

THE IMAGE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN AS PRESENTED BY AMERICAN  
MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE: INTERPRETATIONS BY URBAN AFRICAN  
AMERICAN ADOLESCENT FEMALES REGARDING THEIR LIFE CHANCES, LIFE  
CHOICES, AND SELF-ESTEEM

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE IMAGE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN AS PRESENTED BY AMERICAN MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE: INTERPRETATIONS BY URBAN AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENT FEMALES REGARDING THEIR LIFE CHANCES, LIFE CHOICES, AND SELF-ESTEEM**

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The aim of this study was to investigate the image of African American women in popular culture and gain an understanding of how those images are interpreted by urban African American adolescent girls ( $N=40$ ) between the ages of 13-19 years old. Black magazine covers and hip-hop/rap music videos that display images of African American women were viewed by the participants. Questions were asked of the girls that explored whether popular culture media images of African American women affect the interpretation of their self-esteem, choices they make, and future chances in life. Specifically, I sought to understand: 1) Do images of African American women shown in popular culture influence the interpretation of life chances and life choices of urban African American adolescent girls, and if so, how?; and 2) Whether portrayals of African American women in popular culture influence the interpretation of the self-esteem of urban African American adolescent girls. A mixed method research process was used to gather data that represents the participants' perspectives. Results from the questionnaires suggest that some participants perceive that popular culture images of African American women influence their life chances and life choices, while others also resist the image on some level. The quantitative findings from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale indicate that the participants either have high or normal self-esteem.

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*This work is dedicated to my daughters, Courtney and Zakiya Miniffee; from the very beginning of this academic journey you have been supportive, encouraging, and always willing to help where possible. I will always treasure our bond. You were my inspiration for this project.*

*And my mother, Helen M. Smith, who always told me to “stand tall.” With you as my role model, how could I not? Thank you for teaching me to be strong, tenacious, and to have the fortitude to meet life’s challenges.*

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## **Chapter 1: Statement of the Topic**

When slaves were brought to America African people were not regarded as human beings, but chattel (Copeland 2010; 1992). During this historic period demeaning images of African people were woven into the fabric of American culture. As a result, the mass media image of African American females is particularly negative (Hooks 1981; Lemons 1977). Society is indoctrinated with images that convey women with dark skin, wooly hair, large noses, large derrières, and large lips as unattractive and less valuable compared to Caucasian women. African American women with lighter skin, narrower features (noses and lips), and naturally straight or less curly hair, called “good hair” are considered to be more favorable. As an agent of socialization, the mass media disseminates popular culture primarily controlled and shaped by political and economic powers. In turn, the meaning of media representations is also shaped by the consumer. Meaning is given to objects, people, and events based on the framework of interpretation one uses (Hall 1997a). Historically, African women have been depicted as stereotypical characters, such as, Mammy (nurturer), Sapphire (bossy), and Jezebel (hypersexual). These images shaped the perception of African American women to be caretakers of White families (Mammy), hot-tempered, domineering toward children and men (Sapphire), and sexually immoral (Jezebel). The ideology that women of African descent can only be nurturers, overbearing, and hypersexual beings continues today; further perception that she is lazy and a welfare queen overwhelmingly negates the images of African American women in prestigious, academic, political, and other reputable positions.

Various researchers have studied teenage girls with a focus on such areas as teen self-esteem issues, identity formation, pregnancy, eating disorders, and most recently resisting stereotypes. In comparison to their White counterparts African American girls must negotiate

their identity amongst the stereotyped portrayals of Black women in addition to the gender stereotypes of femininity. Media images of White women that stress physical appearance have not been found to affect the positive self-esteem of African American teenage girls (Frisby 2004; Milkie 1999; Schooler et al. 2004); comparatively, it has been noted that the self-esteem of White teenage girls begins to plummet during adolescence (Kilbourne 2010). There is a dearth of information available focusing on the interpretation of unrealistic African American gender role images by urban adolescent females. Specifically, the interpretation of the distorted image of African American females has in shaping urban adolescent girls into women needs further exploration. The visibility of African American women in mass media has increased since the Post Civil Rights era; yet, the majority of her roles are those in which she is demonized or dehumanized (Gordon 2008 ; Kilbourne 1999). Her images in print, electronic, visual, and audio mediums are not grounded in diversity, but instead are stereotypical (Gordon 2008 ; Thornham 2007).

Mainstream US mass media has a one dimensional viewpoint of African American females in daily traditional newscast, magazines, advertisements, music videos, films, television programs, and newspapers. The images of successful African American women are rare in mainstream US mass media. Entman and Rojecki (2000) contend that the use of social distance between Blacks and Whites and the predominant imagery of Blacks in certain media representations like those viewed “on television oscillates between the supremely gifted, virtuous, and successful and the corrupt, criminal, and dangerous..., much more so than it does with Whites” enforces what they call “liminality” (p. 207). There are very few ordinary depictions of Blacks and “The media’s limited portrayals of Black success hold a distant second place to the more common portrayals of turmoil and inadequacy” (Entman and Rojecki 2000, p.

208). Largely unseen are the constant diverse portrayals of successful African American women including, Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, First Lady Michele Obama, Former Detroit Police Chief Ella Bully Cummings, Dr. Dorothy Height, Alicia Keys, superstar entertainer, Keyshia Cole, hip hop artist, or Candace Parker, Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) basketball player, all of which are visual images that reflect an expansive representation of African American women. Instead the media industry's predominant image of African American women is a homogeneous one – depicting African American women as lazy, hypersexual, and welfare queens.

The hip-hop/rap music video industry portrays African American women as objects and frequently refers to them in song lyrics as “bitches” and “hos” (Malveaux 2008; Pough 2004; Sharpley-Whiting 2007; Thompson 2009), which is meant to defeminize and demonize Black women (Collins 2004). Magazine covers illustrate demeaning pictures of scantily clothed models/celebrities in provocative poses and rarely are there television programs and movies that do not project stereotypical roles of African American women. Furthermore, in urban communities there are advertisements on billboards and beer trucks by Colt 45 that are designed in comic strip form, covering the entire truck, sending messages specifically targeted at African Americans. Some of the ads have African American women wearing t-shirts with the slogan “Works Every Time,” others objectify them in pictures like the one with a model sitting on an oversized Colt 45 beer can posing provocatively in a thong leotard and high heel shoes. As a result, African American females (girls, teens, and adult women) bombarded with poor images like these and more are being socialized to think that this is acceptable. Young girls from impoverished urban communities oftentimes lack hope of a future that encompasses the “American Dream.” The images they see bombarding them, especially those of video vixens, are

a symbol that they can get “paid” and make it out of their perplexing situations. Although there are some positive images of African American women in the media they are rare in comparison with the flow of negative images (Manatu 2003).

### Research Questions and Objectives

The aim of this study was to investigate the image of African American women in popular culture and gain an understanding of how those images are interpreted by adolescent African American girls. The girls were asked questions that explored whether pop culture media images of African American women affect the interpretation of their self-esteem, the choices they make, and their future chances in life. Exposure to stereotypical images of gender and sexuality to a group of American White male and female college students illuminated feelings regarding interpersonal violence as one of the findings (Kalof 1999). Kalof (1999) posits viewing traditional imagery in music videos impacted male and female observers differently. Females exposed to such imagery had higher levels of acceptance of interpersonal violence compared to males and women unexposed to the stereotypical representations. She notes that these results, which should be interpreted cautiously, are comparable to research findings bearing evidence that “African American teenage girls who were exposed to hip-hop/rap music videos had greater levels of acceptance of teen dating violence than others who were not exposed to such videos” (Kalof 1999, p. 383). Media representations help to shape the lives of individuals, schools, and society (Baldwin 2006), which in turn may affect girls’ life chances, life choices, and self-esteem.

Harris-Perry (2011) posits that “When they [Black women] confront race and gender stereotypes, black women are standing in a crooked room, and they have to figure out which way is up” (p. 29). Her concept is based on cognitive psychology research that took place after

World War II. She specifically noted, “In one study, subjects were placed in a crooked chair in a crooked room and then asked to align themselves vertically, some perceived themselves as straight only in relation to their surroundings” (Harris-Perry 2011, p. 29).

This study focused on the core themes and concepts from the data collected in effort to pinpoint significant patterns of how urban African American girls interpret media images in hip-hop/rap music videos and popular magazines. Are they in a crooked room when making sense of the images they view of African American females? This qualitative investigation into whether popular culture images influence the participants’ interpretations is based on the NCT (noticing, collecting, and thinking about things) model used with Atlas.ti software and grounded theory. I searched for similarities and dissimilarities in the data. Kalof, Dan, and Dietz (2008) emphasize the importance of including all data from the sample, even those that do not fit in the themes derived from the information gathered:

When doing grounded theory, we look not only for data that are similar but also for data that do not fit with a pattern or concept that is identified. By looking at divergent data — the outliers — we can better understand what distinguishes one concept from other concepts (p. 91).

A quantitative measure was also included in the data gathering. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was used to test for positive or negative feelings toward oneself (Rosenberg 1989).

The research addresses the following questions:

- Do images of African American women shown in popular culture influence the interpretation of life chances and life choices of urban African American adolescent girls, and if so, how?
- Do popular culture portrayals of African American women disseminated through mass media influence the interpretation of the self-esteem of urban African American adolescent girls?

## Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

### *African American Females in Historical Perspective*

Historically, African American people in the United States have been deemed the “other” by essentializing their racial differences through stereotyped imagery (Hall 1997b). Hall (1997b) asserts that Western ideas regarding ‘race’ and images were shaped by the following three historical moments (p. 239):

The first began with the sixteenth-century contact between European traders and the West African kingdoms, which provided a source of black slaves for three centuries. Its effects were to be found in slavery and in the post-slave societies of the New World.

The second was the European colonization of Africa and the ‘scramble’ between European powers for the control of colonial territory, markets and raw materials in the period of ‘high imperialism.’

The third was the post-World War II migrations from the ‘Third World’ into Europe and North America.

Casting Africans in a negative light began when European businessmen advertised racialized images of African people on their products. Demeaning pictures were distributed through popular mediums, such as, matchboxes, needle cases, toothpaste, pots, pencil boxes, cigarette packets, board games, paperweights, sheet music, biscuit tins, whiskey bottles, tea tins, chocolate bars, and soap boxes. The spread of these commodities created a stereotyped visual representation of people from African descent (Hall 1997b).

Once African women were enslaved in America they were exploited sexually, physically, and mentally (Gunther 1978; Hine 1997). As an example, Saartje Baartman (The Hottentot Venus) a young African woman left her home in South Africa because she was convinced to travel to England with two South African men on the premise that she would earn a great deal of money abroad. To her detriment she was kept in a cage and treated like a wild animal (Hall 1997b). Hall states (p. 265):

Saartje Baartman became the embodiment of ‘difference’. What’s more, her difference was pathologized’: represented as a pathological form of ‘otherness’. Symbolically, she did not fit the ethnocentric norm which was applied to European women and, falling outside a western classificatory system of what ‘women’ are like, she had to be constructed as ‘Other’.

