Frank Sinatra's critique of Elvis's music as "a rancid smelling

aphrodisiac" that fosters negative and destructive directions in young people further emphasizes the ongoing challenges regarding the portrayal of sexuality and its impact on cultural perceptions and behavior (American Songwriter, 1).

With well-known, catchy hooks and an audience of over 20 million monthly listeners worldwide, the impact of Sexyy Red's music extends both domestically and abroad. Her music has achieved top rankings in nations like The Bahamas, Anguilla, Turks and Caicos, and Gambia. This context prompts discussions about how American rap lyrics contribute to shaping cultural norms, perceptions of race, gender, and themes of consent and personal responsibility within hip hop music. These messages can have significant implications for the broader black community.

Impact

In her journal article "*What It Do, Shorty?: Women, Hip-Hop, and a Feminist Agenda*," Gwendolyn Pough discusses the cultural challenges stemming from hip hop trends since the 1980s. She notes that the concept of the "objectified black female" is not a recent phenomenon, particularly evident in the role of "video vixens" in black male rapper videos. These portrayals are often criticized as "borderline pornographic" due to their depiction of African American and Latina women. Pough highlighted an example involving a popular vixen, noting that she stated, "When the cameras go on, I detach myself and play the sexy vixen ... [as] my job is to sell fantasy and perfection" (Pough, 10). While this mindset is arguably part of the job description for those aiming for exceptional fame or acclaim, it raises questions about why such roles are predominantly associated with black women, seen as "highly exclusive" and representing the ideal of a "sexy, confident female" over time.

We begin to explore the importance of female agency regarding what we are willing to accept within the broader culture compared to the expectations of being treated differently based on our expressions or presentations to the world. Gwendolyn Pough refers to these agents as *hip-hop feminists*, defining them as "women and men who step up and speak out against gender exploitation in hip-hop" (Pough, 4). She emphasizes that while the need for alternative messaging is crucial based on these findings, these agents also "have a strong relationship to the 'self,' connecting their personal narratives with theoretical foundations and critique... [and] hold themselves and their peers accountable for effecting change in the present and future by encouraging individuals to recognize and confront their own complicity" (Pough 14).

Specifically, regarding rapper Sexyy Red, her positive sentiment songs are not necessarily the primary issue when critiquing her work. However, a statistically significant difference is still evident in the music categorized as negative. These negative portrayals of black women are particularly concerning as they actively shape the world's evolving perception of the stereotypical black woman. Pough illustrates this impact with examples from female students at Duke University, who recount dissonant experiences during social interactions. They describe feeling pressured to conform to expectations of being "expected to be sexually provocative... [and] want[ing] to be touched, to be grabbed, to be fondled... "as if reenacting [scenarios from] rap videos" (Pough 12). This influence extends beyond university settings and into broader societal contexts, including instances where Sexyy Red's music is played in settings frequented by young children, such as high school pep rallies and social media dance trends, highlighting the pervasive influence of her negative sentiment lyrics. Remarkably, Sexyy Red has openly

discussed her experience of sexual assault in an interview, emphasizing how an artist's personal experiences can directly influence their cultural impact within the realm of hip hop (Last FM,1).

The question of whether the issue stems from the widespread portrayal of the “objectified black woman” or the accountability of rappers creating socially-responsible music for real individuals, including men, women, and children, is a significant one. The crux of the problem lies in the extensive dependence on hip hop music within the black community to elevate thinking to a more elevated level. Pough aptly notes that for artists like Sexyy Red, while everyone has their own approach, hip hop itself is not to blame. In fact, it's undergoing a positive evolution. She states, “The real challenge lies in our reliance on base instincts rather than elevating our thoughts to a higher level... [as] Hip hop, ideally, serves as a platform for intellectual engagement (Pough, 1).