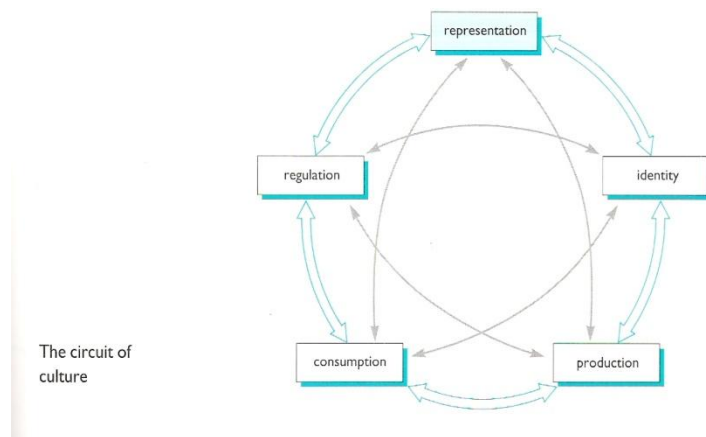
Hall (1997a) suggests that through the display of objects meaning is produced in “systems of representation.” Signs and symbols (language) are used “to stand for or represent to other people our concepts, ideas, and feelings” (Hall 1997a, p. 1). He contends that “language is one of the ‘media’ through which thoughts, ideas, and feelings are represented in a culture” and argues that “representation through language is therefore central to the processes by which meaning is produced” (Hall 1997a, p. 1). For instance, Jean Kilbourne points out that over the past several decades women have learned through advertising that the most important thing about being a woman is how she looks. In the academic film *Killing Us Softly 4: Advertising’s Image of Women*, she states that “Black women are often featured in jungle settings wearing leopard skins as if they were exotic animals” and that “women of color are considered beautiful if they approximate the white ideal” (Kilbourne 2010). The Circuit of Culture scheme (Figure 1), visually illustrates the complex connections that Hall (1997) demonstrates form social meaning from signs and symbols. These five concepts in the circuit of culture model are known as the “five moments.” Curtin (2007) identifies the definition for each moment in *Global Public Relations and the Circuit of Culture*:

*The moment of regulation* - comprises controls on cultural activity (p. 38). *The moment of production* - outlines the process by which creators of cultural products imbue them with meaning (p. 39). *The moment of representation* – is the form an object takes and the meanings encoded in that form (p. 40). *The moment of consumption* – when messages are decoded by audiences (p. 40). *The moment of identities* – are meanings that accrue to all social networks, from nations to organizations to publics (p. 41).



Examining the five interrelated concepts, identity, production, consumption, regulation, and representation, Hall (1997) presents a framework to interpret culture and make sense of historical and contemporary projected images of African American women.

Figure 1



**Figure 1 The Circuit of Culture. Reprinted from “Introduction,” by S. Hall, 1997, Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices, p.1. Copyright 1997 by The Open University.**

### The Representation of Women in Mass Media

#### **Media Images of Women**

Media images of women, regardless of race, are often stereotypical, negative and degrading. Mass media disseminates these images via electronic, print, visual and audio capabilities. More than 30 years ago researchers wrote a collection of essays in the book *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media* that focused on ‘sex-role stereotyping’ within media messages. The predominant argument is that women are depicted as a commodity-object and seen as a negative sign in a male dominated culture. Tuchman (1978) authored a chapter in *The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media*, where she describes the role of women in magazines as fictional and identified by some aspect of men:

Particularly in middle-class magazines, fiction depicts women “as creatures...defined by the men in their lives” (Franzwa, 1974a, p. 106; see also, 1974b, 1975). Studying a random sample of issues of *Ladies’*

*Home Journal*, *McCall's*, and *Good Housekeeping* between the years 1940 and 1970, Helen Franzwa found four roles for women: “single and looking for a husband, housewife-mother, spinster, and widowed or divorced—soon to remarry.” All the women were defined by the men in their lives, or by their absence (p.19).

Other studies point out the confusing and contradictory expectations about women in popular culture (Douglas 1994); ideologies of femininity (Kalof 1993; Kalof and Baralt 2007; Ward et al. 2005); and the normalization of distorted female images (Baldwin 2006).

Researchers suggest most television images of women portray them as usually attractive, thin in stature, youthful, and White. In addition, it is argued that women play traditional roles that are inferior to men (Gordon 2008 ; Perse 2001). Kilbourne’s (2010) fourth remake of the academic film, *Killing Us Softly*, emphasizes how the world of advertising creates unrealistic beauty expectations for women and also depicts them as “things” and “objects.” Moreover, Kilbourne believes promoting images of this nature creates a dangerous cultural environment that may perpetuate violence. An example of this took place in New York City during the 2000 [Puerto Rican Day Pride Parade](#) in Central Park when an out of control group of young men randomly attacked young women by sexually assaulting, dousing with water, and stripping them of their clothes (Fritsch 2000). This incident replicates actions that are sanctioned daily in music videos. [Tip Drill](#) by Nelly (rapper) encourages dehumanizing behavior like that exhibited during the parade, in the video women are doused with water and a credit card is swiped through a woman’s buttocks. Littlefield (2008) exerts this action treats women as “nameless objects whose sexuality is for sale” (p. 680). This behavior can become normalized. Researchers have found that mass media aimed at children as young as two years old is full of sex role stereotyping (Perse 2001).

## Media Images of African American Women

The African American female must contend with the mindset of those that view her as less than a White woman, partly, because of the normalization of negative images. Entman and Rojecki (2000) write about the messages of race relations sent in the media in *The Black Image in the White Mind*, noting:

The frequent pairing of social pathology (crime, cheating, violence, low self-discipline) and unpopular policy (welfare, affirmative action “preferences”) with Blacks helps sustain the largely unconscious linkages that guide information processing. The experimental evidence demonstrates these linkages help ratify the White fear and rejection that act as a drag on support for ameliorative race policy in the public sphere and reinforce the separations in the private. The ignorance bred of private separation then makes Whites more susceptible to simplifying, partial media messages, a process fairly described as a vicious cycle (p. 208).

When America acknowledges a successful Black woman she is deemed the exception. American culture sends misleading messages that say everyone can prosper in this land of opportunity, if they work hard or pull themselves up by their boot straps. However, the social structure in America does not provide equal opportunity for everyone. The Horatio Alger rags to riches concept is more myth than reality for many groups, especially African Americans. The urban adolescent female is a long way from connecting with the exceptions – the projected image of African American women she views in her community, on television, in movies, video games, and magazines are primarily negative.

Popular media representations of African American women portray them as sex objects – hypersexual, promiscuous, and immoral (Dunn 2008; Gordon 2008 ; Littlefield 2008; Malveaux 2008). These images are depicted in magazines, music videos, films, and television sitcoms, all of which are easily accessible to teenagers. Youth are bombarded daily with representations that send persuasive messages. Hip-hop videos have been marketed to teenagers with extremely distasteful representations of African American females; yet, adolescent girls want to emulate

what is being projected to them as a glamorous lifestyle (Taylor et al. 2003). A report for the Kaiser Family Foundation suggest that Black children and adolescents ranging in age from 8-18 watch all screen media (i.e., TV, videos /DVDs, and movies) more than two hours longer than white children (Roberts et al. 2005).

Schooler, Ward, Merriwether, and Caruthers (2004) noted that adolescent Black girls have a healthy view of themselves when it comes to body image, whether watching mainstream or Black-oriented programs. In contrast, White girls are not significantly influenced by Black-oriented media, but do indicate having less satisfaction with their body image from viewing mainstream media. Tune into *106 & Park* on BET at 6:00pm and one will see teenage girls in the audience shouting and cheering the videos and celebrity guests. Jason Carroll (2004) from CNN conducted a special report entitled, *Hip-hop videos degrade women?* Several video models were interviewed and there are three that I have included in this synopsis:

Video model 1) Celestine Henry is an English major at Temple University. She has been taking ballet since she was age 5. She has always had aspirations of being a dancer or actress. She teaches ballet to young children in a community center near her home where she has grown up. Accessing the opportunities available to African American women to enter the entertainment world, she decided that being a video model would open doors for her and all types of women. Her belief is that African American women are often portrayed in negative images, but in music videos are seen as beautiful. Her advice to those who seek this opportunity is that "African American women must stay true to themselves."

Video model 2) Karrine Steffans (2005), aka Super Head, is a former video model that feels that the down side to working as a video vixen is selling your sexuality. She strongly believes experiencing this line of work can corrupt the women in the videos. Her personal experience from allowing herself to be treated poorly, because she projected a poor image of herself, spilled over into her everyday life. She became promiscuous and started acting like the characters she portrayed. Her suggestion to girls who want to be taken seriously is to utilize your brain and not your body, get an education.

Video model 3) Melissa Ford launched a broadcasting career after starting as a music video model. She believes the public is savvy enough to separate images in videos from the real thing. Yet, she wouldn't feel comfortable doing them again these days. She says girls are being sexy for the camera and a majority of them are not portraying who they really are. Her goals were always about using her head not to continue to use her body.

These models created an image by selling their sexuality. Some have said that this is porn for beginners and that it fosters misogynistic attitudes (Carroll 2004). Some models justified their stance by saying that dancing in videos was an opportunity for a diversity of African American

women to work (Carroll 2004). Jason Carroll (2004) concludes that these young women are using the video music industry as a stepping stone to launch a career outside of the video industry, but are creating an image for the public that may be tough to erase.

Researchers argue that being African American and female from an urban environment inherently presents several issues (i.e., racism, sexism, and classism) that African American females are struggling against in this society (Dunn 2008; Littlefield 2008; Malveaux 2008). The reality of confronting racism, sexism and classism are also challenges faced during adolescent development. According to Littlefield (2008), “Beginning with the welfare queen during the Reagan administration to the strip-club porno chick represented in current videos, the media of the new generation broadcast a daily discourse on race, gender, and class that continues to reproduce dominant and distorted views of African American womanhood and sexuality” (p. 678).

### *Resisting the Stereotyped Image*

A number of social scientists have conducted research regarding identity and resistance (Balaji 2008; Collins 2004; Hobson and Bartlow 2008; Milkie 1999). Milkie (1999) posits that mainstream magazine images are part of White girls’ culture, “Black girls generally rejected the images as part of their reference group [members who have specific characteristics in common (e.g., gender or ethnicity)] even though they occasionally read popular girls’ magazines” (p. 196). She found that Black girls rarely read mainstream magazines such as Teen or Vogue individually or as a collective group. In comparison White girls read popular magazines, quite often during school hours, and discuss the content of the articles.

Milkie (1999) found that Black girls find themselves more confident, thought of themselves better-looking and were happier with the way they looked in comparison to white

girls, primarily due to the fact that they tended to be more critical of the mainstream's standard of beauty. However, the research findings indicated that while black women express less dissatisfaction with their bodies and fewer obsessions with fitting a skinny ideal than their white counterparts, this does not completely liberate them from feeling inadequate in their inability to attain the "fair-skinned, long-haired, 'white'" beauty standard perpetuated by mainstream media. Many expressed discontent with their hair and felt the need to modify it (ex: straighten it with chemicals) in order to feel more beautiful and accepted. The very magazines that are credited with giving these girls a sense of beauty and confidence due to their diversity are the same ones that sell advertising space for the chemical relaxers that can give their readers a "whiter" and "more acceptable" look.

According to Hobson and Bartlow (2008) women vocalists have used popular music as a vehicle for resistance – "women's musical roles are presently constructed in concert with or resistant to the market demands for sexualized representations that reinforce gendered and racialized stereotypes, even while individual artists negotiate and complicate nuanced performances in response" (p. 3). Misogyny is freely expressed in rap and hip-hop culture, yet also resisted by African American women in roles as writers, producers and performers (Collins 2004). Additionally, Collins (2004) asserts that Black female rappers reject the stereotypical representations through creativity, self-expression, and by promoting an independent, strong, and self-reliant image.

Balaji (2008) conducted an interview with well known video model Melissa Ford, who felt that she did not compromise her morals and values when performing in hip-hop music videos. She asserts that she was in command of her body language and carried herself in a way that distanced her from being cast as a video vixen, using techniques like not staring into the

gaze of the rapper. She claimed that “she demonstrated her agency by emphasizing the subtle sexuality that she says helps her to ‘sell fantasy’” (Balaji 2008, p. 11).

Some women in hip-hop strive to project images that are in opposition to the mainstream dominant messages about African American women. MC Lyte, Queen Latifah, India Arie, Lauryn Hill, Nonchalant, and Jill Scott are female artists who project an image against the grain of the saturated sexually charged depiction of female emcees. Until recently, I would have also included Erykah Badu, but in her video *Window Seat* she strategically stripped each article of clothing off her body until she was completely exposed in a public location. Although Erykah’s music is meant to be conscious raising, the plot, controversial location, and message of the video took a back seat to her display of nudity. Gordon (2008 ) argues that young women like Lauryn Hill, Nonchalant, and Jill Scott who reject sexual exploitation and project a positive sense of self risk marketing visibility and alienation. I do not doubt that Erykah has a strong sense of self, but she has substituted her initial image of a strong woman addressing political and love thyself messages to a reduction of her image to body parts (historically the case for African American women). A review of the comments left April 2, 2010 regarding the video broadcasted on YouTube ([ErykahBadu](#)) revealed that some in the audience loved the video overall and found it deep in meaning “wow that video is deep she got shot at the same spot as \*j.f.k. did anybody catch that?” ([bigwill901](#)) or didn’t quite get the message “I find the song interesting but can somebody explain it to me cuz i honestly don’t get it...maybe ima lil slo or ignorant but i really would like to know the meaning of the video” ([MyBreezy2009](#)). Others left racist comments “What are three things you can not give a nigger? A black eye, a fat lip and an education. ya know what I’m sayin ([liberalsgotohell](#)) or sexual comments that reduced her to her buttocks “That was a lovely video. Never knew Badu had such a nice ass” ([PsilocybedOne](#)) (Badu 2010).

The depiction of African American women in popular culture and mass media images is primarily negative. Black people have historically been treated as the “other,” cast in the light of stereotyped racial differences through signs and symbols projected in different mediums that produce meaning to the audience (Collins 2004; Curtin 2007; Hall 1997a; Hall 1997b). Exposure to stereotypical images causes a preconceived notion of Blacks (Entman and Rojecki 2000). As noted above, despite the lack of positive images of African American women, researchers have found that African American teenage girls feel better about their body image and have a stronger sense of self in comparison to White girls, and on certain levels resist the stereotyped image (Balaji 2008; Gordon 2008 ; Hobson and Bartlow 2008; Milkie 1999). The goal of this study was to gain an understanding of how urban adolescent African American girls interpret the image of African American women in mass media and popular culture.



### Chapter 3: Research Strategies

The first research question used an *inductive strategy*, which can produce theoretical generalizations from the data (Marshall 2003). I collected data from forty urban African American adolescent females related to the concepts of pop culture, life chances, and life choices from open-ended questions, and searched for patterns in the data. I also used a *deductive strategy* in the data collection, which applies logical rules to arrive at a set of premises from which certain conclusions must follow (Scott and Marshall 2009). The data for the deductive strategy was collected using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Additionally, demographic information regarding gender, race, age, grade, parental unit, and income were identified.

#### Operationalization of variables and questionnaires

For the purpose of this study the concepts pop culture, life chances, life choices, and self-esteem were operationalized and a series of questions were constructed for these variables. The questions were designed to gain insight into the participants' attitudes, emotions, thoughts, feelings, and current outlook after viewing the pop culture images selected from Black magazine covers and music videos for this project. The questions following each of the variables were asked in order to discern how African American adolescent girls interpret the pop culture images of African American women.

The definition and set of questions for each inductive concept is as follows:

**Pop Culture** – are images selected from depictions of African American women on magazine covers and rap videos that are heavily viewed by African Americans.

- 1) What do you think of this picture/video?
- 2) Does this person in this picture/video represent you?
- 3) Do you wish that you could be the person in the picture/video? Why or why not?

- 4) Do you think African American adolescent girls want to be like the images of the African American women on the magazine covers or in music videos?
- 5) Do you think that young African American girls are inspired by the African American women on magazine covers or in music videos for hair, clothes, and music choices?

**Life Chances** - A term used in Max Weber's analysis of class and status...The term subsequently passed into general usage, notably in studies of social mobility, where the closed nature of a society diminishes the opportunities (chances) for advancement of social classes, women, and ethnic or racialized minorities. It includes chances for educational attainment, health, material reward, and status mobility (Marshall 2003).

- 1) Do you want to do what any of the African American women on the magazine covers or videos are doing?
- 2) How would you describe the educational background of the African American women in these images?
- 3) What type of income do you think you can earn if you want to do what the African American women on the magazine covers or videos are doing?
- 4) Are you going to finish high school or go to college to have a career like any of the African American women on the magazine covers or in the music videos?
- 5) Do you believe that obtaining a career like one of the African American women in these images will offer you a better life?
- 6) The African American women in these images appear to be healthy, is this important to you?

- 7) Do you think that African American adolescent girls are strongly influenced by the images of African American women on magazine covers or in the music videos?

**Life Choices** – I find that life choices is related to *self-efficacy* – A theory of situation-specific self-confidence that proposes that self-efficacy is fundamental to initiating certain behavior necessary for competent performance. According to the theory, self-efficacy is enhanced by four factors: successful performances, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. Successful performance, which can be achieved by participatory modeling, is regarded as the most important factor (Kent 1998).

- 1) Do you ever try to be like any of the African American women on the magazine covers or in the music videos?
- 2) Are the clothes that you choose to wear like any of the African American women in the images?
- 3) How do you decide how to wear your hair?
- 4) Do you think that other African American adolescent girls try to copy your personal style?
- 5) Do you think that African American adolescent girls want to be like the images on the magazine covers or in the music videos?
- 6) Do you think that African American adolescent girls want to be like any of these images to impress their peers?
- 7) Do you feel the opinion of your peers influences which magazine covers or music video images you think are important?

**Self-Esteem** – The research question addressing self-esteem was explored using the deductive research strategy. The definition for the deductive concept draws on Rosenberg's work

(Rosenberg 1989). Self-esteem is defined as the individual's conscious beliefs, opinions, attitudes, values and feelings about himself (sic); the self is an attitude toward an object. Though not exclusive, concern is the individual's positive or negative orientation toward this object, favorable or unfavorable attitudes toward it, and the associated emotional reactions (Rosenberg and Simmons 1971). Self-esteem was determined by the score each participant received on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES). Each participant was administered the scale consisting of 10 statements twice, once at the beginning of the study and again after viewing popular culture images from magazine covers and hip-hop/rap music videos. SES questions can be viewed in the Quantitative Measure section on page 33 or in Appendix C.

**Demographics** - Information on the following standard demographic concepts was also collected:

*Gender:* In sociology, the social and cultural differences between men and women based on, but not necessarily coincident with, anatomical differences. Gender refers to socially and culturally determined attributes categorized as masculine and feminine (Kent 1998).

*Race:* Racial categorization is frequently (though not always) based on phenotypical differences; that is, differences of facial characteristics, skin color, and so forth (Scott and Marshall 2009).

*Age:* The duration of time a person has lived. Age is conventionally defined from the time of birth, which counts as zero, and is measured in completed years of life. For some purposes, age is measured from conception, and sometimes it may be convenient to use units shorter than a year (Last 2007).

*Grade:* Pertains to the United States level of educational attainment in high school, such as, grade 9, 10, 11, or 12.

*Parental Unit:* Both parents, single-parent, grandparent(s), family member(s), friend(s).

*Income (personal and/or parents):* Money earned within the household.

## Chapter 4: Methods

### Participants

Forty African American adolescent females participated in the study on a voluntary basis. The participants ranged from 13-19 years old and all were residents of Detroit, Michigan. Two research sites in Detroit were secured and they both agreed to post and distribute a flier [Appendix I] about the study to potential participants. One of the research sites is a public high school and the other a local community center. Several African American teenage girls attended the initial meetings at each recruitment site. There were 31 girls from the community center and 22 girls from the school, in all there were 53 girls that showed interest at the initial gathering.

The final participant count for the study was narrowed to 40 girls after those who did not want to make the commitment dropped out. The breakdown by age group consisted of four girls age 13, three girls age 14, five girls age 15, seven girls age 16, seven girls age 17, nine girls age 18, and five girls age 19. The girls were asked to meet four times, with arrangements made for a time period after school or on the weekend for approximately 1.5 to 2 hours per meeting. I met with the entire group from the respective locations in contrast to limiting the size of the group for each meeting. This took place except for the initial meeting with the 18 and 19 year old participants (see First Meeting section) and the last meeting, where after presenting my findings to the group; I held individual meetings with participants who wanted an opportunity to express their concerns privately.

Part of the research took place by email. Participants were asked to give their opinion regarding pop culture images of African American women portrayed in the selected hip-hop/rap music videos and magazine covers by filling out the questionnaire and emailing it back to me before the next meeting.