With hip hop's emergence in the 1970s from New York, it has since exerted a profound influence not only on black culture but also on its global portrayal. It stands as one of the most lucrative "exports" of the American economy, generating an annual revenue exceeding 15 billion dollars (Community Voice, 1). In today's interconnected and technologically advanced era, where our ideas can easily permeate mainstream culture, we hold the power to promote diverse forms of artistry. However, this also means that decisions made within hip hop, particularly in visual media, carry significant weight, shaping perceptions of black women due to the historical and cultural developments that have brought us to this point.

Conclusion

Indeed, "Hip-hop music videos are spreading representations of U.S. women of color around the globe," emphasizing the significance of the images we project in shaping cultural narratives (Pough, 7). In the case of Sexyy Red, her music has had a notable impact on the perceptions of young children and women of color. The data analysis conducted in this study reveals a statistically significant difference in the sentiments expressed in her negative and positive songs. This analysis sheds light on the real-world implications of the themes conveyed in Sexyy Red's negative sentiment songs, particularly in how they reflect the experiences of young black women. Sexyy Red's rapid rise to fame underscores the pervasive nature of her influence. However, as a society, there is a pressing need to engage with a "higher mind," encouraging deeper reflections on our actions within a broader context.

Works Cited

- Black, Word in. "Money and Hip-Hop: Why Artists Struggle Financially." *The Community Voice*, 13 Sept. 2023, www.communityvoiceks.com/2023/09/13/money-and-hip-hop-why-artists-struggle-financially/#:~:text=Yet%20rap's%20shining%20stars%20often,wealthiest%20rapper%20on%20the%20planet.
- Gwendolyn D. Pough. "What It Do, Shorty?: Women, Hip-Hop, and a Feminist Agenda." *Black Women, Gender + Families*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2007, pp. 78–99. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/blacwomegendfami.1.2.0078>. Accessed 1 May 2024.
- "KWORB Statistics." *SEXXY Red - Spotify Top Songs*, kworb.net/spotify/artist/3DbwFQlvLxRSi2uX8mf81A_songs.html#google_vignette. Accessed 22 Apr. 2024.

Appendix A

1. Below is the code used for scraping Genius API for Sexyy Red's lyrics:

```
# Load necessary packages
library(httr)
library(jsonlite)

# Define function to get lyrics for an artist's songs
get_artist_album_lyrics <- function(access_token, artist_name, album_name) {
  # Search for the artist
  artist_search_url <- paste0("https://api.genius.com/search?q=", URLencode(artist_name), "&access_token=", access_token)
  artist_search_response <- GET(artist_search_url)
  artist_search_data <- content(artist_search_response, as = "parsed")
  artist_id <- artist_search_data$response$hits[[1]]$result$primary_artist$id

  # Get songs by artist and album
  album_search_url <- paste0("https://api.genius.com/artists/", artist_id, "/albums?access_token=", access_token)
  album_search_response <- GET(album_search_url)
  album_search_data <- content(album_search_response, as = "parsed")
  album_id <- album_search_data$response$albums[which(album_search_data$response$albums$title == album_name), "id"]

  if (length(album_id) == 0) {
    cat("Error: Album not found for the specified artist.\n")
    return(NULL)
  }

  album_songs_url <- paste0("https://api.genius.com/albums/", album_id, "/songs?access_token=", access_token)
  album_songs_response <- GET(album_songs_url)
  album_songs_data <- content(album_songs_response, as = "parsed")

  # Extract song IDs
  song_ids <- sapply(album_songs_data$response$songs, function(song) song$id)

  # Fetch lyrics for each song
  all_lyrics <- character()
  for (song_id in song_ids) {
    song_lyrics_url <- paste0("https://api.genius.com/songs/", song_id, "/lyrics?access_token=", access_token)
    song_lyrics_response <- GET(song_lyrics_url)
    song_lyrics_data <- content(song_lyrics_response, as = "parsed")
    all_lyrics <- c(all_lyrics, song_lyrics_data$response$lyrics$plain)
  }

  # Combine lyrics into a single string
  all_lyrics_text <- paste(all_lyrics, collapse = " ")

  return(all_lyrics_text)
}

# Set your Genius API access token
access_token <- "tTQtLEZ0q80f-n_ik2B3oS-qmBjA-5TFJhRIhvo2JNYbh-HXn38m10cs5wLUCn80"

# Specify the artist name and album name
artist_name <- "Sexyy Red"
album_name <- "Hottest Hood Princess"

# Getting all lyrics for the specified artist and album
album_lyrics <- get_artist_album_lyrics(access_token, artist_name, album_name)

if (!is.null(album_lyrics)) {
  # Specify the file path to your desktop
  desktop_path <- file.path(Sys.getenv("USERPROFILE"), "Desktop")
  file_name <- paste0(tolower(gsub(" ", "_", artist_name)), "_", tolower(gsub(" ", "_", album_name)), "_lyrics.txt")
  file_path <- file.path(desktop_path, file_name)

  # Write lyrics to a text file
  writeLines(album_lyrics, file_path)
  cat("Lyrics saved to:", file_path, "\n")
} else {
  cat("Failed to retrieve lyrics for the specified artist and album.\n")
}
```