To fulfill the requirements of the Michigan State University Institutional Review Board each student 18 years and older were required to complete a consent form [Appendix A]. All participants under 18 years of age gave their assent [Appendix A] and were given a parental consent form [Appendix A] that was signed by a parent or guardian allowing her to be involved in the study. Additionally, each student's file was assigned an alias and confidential identification number in order to keep their identity and file anonymous and that information was locked in a secure file cabinet on campus.

**Study Introduction:** In the initial gathering I introduced the teenagers to the study and explained what their role as a participant entailed and that the sessions would be audio and video taped. This information was also detailed in the consent/assent form [Appendix A] each participant signed to give their permission to be involved in the study. I made the young ladies aware of the time commitment and emphasized that their participation was totally voluntary and they could discontinue their involvement at any time. If a participant decided to leave the study an exit form [Appendix A] was completed with the understanding that they would no longer be part of the study once signed. Each session lasted for approximately 1.5 -2 hours and the girls were offered something to drink (i.e., bottled water or juice) and snacks (i.e., granola bar, muffin, or cookies) during this time.

**First Meeting:** The first meeting for the 18 and 19 year old participants commenced on the same day as the study's introduction and took place at the designated meeting location, either high school or community center. This was because they could officially give their consent to be involved in the project immediately. Those younger than 18 years old were given the necessary paperwork (assent and consent forms), as stated in the study's introduction section, to complete and also have their parent or guardian complete. A date/time to meet for their first official

meeting was assigned for the following week. In the first meeting participants filled out a form requesting demographic information: gender, race, age, grade, parental unit and income [Appendix C]. Table 1 displays a list of the participant characteristic frequencies and there is a table located in Appendix D with participant descriptions.

**Table 1 Demographic Characteristics for the Total Sample (N=40)**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	40	100
<i>Race</i>		
African American	40	100
<i>Age</i>		
13	4	10
14	3	7.5
15	5	12.5
16	7	17.5
17	7	17.5
18	9	22.5
19	5	12.5
<i>Grade</i>		
9 - Freshman	7	17.5
10 - Sophomore	6	15
11 - Junior	12	30
12 - Senior	15	38
<i>Parental Unit</i>		
Both Parents	3	7.5
Mother	34	85
Grandmother	3	7.5
<i>Income Level</i>		
\$0 to \$25,000	14	35
\$26,000 to \$40,000	5	12.5
\$41,000 to \$60,000	1	2.5
\$61,000 to \$100,000	2	5.0
Unemployed	9	22.5
Did not answer	9	22.5

Additionally, the girls completed the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale [Appendix C] before viewing the pop culture images for the project, and it was also administered a second time during the third meeting to retest the participants once exposed to the pop culture images in the study. After the initial completion of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale each girl was given a bound



booklet with 10 magazine covers [Appendix G] to review. The booklet contained a designated space for responses and comments to each cover. I learned that the participants preferred to fill out the questionnaires electronically, instead of completing the booklets during the meeting. Actually, I thought submitting this information electronically was a good idea. We exchanged email addresses and in addition, I gave them my cell phone number in case they wanted to reach me quickly.

After each participant's first meeting I sent the questionnaires as email attachments. There were instructions in the email reiterating the instructions in the booklet asking the participants to answer all 19 of the questions for each magazine cover. My request was that they send one completed survey per magazine cover and fill in the space at the top of the survey with the title of the magazine. On average the girls took about four days to complete the magazine cover surveys; I sent regular email messages to ask how they were coming along and if I could answer any questions. I believe being in touch on a daily basis was a good reminder and encouragement to finish the surveys.

### Magazine Cover Selection

The magazine covers chosen for this research were selected from three cross referenced top selling lists for magazines read by African Americans. The marketing report from the Association of Magazine Media ([MPA](#)) lists the most popular African American magazines, Magazine Line ([ML](#)) has a list of top sellers for different ethnic groups, and the media directory All You Can Read ([AYCR](#)) offers a top ten list for Black magazines. I would like to have used one resource to narrow down the top 10 magazines to use for the study but did not have access to the *Audit Bureau of Circulations*, an entity that documents the circulation statistics for magazines.

To inquire whether pop culture images of African American females influence the interpretation of urban adolescent girls' life chances, life choices and self-esteem one magazine cover was randomly chosen from each of the following popular African American publications, *Black Enterprise*, *Black Men*, *Ebony*, *Essence*, *Heart and Soul*, *Hype Hair*, *Jet*, *Juicy*, *Sister 2 Sister*, and *Vibe*. These magazines are readily accessible in convenience stores, gas stations, grocery stores, bookstores, and targeted to the African American community.

The monthly cover for each magazine was chosen by using a simple random sample calculation from the total number of covers in the prior 12 month period that had a Black woman on the cover [Appendix I]. For example, *Black Enterprise* magazine distributes an issue each month of the year, which means that there were 12 magazine covers to possibly choose from. Out of the 12 covers only 7 had Black women on them. After narrowing down the population that contained Black women on the covers, from this point each magazine cover with a Black woman had the same odds of being chosen for the sample, and were randomly selected using a TI-83 graphing calculator.

**Second Meeting (one week after first session):** We were able to meet in the same rooms in both research sites (i.e., school classroom and community center conference room), which lessened confusion for knowing where to meet and added a degree of consistency. The second session was a focus group meeting with all participants of all ages. Having a group session gave the participants a chance to interact and voice their opinion amongst their peers. The leading question for the girls to discuss was – When you think about the image of Black women what is your first thought? At times the participants demonstrated group think mentality, where one or two of the participants would lead the group's answers. I would interject by asking some of the reserved participants to expand on their comments or the last comment made by

someone in the group, making certain not to ask leading questions that could influence their response. Equally important, I would ask everyone in the group to give their opinion on some of the different remarks brought forth. Finally, I asked the participants to write their thoughts about the focus group's discussion, not to critique the discussion itself, but summarize or expand on the points that resonated with them.

After the meeting I emailed the rap video links and questionnaire to all the participants. The instructions were the same as those for the magazine covers, participants were to view each video and fill out the survey. Once the questionnaire was completed for each video, making sure that the title was included at the top of the first page, they were returned to me as email attachments before the third meeting took place.

#### *Hip-Hop/Rap Music Video Selection*

The videos [Appendix H] were chosen based upon their placement on the Black Entertainment Television (BET) network's Top 100 music video list for the year 2011. From this list developed by BET the first ten with Black women in the videos were shared with the participants via email. This directly connected them to all of the videos listed below and they were able to fill out the questionnaire [Appendix B] for each video after saving it to their computer:

1. Beyoncé- "Run The World (Girls)"
2. Lil Wayne- "How To Love"
3. Miguel- "Sure Thing"
4. Kelly Rowland (Feat. Lil Wayne)- "Motivation"
5. YC (Feat. Future & Nelly)- "Racks"
6. Dj Khaled (Feat. Drake, Rick Ross & Lil Wayne)- "I'm On One"

7. Trey Songz- “Love Faces”
8. Wiz Khalifa- “Roll Up”
9. Chris Brown “She Ain’t You”
10. Lil Wayne ft. Cory Gunz – “6 Foot 7 Foot”

**Third Meeting (two weeks after the initial meeting):** At this point the participants had viewed the magazine covers and hip-hop/rap music video images of African American women away from the research site and primarily at home. After doing so, their answers to the questionnaires pertaining to both mediums were submitted to me via email. During this meeting the self-esteem scale was distributed again, the instrument was initially used at the first meeting once assent and consent forms were on file. Before the participants selected their answers for each of the statements in the scale, I showed a PowerPoint presentation of the 10 magazine covers and played the 10 videos. This took place during the first hour of the two hour meeting.

I was able to observe and take notes while the participants viewed the slides and videos. Immediately after viewing the pop culture images the girls filled out the self-esteem survey for the second time. It did not take long for me to score each survey; this was accomplished while the girls commented on the videos. Without delay, I compared the participants before and after scores of the SES survey, this enabled me to probe deeper with the girls who had changes in their scores. No one’s overall categorical placement changed from high, normal, or low self-esteem, but some participants had a shift up or down in their score after selecting a different statement on the second distribution of the SES survey, see survey item data changes beginning on page 40. The participants who had no change in their answers were given the option to leave, while I spoke with the girls whose selection of statement choices shifted out of ear shot of the other participants during the second hour of the meeting.

**Fourth Meeting (once project was completed):** This meeting was scheduled to debrief the girls once the study was concluded. The purpose and procedures of the study were recapped. I shared my results from the findings and inquired if the participants were in agreement or had any questions or concerns. Presenting my findings to the group at each research site during the first hour of the fourth session, allotted plenty of time for individual meetings with the participants who wanted to converse one-on-one that day.

### Instruments

Quantitative and qualitative research methodologies were used to support this exploratory study. Mixed methods can be conducted sequentially or simultaneously and “can also give us greater confidence in our findings (it increases the validity...)” (Kalof et al. 2008). This mixed method approach used qualitative findings to learn whether pop culture images of African American women influence the interpretation of the life chances and life choices of the participants. Quantitatively, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES) was used to measure the self-esteem variable, while personal information was collected from a demographic questionnaire. Atlas.ti software was the tool that I used to store and analyze the qualitative data (Frieze 2012). Further details explaining each instrument and data analysis are discussed in the quantitative and qualitative sections below, respectively.

### **Quantitative Measure**

Rosenberg’s Self -Esteem Scale (1965) was created to measure adolescents’ global feelings of self-worth or self-acceptance. The SES instrument is a 10 item Likert scale. The scale contains five statements that signify high self-esteem and five statements that signify low self-esteem. The Rosenberg Scale statements consist of: 1) I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plan with others; 2) I feel that I have a number of good qualities..; 3) All in all, I am

inclined to feel that I am a failure; 4) I am able to do things as well as most other people; 5) I feel I do not have much to be proud of; 6) I take a positive attitude toward myself; 7) On the whole, I am satisfied with myself; 8) I wish I could have more respect for myself; 9) I certainly feel useless at times; and 10) At times I think I am no good at all. The responses to select from are strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The statements marked with asterisks (3, 5, 8, 9, & 10) target the low self-esteem responses and are scored with values reversed of the high self-esteem (1, 2, 4, 6, & 7) statements. The values for high self-esteem responses consist of 0-3, strongly agree=3, agree=2, disagree=1, and strongly disagree=0.

According to Rosenberg (1965), self-esteem is how one regards themselves whether positively or negatively. Within this there are two distinct connotations: thinking of oneself as "very good," while the other is thinking of oneself as "good enough." One who falls under the category of the "very good" mentality has high self-esteem in the sense that they may think of themselves as better than most, yet still view themselves as deficient in relation to the standards that they expect themselves to personally achieve. On the other side of this is someone who considers themselves average (implying low self-esteem), but accepts herself as is and finds contentment in such (implying high-self esteem). In sum, she thinks of herself as "good enough." Therefore those with "high self-esteem" in general find worth within themselves, and have a certain level of respect for themselves. This does not necessarily mean that they always believe that they are superior to others, but in fact realize that they lack skills in specific aspects and are constantly seeking to improve. While low self-esteem can be classified as "self-rejection, self-dissatisfaction, and self-contempt." (p. 31).

### Data Analysis

Once each participant completed the SES it was hand scored. I placed the value for each statement, according to whether the participant strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed to the left of the statement. For items 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7, strongly agree (3), agree (2), disagree (1), and strongly disagree (0). For items 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10, strongly agree (0), agree (1), disagree (2), strongly disagree (3). The values were summed and the total score determined whether the participant fell in the range for high self-esteem (26-30), normal self-esteem (15-25), or low self-esteem (0-14).

Additionally, the demographic characteristics gathered from the 40 participants were aggregated in a table to represent an overall picture of the girls volunteering in the project (see Table 1 or Appendix D). Gender, race, age, grade, parental unit, and income level were the variables used to identify this population.

### **Qualitative Measure**

Using a qualitative research design – questionnaires, observation, audio and video recordings, and a focus group meeting provided the opportunity for participants to communicate their feelings about the topic being explored. Additionally, conducting qualitative research provided an avenue for understanding the particular context within which the participants are socialized, and the influence that this context may have on their behavior. Moreover, qualitative research methods are not only interested in the physical events and behavior that are taking place, but also in how the participants make sense of this and how their understandings influence their behavior.

Data collection began on the first day I met with the girls interested in volunteering for the project. The 18 and 19 year old girls were able to give their consent to be participants in the

project immediately and other participants returned the following week with consent and assent forms signed granting them permission to take part in the study. Initially, the magazine cover images and questionnaires were administered during the first meeting in hard copy, but it was determined that electronic copies of the research packet would work-out better for both the researcher and participants. The questionnaires for the magazine covers and rap video links were emailed to the participants after the first and second meetings, respectively. I received all of the completed questionnaires electronically before the next scheduled meeting, 72 percent of the participants returned them within four days.

There was an enormous amount of raw data collected from the questionnaires in addition to the 40 pages for demographic characteristics and the 40 x 2 (collected twice) worth of SES information. Each participant had a total of 20 questionnaires that they submitted electronically, 10 for the magazine covers and 10 for the hip-hop/rap music videos. The magazine covers, hip-hop/rap music video questionnaires, my observation notes, participant summary and audio and video transcripts from the focus group yielded a great deal of data to sift through. Using several ways to collect data is known as triangulation (Kalof et al. 2008), this was done to help counter threats to validity and to not limit my perspective on the social and symbolic reality of the data.

### Data Analysis

Constantly reviewing the data as it is collected is imperative when conducting qualitative research (Frieze 2012; Kalof et al. 2008). In order to read the questionnaire responses in the Atlas.ti program all Word documents had to be converted to Rich Text Format (RTF). Once in the correct format I identified themes and assigned codes to the data. I used two distinct methods for searching and coding the data. I wanted to discover which concepts and theories would emerge from the data. 1) This was done by using a deductive model of coding qualitative data



called NCT, which stands for noticing things, collecting things, and thinking about things (Frieze 2012). I used this model because I developed questions in my instrument that revolved around preconceived concepts – popular culture images, life chances, and life choices. I coded [Appendix E] the questions in the magazine cover and hip-hop/rap music video questionnaires in order to look for patterns in the participants' responses. 2) Grounded theory is the inductive model I used as I recoded the data and looked for emerging concepts. I also used the grounded theory method when searching for patterns in the participants' summaries from the focus group discussion that took place during the second meeting.

Atlas.ti qualitative software was used to support the process of data collection and data analysis. Using this scientific software program allows the creation of a basic structure containing all of the key elements of this research project. Atlas.ti is an interactive program that stores transcripts, papers, publications, images, video segments, and audio files (Frieze 2012). Organizing, coding, and interpreting the data to find themes, concepts, ideas, and interactions were displayed in a structure that highlighted patterns and formatted hyper links between the different texts. The electronic manipulation and retrieval of information helped in managing large quantities of data and its intense examination.

## **Chapter 5: Findings and Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the image of African American women in popular culture and gain an understanding of how those images are interpreted by adolescent African American girls. Specifically, the girls were asked questions that explored whether pop culture media images of African American women affect the interpretation of their self-esteem, the choices they make, and their future chances in life. Both inductive and deductive strategies were used in the collection of data. For the qualitative measure participants filled out questionnaires via email and took part in a focus group and at that time I observed, audio and video taped the meeting. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was the quantitative measure used to investigate the participants' general feelings about themselves. Participants also completed a background information sheet that requested information about their gender, race, age, grade, parental unit, and income level [Appendix C].

### **Quantitative Measure**

#### **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale**

The self-esteem scale was administered to the participants twice to answer the following question: Do popular culture portrayals of African American women disseminated through mass media influence the interpretation of the self-esteem of urban African American adolescent girls? The first time took place during the initial meeting, each girl filled out the scale in its entirety. At this time none of the magazine covers or hip-hop/rap music video images pertaining to the project had been shown. Once the meeting was over I scored the surveys according to the value representing each statement. The total score indicated whether the participants' had high self-esteem, normal (medium) self-esteem, or low self-esteem. The scale ranged from 0-30 points, with 30 points being the highest score obtainable. The scoring breakdown for each self-esteem

indicator is 26-30 = high self-esteem, 15-25 = normal self-esteem, and 0-14 = low self-esteem.

As a result, the initial self-esteem measure of the 40 participants generated 21 participants = high self-esteem, 19 participants = normal self-esteem, and 0 participants = low self-esteem

calculations. The distribution of self-esteem scores according to age is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 Age and Self-Esteem Before and After Viewing the Magazine Covers and Hip-Hop/Rap Video Images**

Self-Esteem	Participants Age						
	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years	18 years	19 years
High	25%	67%	60%	71%	43%	44%	60%
Normal	75	33	40	29	57	56	40
Low	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total percent	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(Number)	(4)	(3)	(5)	(7)	(7)	(9)	(5)
No categorical changes took place when the participants were administered the self-esteem scale a second time.							

Two weeks later, during the third meeting the participants filled out the self-esteem scale a second time. This time around the girls had already viewed the 10 magazine covers and 10 hip-hop/rap music video images of African American women designated for the research. The data gathered from all 40 participants indicated that there was no change in the categorical placement of high, normal, or low self-esteem when compared to the calculation of their first self-esteem scale submissions (see Table 2). However, there was a shift in 14 of the participants' self-esteem scores reported by the adolescent females in this dependent variable. Therefore, the number of participants whose score shifted within their respective category amounted to high self-esteem = 2 participants' scores moving down and 3 moving up, normal self-esteem = 6 participants' scores moving down and 3 moving up, and consistent with the findings in the first self-esteem scale submission there were no participants with low self-esteem scores.

To further explore the results of the self-esteem variable, participants whose score deviated up or down from their original submission were noted and further inquiry was made to

establish insight on the girls' rationale for changing their original answer. An example of an item from one of the five questions that measures high self-esteem was "I feel that I have a number of good qualities." The first self-esteem submission indicated that Cynthia (participant #4) chose "strongly agree" and the next time when filling out the self-esteem scale she selected "agree," this was a downward shift numerically by 1 when calculating the score. Additionally, one of the items from the five questions that measured low self-esteem was "I certainly feel useless at times." The shift in Evelyn's (participant #16) selection was upward by one point, she chose "agree" the first time and "disagree" the second time. During the fourth meeting the 14 girls who had a change in their scores were asked to share their thoughts for selecting a different answer when the survey was administered the second time. The before and after scores for the Rosenberg SES can be viewed in Appendix D.

### **Survey Item Changes**

Participants' reasons for changes in the survey varied as did the shift in responses to several survey items. The scores from the 14 adolescent girls either decreased or increased depending on their deviated response. The participant names in the study are aliases and the comments were established from further investigation regarding the shift in item selection on the Self-Esteem Scale (SES).

Scores are calculated using the following values:

#### **SES items 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7**

Strongly Agree = 3

Agree = 2

Disagree = 1

Strongly Disagree = 0

#### **SES items 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10**

Strongly Agree = 0

Agree = 1

Disagree = 2

Strongly Disagree = 3

**1) I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.**

Participant #29 – **Monique:** Agree = 2 → Strongly Agree = 3: Shift ↑

**Comment:** I am smart and talented, maybe I can be an actress like Chandra Wilson on Heart & Soul.

**2) I feel that I have a number of good qualities...**

Participant #4 – **Cynthia:** Strongly Agree = 3 → Agree = 2: Shift ↓

**Comment:** I'm pretty okay with me, except I would like for my hair to be longer.

**3) All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.**

Participant #29 – **Monique:** Strongly Disagree = 3 → Disagree = 2: Shift ↓

**Comment:** School is really hard for me now. I wonder if I will be successful like the women on the magazines and in the videos.

Participant #32 – **Shaun:** Strongly Disagree = 3 → Disagree = 2: Shift ↓

**Comment:** When I look at these images I would love to be like them, I don't want to follow in my mother's footsteps.

**4) I am able to do things as well as most other people.**

Participant #2 – **Donna:** Strongly Agree = 3 → Agree = 2: Shift ↓

**Comment:** Really thinking about it, there are a lot of things I wish I could do, like play sports or an instrument.

Participant #4 – **Cynthia:** Strongly Agree = 3 → Agree = 2: Shift ↓

**Comment:** Comparing myself to other girls at school, I want to be able to buy the latest clothes, purses, and shoes.

Participant #8 – **Quillian:** Strongly Agree = 3 → Agree = 2: Shift ↓

**Comment:** I would love to dance and be in videos; I don't think I'm pretty

Enough.

Participant #35 – **Tasha:** Strongly Agree = 3 → Agree = 2: Shift ↓

**Comment:** Wish I had a Baller like the girls in the videos.

**5) I feel I do not have much to be proud of.**

Participant #12 – **Vivian:** Disagree = 2 → Strongly Disagree = 3: Shift ↑

**Comment:** Actually, I'm happy with myself and accomplishments.

Participant #29 – **Monique:** Strongly Disagree = 3 → Disagree = 2: Shift ↓

**Comment:** I don't think I've learned much in this school.

**6) I take a positive attitude toward myself.**

Participant #11 – **Patricia:** Agree = 2 → Strongly Agree = 3: Shift ↑

**Comment:** I want to be an anesthesiologist when I graduate; I will be the first person in my family to go to college. This is something I am proud of.