2. Below are sentiment scores for Sexy Red's lyrics:

Positive Sentiment			Negative Sentiment		
Ghetto Freestyle	27.4	401,243	Hood Bitch	-0.3	628,427
Sticky Icky (Roll Det)	62.1	1,139,558	Sexyy	-47.3	536,406
Man At Home	35.4	182,555	Nasty	-5.3	102,027
My Bitches	76.9	139,581	Strictly for the Stripped	-37.1	1,815,694
Facetime	26.8	356,337	SkeeYee	-1.9	86,108,175
I'm The Shit	45.5	3,853,579	Hellcats SRTs	-90.3	20,799,245
Sexyy Walk	57.6	2,365,678	Pound Town 2	-91.3	55,908,997
Nachos	60.1	1,185,047	Looking For the Hoes	-7	55,522,831
Mad at Me	62.9	12,468,838	Born By the River	-67.1	3,207,760
Sexyy Red For Preside	35.6	954,909	Female Gucci Mane	-76.3	3,880,699
Sexyy Please	46.7	646,827	Bow Bow Bow	-6.8	24,039,121
Hold on Yeah	32	657,576	Ghetto Princess	-56	1,634,857
Free My N****	54.1	1,773,774	Shake Yo Dreads	-57	8,777,627
I Don't Wanna Be Saved	17.3	5,774,906	Perfect Match	-6.7	868,615
Rich Baby Daddy	6.1	326,579,453	I Might	-40.3	2,374,245
Mmm Hmm	20	12,067,120	Hood Rats	-41.8	628,427
Face Down	25.8	9,099,424	Peaches and Eggplant	-28.2	20,983,095
Yonce Freestyle	35.2	9,074,236	Hellcats SRTs 2	-86.4	9,660,471
FTCU	9.7	4,189,751	Slut Me Out	-97	9,467,260
	737.2		Daddy	-44.9	4,128,261
			Big Dawg	-41.7	3,899,386
			Shiesty	-70.1	3,564,837
			BING BONG	-62	3,135,658
TOTAL STREAMS		392,910,392		-1062.8	321,672,121
AVERAGE		20,679,494.32			13,985,744.40
Average Sentiment		38.8		-46.2	

3. Below are T-Test results for Sexy Red's sentiment scores:

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances		
	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	38.8	-46.20869565
Variance	387.7544444	973.9699209
Observations	19	23
Pooled Variance	710.1729565	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	40	
t Stat	10.28957319	
P(T<=t) one-tail	4.21208E-13	
t Critical one-tail	1.683851013	
P(T<=t) two-tail	8.42416E-13	
t Critical two-tail	2.02107539	