Participant #32 – **Shaun:** Strongly Agree = 3 → Agree = 2: Shift ↓

**Comment:** Sometimes I don't like things about myself. Things like where I live. I wish I could be Oprah or Michelle Obama.

**7) On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.**

Participant #5 – **Saundra:** Strongly Agree = 3 → Agree = 2: Shift ↓

**Comment:** I want to get paid like the video vixens.

Participant #6 – **Paulette:** Agree = 2 → Strongly Agree = 3: Shift ↑

**Comment:** I think I can do anything if I put my mind to it.

Participant #25 – **Angel:** Strongly Agree = 3 → Agree = 2: Shift ↓

**Comment:** I want my hair to be longer. You know, I'd like to look like Beyoncé.

Participant #39 – **Asia:** Disagree = 1 → Agree = 2: Shift ↑

**Comment:** Before, I think I was a little hard on myself, there are a lot of things I like about myself and some things I want to change.

**8) I wish I could have more respect for myself.**

Participant #29 – **Monique:** Disagree = 3 → Agree = 2: Shift ↓

**Comment:** I don't know; I really wasn't feeling very happy that day.

Participant #32 – **Shaun:** Disagree = 3 → Agree = 2: Shift ↓

**Comment:** I want to be like the girls in the videos and I realize this is not a good image.

Participant #33 – **Tanya:** Strongly Agree = 0 → Strongly Disagree = 3: Shift ↑

**Comment:** I don't think I read the question right, I meant strongly disagree.

**9) I certainly feel useless at times.**

Participant #16 – **Evelyn:** Agree = 1 → Disagree = 2: Shift ↑

**Comment:** I get upset sometimes because I wish my life was different. I dream about becoming a video vixen, just not sure how to make it happen, yet.

Participant #29 – **Monique:** Disagree = 3 → Agree = 2: Shift ↓

**Comment:** I do agree with this statement, because I'm not sure what I will do with my life when I graduate. I want to be successful like the women in the pictures.

**10) At times I think I am no good at all.**

Participant #33 – **Tanya:** Disagree = 2 → Strongly Disagree = 3: Shift ↑

**Comment:** I am not really popular at school and they boys call us (black girls) "rats" or "hood rats."

## Discussion

### **Self-Esteem Level**

The participants' responses to the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES) indicated that no one scored in the low self-esteem range. The SES was administered twice, once before and again after viewing the magazine cover and video images. After viewing the pop culture images of African American women, fourteen of the girls' choices of positive or negative statements regarding themselves differed in some instances from their original selections in the survey. In part, this was due to wanting to be like the image in the examples, having a bad day, perception of what others think of them, believing in themselves, educational struggles, and misinterpretation of the statement. Even though some of the participants had a change in their score, their self-esteem level on the SES did not change when they took the survey a second time. Their self-esteem level remained in the high or normal range. These results are consistent with the research that demonstrates that African American adolescents have a positive attitude toward themselves during adolescence (Stevens 1997).

Oftentimes, it is assumed that because one is a minority or from a low income background that they have low self-esteem (Porter and Washington 1979; Rosenberg and Simmons 1971), this population of African American adolescent females' scores did not indicate low self-esteem for any of the participants as a component of their self-worth. The participants' scores were either in the range of normal or high self-esteem. The findings suggest that the images shown in the study did not change the participants' perceived level of self-esteem. Initial studies of global self-worth and self-esteem of adolescent females were of White girls, resulting in data indicating that low self-esteem was prevalent for this age group. Moreover, Brown et al. (1998) studied Black and White girls between the ages of 9 and 14 and found that the global self-



worth of White girls decreased in their study of approximately 5 years. In contrast, their research has shown that Black teenage girls have higher self-worth and feel better about their physical appearance than White girls do at this stage in life (Brown et al. 1998). Rosenberg and Simmons (1971) posit that contextual factors have a strong hand in the development of a Black child's self-esteem. Specifically, noting in their *Black and White Self-Esteem: The Urban School Child* study that low self-esteem was not found to be the case for Black children. With this in mind, it should be taken into consideration that the participants' environment plays a major role in shaping their values, attitudes, and perceptions about what matters to them. Through observation I noted that thirty six of the participants styled their hair with weaves (sewn or glued in hair extensions), mostly long and straight. Speaking with them about the way African American girls wear their hair, various reasons were offered, but the main reasons were because boys liked it and they were copying the latest styles from popular African American women. It did not concern them whether the representation reflected a positive or negative image; they still chose to emulate the hair style. I find this to be an indication that on some level they are internalizing the stereotyped messages and that the pop culture image is reinforced by their peers and community. Hooks (1981) contends that Black parents feel that distorted and negative mediated images of Black females "lowers the self-confidence and self-esteem of black girls" (p. 66). As stated previously, some researchers have documented the existence of high self-esteem for Black girls during their adolescent years (Porter and Washington 1979; Rosenberg 1965; Rosenberg and Simmons 1971; Stevens 1997). Moreover, Porter and Washington (1979) point out under the premise of social evaluation theory, "The child compares himself [herself] to those with whom he [she] is in actual association in sustained social relations. The typical black child spends his [her] formative years in essentially a black world...that insulates them from low societal

ranking” (p. 63). With this being noted, the indication of positive self-esteem from the Rosenberg Scale for some urban African American girls may actually be a contextual sense of self-esteem based on their insular experience in a Black world.

### Qualitative Measure

Open-ended questionnaires were distributed to collect data pertaining to the participants’ interpretation of pop culture images from magazine covers and hip-hop/rap music videos, as well as the perceived influence the images may have regarding their life chances and life choices. Specifically, I sought to answer the following question: Do images of African American women shown in popular culture influence the interpretation of life chances and life choices of urban African American adolescent girls, and if so, how?

The participants’ responses to the pop culture images on the magazine covers and in the hip-hop/rap music videos selected for this project were diverse with some commonality at times. The girls reviewed the images and gave their perspective regarding the women on the covers or in the videos. Their input shed light on various factors: 1) whether the women in the pictures or videos represented them, 2) if they learn from them, 3) would like to be like them, 4) if they thought adolescent girls want to be like them or 5) are inspired by them for hair, clothes, and music choices. Additionally, they commented on whether they wanted to do what the women on the magazine covers or in the hip-hop/rap music videos were doing, if the women’s educational background, income potential, and health status would offer a better life, if they would personally finish high school or college, and whether African American adolescent girls are strongly influenced by the images presented in this study. Equally important, the participants addressed possible physical emulations like: 1) whether they attempt to be like them or 2) if their clothes are like those of the women on the magazine covers or in the hip-hop/rap music videos,

3) how they learn about hairstyles, 4) if other African American girls copy their personal style or want to impress their peers by emulating magazine cover or hip-hop/rap music video images, and 5) whether peers influence the importance of a certain magazine cover or hip-hop/rap music video.

Data is presented throughout my analysis to document and demonstrate various patterns and observations for each magazine cover, hip-hop/rap music video, and from the focus group meeting. I am only including a section of responses in each category. A synopsis of the magazine covers and hip-hop/rap music videos including the hook (a lyrical phase that stands out and can be easily remembered), along with the themes that emerged from coding the questions for the concepts pop culture, life chances, and life choices are highlighted.

## **Magazine Covers**

A results summary for the 10 magazine covers, *Black Enterprise*, *Black Men*, *Ebony*, *Essence*, *Heart and Soul*, *Hype Hair*, *Jet*, *Juicy*, *Sister 2 Sister*, *Vibe*, and the responses and perspectives from some of the girls in reference to whether they want to be like the magazine cover image is as follows:

### **Black Enterprise**

**Cover Synopsis:** Tyra and Iman, both high paid models are dressed in white blouses that over expose their breasts. They have very long straight brown highlighted hair, both are smiling. All of the participants recognized Tyra and twenty percent of the participants did not recognize Iman.

**Pop Culture Image:** All of the participants believe that this image is a positive representation of African American woman and thought that young urban girls would want to be these models. Although some of the participants indicated that they were not interested in modeling and so the

picture did not represent them. On the other hand, several participants thought the picture represented them with strong Black women.

**Life Chances:** The consensus is that the models on the cover seem to have a good education, are healthy and make a lot of money. The participants believe that these models make a lot of money due to their notoriety and that the more famous you are the more money you can earn.

**Life Choices:** Some girls would like to graduate from high school and college and have a modeling career, while others do not envision themselves as a model.

**Do you wish that you could be the person in the picture? Why or why not?**

**Monique:** Sure. I wouldn't mind getting to travel the world and being paid to be photographed.

**Karen:** Sometimes because I would like to model.

**Starr:** No, although Tyra is very influential, and has obtained many accomplishments I don't wish to be anything but myself. I have always seen her as a role model though.

**Monica:** No I think they have great lives but not something that I would want for myself.

**Tiesha:** No. I'm comfortable in the skin I'm in.

### **Black Men**

**Cover Synopsis:** Three models with long straight black hair are dressed in lingerie type outfits with their buttocks exposed, breasts emphasized, and standing in provocative poses.

**Pop Culture Image:** The comments range from revealing/explicit to degrading/disgusting. None of the participants said the image represented them, but all believed that young girls are inspired by and want to emulate these women.

**Life Chances:** It is believed that the women are popular because they are on the cover of this magazine. The participants feel that these women are uneducated; look like they had work done

to their bodies or the pictures are photo shopped, they are selling their bodies, and they represent the image (light skin, long hair and big buttocks) boys/men are supposed to like.

**Life Choices:** These women will not make a lot of money or have a healthy lifestyle.

Some participants believe the women may work out to keep their shapes, but may have emotional and mental issues. Additionally, violence was associated with these women, believing that they are putting themselves in harm's way for physical and verbal abuse.

**Do you wish that you could be the person in the picture? Why or why not?**

**Tracy:** No, I would never wish to be so distastefully half naked on the cover of a magazine.

**Shaun:** No, because that's not representing me well.

**Vivian:** No. I have no desire to be exposed like those women were.

**Jewel:** No because it is not meant for everybody across the world to see my body.

**Tiesha:** No. I'm comfortable in the skin I'm in.

### **Ebony**

**Cover Synopsis:** Actress, Nia Long is featured on the cover pregnant and nude with her arms across her breasts and long flowing straight black hair.

**Pop Culture Image:** The terms used to describe this cover were strong, independent, empowering, and encouraging that Black women can look beautiful during pregnancy. In contrast, some believed the image to be inappropriate and an encouragement for African American adolescent girls to have babies. All of the participants expressed that adolescent girls want to be like this image on the magazine cover.

**Life Chances:** Because of Nia's profession the participants believe she has a real good income, very healthy, and probably educated.

**Life Choices:** Young girls would like to be like her for several reasons: to have a great job, earn lots of money, be famous, and become a Baby Mama.

**Do you wish that you could be the person in the picture? Why or why not?**

**Sheryl:** I would love to be the person in the picture! Birth is an incredible experience for a woman and sharing it with the world makes it very special.

**Asia:** No, I don't wish to be pregnant at this point in my life.

**Bobbi:** No. I don't have plans to have kids, ever.

**Tiesha:** No. I'm comfortable in the skin I'm in.

### **Essence**

**Cover Synopsis:** The First Lady, Michelle Obama graces the cover in a red conservative sleeveless dress with a square neckline. She is smiling and has an up do hairstyle.

**Pop Culture Image:** Michelle Obama is an excellent role model, classy, elegant, respectable, and empowering. All of the participants expressed that adolescent girls want to be like this image on the magazine cover.

**Life Chances:** Aspiring to be like the First Lady would bring fame, excellent education, and wealth.

**Life Choices:** It is believed that young girls would like to be like Michelle Obama, the first lady. At the same time some participants expressed that they were not interested in becoming a lawyer.

**Do you wish that you could be the person in the picture? Why or why not?**

**Karla:** Of course I wish I was that person in the magazine because that lets me know I am doing something right with my future. My goal is to help so many people in this world that I will be well known for my accomplishments.

**Donna:** I would love to be Michelle Obama. She has succeeded a lot in life by her own achievements, not just the achievements of her husband. She is one of the most phenomenal women in the country and for the right reasons.

**Jamekia:** Yes! She is extremely intelligent, beautiful and elegant. She appears to be a good mom and wife. She cares about being environmentally friendly and healthy. I could go on but I won't.

**Cynthia:** Yes, because it is amazing to be the first black first lady of the United States. Not only is she by her husband side but she is influential as a business woman and mother.

**Paulette:** I don't wish I could be the person in the picture because one day I will have my chance to make a name for myself and maybe I will get a magazine cover of my own.

**Evelyn:** No, I think she fits being herself perfect. I fit being myself perfectly as well. She's a very good role model though.

**Tiesha:** No. I'm comfortable in the skin I'm in.

### **Heart and Soul**

**Cover Synopsis:** Actress, Chandra Wilson from Grey's Anatomy has on a layered knee length pink chiffon strapless dress. Her straight hair is styled long and flowing past her shoulders. She is considered to be a plus size model.

**Pop Culture Image:** Phenomenal picture illustrating that African American women come in different shapes and sizes, Chandra looks confident and comfortable with herself. All of the participants expressed that adolescent girls want to be like this image on the magazine cover.

**Life Chances:** This image represents that larger girls/women can be successful actresses, earn a good income, and dress classy.

**Life Choices:** Chandra is a role model for all Black girls, but especially girls that are plus size.

**Do you wish that you could be the person in the picture? Why or why not?**

**Louise:** Yes, because she's beautiful and she looks very comfortable with who she is and how she looks.

**Tasha:** Yes she is a phenomenal actress who stands for what she believes in. She is also naturally confident, which is an admirable characteristic.

**Quillian:** No. I don't know who she is!

**Alexis:** No. She is gorgeous though.

**Tiesha:** No. I'm comfortable in the skin I'm in.

### **Hype Hair**

**Cover Synopsis:** Beyoncé has a long straight blonde tone weave that is parted down the middle with large hoop earrings. The caption reads beauty with a bang. She appears to be wearing a halter top that is barely noticeable from the side angle the way the picture was taken.

**Pop Culture Image:** Beyoncé is inspirational and beautiful in this picture. She looks like she has no worries and is appealing to both young and older crowds. All of the participants expressed that adolescent girls want to be like this image on the magazine cover.

**Life Chances:** Can make a lot of money, fame, be healthy and basically do what you want.

**Life Choices:** Would have a better lifestyle and be famous. At the same time some girls did not want to be like Beyoncé because she does things they do not agree with, like skin lightening.

**Do you wish that you could be the person in the picture? Why or why not?**

**Angel:** Yes because she has everything I'll ever dream for.

**Karen:** Sometimes just because she's talented and seem like she has it all

**Gail:** No I don't want to be a famous hip hop artist.



**Michelle:** Beyoncé is successful but I would not want her lifestyle because there is no privacy.

**Tyonna:** No because she does things I don't agree with.

**Tiesha:** No. I'm comfortable in the skin I'm in.

### **Jet**

**Cover Synopsis:** Oprah has long straight hair and a red jacket with a high collar turned up. There is a caption that reads: Oprah Winfrey Controlling Her Destiny.

**Pop Culture Image:** Oprah looks beautiful without being naked or half clothed. She looks amazing, classy, elegant, and wealthy. All of the participants expressed that adolescent girls want to be like this image on the magazine cover.

**Life Chances:** Would have a high income, fame, and education. She was once poor and experienced different types of domestic abuse. She turned her bad situation into a good one by accomplishing her goals and becoming wealthy.

**Life Choices:** Working hard and not giving up on your dreams can lead to success, no children and possibly not getting married.

**Do you wish that you could be the person in the picture? Why or why not?**

**Octavia:** Of course. She's a huge success, rich, African American, and beautiful.

**Kelly:** Yes, I would like to make a difference in people's lives like she has.

**Theresa:** Sometimes because she is a very powerful person and gives back to everyone that needs help.

**Char:** No I want to be married and have children. I also don't want the responsibilities that come with her wealth and status.

**Tanya:** No but how her accomplishments make me want to do better.

**Tiesha:** No. I'm comfortable in the skin I'm in.

### **Juicy**

**Cover Synopsis:** Nicki Minaj, female rapper that calls herself the Black Barbie. She has her hair styled in a long straight blonde weave and a very colorful tight fitting dress.

**Pop Culture Image:** The cover photo of Nicki Minaj aka Black Barbie received mixed reviews. Some participants thought she looked pretty, presentable, and has an amazing body. On the other hand, others thought she looked cheap, fake, and made-up. All of the participants expressed that adolescent girls want to be like this image on the magazine cover.

**Life Chances:** Can be wealthy if one reaches her status. Too much plastic surgery, perceived not to be healthy.

**Life Choices:** None of the participants stated that they wanted to be like Nicki, but indicated the young girls would. Nonetheless, she was admired and several would like to earn her income and level of notoriety.

**Do you wish that you could be the person in the picture? Why or why not?**

**Kim:** No I think she lives an eccentric life and I do not want to live that life.

**Gwen:** No because in my opinion she is fake.

**Tiesha:** No. I'm comfortable in my own skin.

**Erica:** No. I don't want to look or be like her. She isn't my ideal woman, personally.

**Danna:** No. I have never had the desire to be a black Barbie.

### **Sister 2 Sister**

**Cover Synopsis:** Tameka Raymond, Usher's (singer) ex-wife is featured with long straight hair and a white back out dress taken from the side view, which shows her star tattoo on the left arm.

**Pop Culture Image:** Overwhelmingly, most participants did not like this picture because her status was based on being the wife of Usher Raymond (singer). A couple of participants liked the picture because Tameka was fully clothed or had no opinion one way or another. All of the participants expressed that adolescent girls want to be like this image on the magazine cover.

**Life Chances:** Tameka is a celebrity hairstylist by trade and believed to make good money in her profession. She looks healthy after having five children.

**Life Choices:** Do not want to be known for marrying a well known artist or getting divorced.

**Do you wish that you could be the person in the picture? Why or why not?**

**Candi:** No, I don't want to be famous for dating a hip hop artist.

**Patricia:** No, Because I can't relate to the character.

**Tina:** No, there is no specific reason.

**Saundra:** No, I don't wish to be a woman scorned or hung up on a man.

**Char:** No I don't want to be a divorced woman.

**Karen:** Nope, She's really nobody to me, I don't know what's special about her or what she has accomplished.

**Donna:** No. She's "famous" for being married to a singer that left her, who wants that?

**Vivian:** No because her appearance doesn't stand out.

**Tiesha:** No. I'm comfortable in the skin I'm in.

### **Vibe**

**Cover Synopsis:** Kelly Rowland (singer) is depicted nude with her hands covering her breasts.

She is shot from the waist up and has a very long straight hair style with a bang and large earrings.

**Pop Culture Image:** Kelly Rowland was well liked for her music. Most did not like that she was naked, felt she was inappropriate, trying too hard, and a bad role model for young girls. All of the participants expressed that adolescent girls want to be like this image on the magazine cover.

**Life Chances:** Makes a good income, not very well educated, and appears healthy.

**Life Choices:** Hip hop artist, singer that shows a lot of her body.

**Do you wish that you could be the person in the picture? Why or why not?**

**Tina:** Yes, because I always wished I could sing and she's a great role model for our generation.

**Evelyn:** I wouldn't mind being a singer that travels the world, but I don't like Kelly Rowland's music. Her songs seem to be written by men and what they perceive to be women's ideas and fantasies.

**Sharon:** No, because I don't think she feels beautiful unless she is naked.

**Alexis:** No, I like her but don't wish to be her.

**Tiesha:** No. I'm comfortable in the skin I'm in.

### Discussion

Responses from the girls signify that out of the ten representations of African American women on the magazine covers five were interpreted as positive, one was considered negative, and four fell into both the negative and positive category. That is to say the women gracing the cover of *Black Enterprise*, *Essence*, *Heart and Soul*, *Hype Hair*, *Jet* were considered positive mediated images. While, the women depicted on *Ebony*, *Juicy*, *Sister 2 Sister*, and *Vibe* had the connotation of being both positive and negative. In addition, *Black Men* was the only magazine cover that all of the participants perceived as a negative illustration of African American women. Some of these variations can be attributed to how the girls perceive themselves and goals they

have for themselves regarding careers and life style. For instance, Tiesha responded “no,” that she did not want to be like any of the images, because she was comfortable in her own skin. Although she admired several of the African American women, she is passionate about making a name for herself in the criminal justice field and does not aspire to be like the images in the study. In contrast, Tina would love to sing and travel the world like Kelly Rowland. She styles her hair and wears clothes like Kelly and believes that she is a role model for young girls. On the other hand, Evelyn thinks being a famous singer is great, but not singing the songs that Kelly performs. She views them as degrading to women.

Therefore, the perceived influence can be attributed to the relationship that young girls negotiate with popular culture images of African American women. The findings of this exploratory study substantiate Hall’s (1997a) concept of representation, in which language is used to produce meaning through signs and symbols. Symbolically, this is further exemplified by the selection of the *Black Men* magazine cover as a negative depiction of African American women by all of the girls in the study. Even though the girls reject this stereotype image in the questionnaire, they offered several comments about the image itself. Women who want to accomplish this ideal can receive butt enhancement injections to increase the size of their buttocks. Additionally, the participants state their concerns about several African American pop culture females that they believe have had lots of different body enhancements including the butt-injections. This finding demonstrates Littlefield’s (2008) notion that the current representations of African American women resemble the historical characterizations as sexual insatiable creatures. I found that the participants did not perceive this trend as healthy or safe, but felt that they could earn a great deal of money if they replicate some of the most influential pop culture figures.

An interesting finding in this study was that all of the participants believe that adolescent African American girls want to be like the popular culture images in the magazine covers presented. It did not matter whether the picture was positive or negative their perception is that girls want to emulate the women on the covers of the magazines. Even some of the participants who stated they were not interested in being the person in the picture stipulate that they look to pop culture images for beauty tips that include their hair styles, clothes, and makeup. As Baldwin (2006) points out, many young women reproduce sexualized imagery seeking empowerment. However, she suggests that the symbols learned from the distorted image through advertising and the media may create distorted perceptions and actual disempowerment.

Examining the magazine cover data from the questionnaires for the interpretation of pop culture images regarding the participants' life chances and life choices, their comments about the images and how they associated themselves with the images varied. This study revealed that most of the participants felt that all of the African American women in the pop culture images represented them because they were African American females. However, there were a few participants that disassociated themselves from some of the images; ones which they described as negative and said that the character of those particular African American women did not represent them. All of the participants aligned themselves with what they determined to be positive images and found them to be inspirational and encouraging. In addition, the participants felt that if they were to seek positions in accordance with the positive images their likelihood of a better life and education, increased wealth and status, options to staying healthy and fit, could be a reality. On the other hand if they had jobs like the women in the negatively perceived pictures they were apt to have declining social mobility, poor health – mentally, physically and emotionally – and low educational achievement.

## **Hip-Hop/Rap Music Videos**

A results summary of the hip-hop/rap music videos, *Run The World, How To Love, Sure Thing, Motivation, Racks, I'm On One, Love Faces, Roll Up, She Ain't You, 6 Foot 7 Foot*, and the responses and perspectives from some of the girls in reference to whether they want to be like the video image is as follows:

### **Beyoncé – “Run The World (Girls)”**

**Synopsis of Female Video Image:** Beyoncé's performance centered on lyrics about female empowerment. Women are dressed in sexy, form fitting, lingerie type costumes.

#### **Hook:**

Who run the world? Girls! [x4]  
Who run this motha? Girls! [x4]  
Who run the world? Girls! [x4]

**Pop Culture Image:** This video came across as fun, empowering, and influential, representing the strength and power of all women. All of the participants expressed that adolescent girls want to be like this image in the hip-hop/rap music video.

**Life Chances:** Potential to earn a lot of money. Send encouraging messages through songs to young and older girls everywhere.

**Life Choices:** Younger participants would like to be like Beyoncé, older participants expressed being comfortable with who they are.

#### **Do you wish that you could be the person in the music video? Why or why not?**

**Shaun:** Yes because she speaks a true meaning/message to young/old girls all over.

**Angel:** Yes because she's a good dancer.

**Danna:** Sometimes I do because of her fame and fortune.

**Michelle:** No because I don't want the issues that come with being a celebrity such as the lack of privacy. I like my privacy.

**Tracy:** No because I don't want to be an entertainer.

**Tiesha:** No. I'm comfortable in the skin I'm in.

**Lil Wayne – “How To Love”**

**Synopsis of Female Video Image:** Depicts two pathways of a young woman's life outcomes based on the relationship she had with the opposite sex, be it her choice or not (forced) to be involved sexually with the different males in her life.

**Hook:**

You had a lot of crooks trying to steal your heart  
Never really had luck, couldn't never figure out  
How to love, how to love  
You had a lot of moments that didn't last forever  
Now you in a corner trying to put it together  
How to love, how to love  
For a second you were here, now you over there  
It's hard not to stare the way you're moving your body  
Like you never had a love, never had a love

**Pop Culture Image:** Bifurcated scenarios that illustrate a negative (stripper and contracts HIV) and positive (receives secondary education and marries) outcome for choices made by a young woman who eventually becomes a single mother. All of the participants expressed that adolescent girls want to be like this image in the hip-hop/rap music video.

**Life Chances:** Depicts a path where young girls can be strong and self-reliant and make better choices about life-partners/boyfriends/husbands/etc. On the other hand a young girl could end up struggling for the rest of her life while trying to raise a child.

**Life Choices:** Positive depiction leads to a happier life, education, and intact family for child. Negative depiction leads to low-income wages, disrespected job, and poor health.

**Do you wish that you could be the person in the music video? Why or why not?**

**Evelyn:** I don't want to be either of the depictions because being pregnant right **Karla:** after college is not one of my goals neither is being a stripper for a living.



**Bobbi:** No because of the things that he chose to do with his life.

**Tiesha:** No. I'm comfortable in the skin I'm in.

**Miguel – “Sure Thing”**

***Synopsis of Female Video Image:*** Young woman is shown exhaling large amounts of smoke.

She is primarily dressed in a leotard with cut-outs or lingerie type outfit. In the first verse Miguel sings: Love you like a brother. Treat you like a friend. Respect you like a lover. Oh, oh, oh.

**Hook:**

You could bet that, never gotta sweat that. [x4]

**Pop Culture Image:** Participants felt that mixed messages were conveyed, singing about love and there was a young woman using a stripper pole. Many disapproving comments regarding the video vixen exhaling smoke. All of the participants expressed that adolescent girls want to be like this image in the hip-hop/rap music video.

**Life Chances:** Video vixens that are highly sought after can make a lot of money, but most probably have very low incomes.

**Life Choices:** Entertaining, but poor choice for a career. The focus was on being Miguel's girlfriend.

**Do you wish that you could be the person in the music video? Why or why not?**

**Starr:** I don't want to ever be so scantily dressed. I don't want to be portrayed as a sex symbol.

**Gwen:** No. The women in this video had nothing more than body shots with a few face shots. There were no roles.

**Candi:** No because I'm not into being a video vixen.

**Tiesha:** No, I'm comfortable in my own skin

### **Kelly Rowland (Feat. Lil Wayne) – “Motivation”**

**Synopsis of Female Video Image:** Kelly is partially dressed in a thong body suite and dances provocatively.

**Hook:**

And when we're done, I don't wanna feel my legs  
And when we're done, I just wanna feel your hands all over me baby

**Pop Culture Image:** Nice but a lot of nakedness, degrading, dances inappropriately, sexually explicit and sexually aggressive. All of the participants expressed that adolescent girls want to be like this image in the hip-hop/rap music video.

**Life Chances:** Video vixens earn a low – income, but Kelly is successful and makes a good – income.

**Life Choices:** Sometimes dress like Kelly. Some participants would like to be successful like Kelly and others do not want to be represented in this way.

**Do you wish that you could be the person in the music video? Why or why not?**

**Donna:** No, I don't want to be portrayed as object for sex.

**Gail:** No because I don't want to be in videos or entertain.

**Theresa:** No because I don't want to be in videos or entertain.

**Tasha:** No, because she sings about sex and is dancing half-naked with all men.

**Tiesha:** No, I'm comfortable in my own skin.

### **YC (Feat. Future & Nelly) – “Racks”**

**Synopsis of Female Video Image:** Females in the video are both fully clothed and normally dressed or wearing form fitting pants and tops, crop tops.

**Hook: YC**

Got campaign goin' so strong  
Gettin' brain when I'm talkin' on the phone  
Spendin' money when your money is long  
Real street niggas, ain't no clone  
We at the top where we belong

Drink lean, rose, Patron  
Smokin' on a thousand dollars worth strong  
When the club 'bout to hear this song

We got racks on racks on racks (Racks)  
Racks on racks on racks (Racks)  
Racks on racks on racks (Racks)  
Got racks on racks on racks

Got racks on racks on racks (Racks)  
Racks on racks on racks (Racks)  
Racks on racks on racks  
Nigga, I ain't even tryna hold back

**Pop Culture Image:** Video is stupid, terrible and not entertaining. The males looked ignorant and females were degraded. All of the participants expressed that adolescent girls want to be like this image in the hip-hop/rap music video.

**Life Chances:** Awful, very low-income.

**Life Choices:** The women look really bad in this video, poor, and unhealthy.

**Do you wish that you could be the person in the music video? Why or why not?**

**Cynthia:** No, I don't care about having racks.

**Erica:** No. This video is vey ghetto and I would want nothing to do with it.

**Kim:** No it isn't my style.

**Tyonna:** No, because they portray an ignorant image of African Americans and women period.

**Tiesha:** No, I'm comfortable in my own skin.

**DJ Khaled (Feat. Drake, Rick Ross & Lil Wayne) – “I'm On One”**

**Synopsis of Female Video Image:** The women are dressed provocatively and strike provocative posses, like when lying on top of the back of a Rolls Royce.

**Hook: Drake**

All I care 'bout is money and the city that I'm from

I'ma sip until I feel it, I'mma smoke it 'til it's done  
And I don't really give a fuck, and my excuse is that I'm young  
And I'm only getting older so somebody shoulda told ya  
I'm on one, yeah, fuck it, I'm on one  
Yeah, I said I'm on one, fuck it, I'm on one  
Two white cups and I got that drink  
Could be purple, it could be pink  
Depending on how you mix that shit  
Money to be got, and I'mma get that shit  
Cause I'm on one, I said, fuck it, I'm on one

**Pop Culture Image:** Could hardly see the women's faces. The camera was focused more on the video vixens' body parts. All of the participants expressed that adolescent girls want to be like this image in the hip-hop/rap music video.

**Life Chances:** Not a very good income

**Life Choices:** Portrayed women as arm candy, while the main focus was on Drake rapping.

**Do you wish that you could be the person in the music video? Why or why not?**

**Char:** No, because I would not want the lifestyle where my significant other constantly lives a life revolving around drugs, money and sex.

**Jamieka:** No, because I honestly don't understand the overall message the song is portraying.

**Louise:** No, it's just not what I'm into.

**Tiesha:** No. I'm comfortable in the skin I'm in.

### **Trey Songz – “Love Faces”**

**Synopsis of Female Video Image:** The women have on suite jackets, blouses, pencil skirts, pants, and the main female has on a wide strapped corset baby doll dress at an art gallery showing. The female image in the paintings that comes alive has on jeans and a tee shirt tied on the side revealing her stomach.

**Hook:**

Don't it feel good when I touch on it,  
Wouldn't it be nice if all night I was in you  
Come kiss me, come with me down the hall to my bedroom

**Pop Culture Image:** Nice to see a video vixen in a role with a speaking part and job that possibly earns a good living. She appeared talented, intelligent, and beautiful. Some expressed that the song did not go with the video. All of the participants expressed that adolescent girls want to be like this image in the hip-hop/rap music video.

**Life Chances:** Believes that the role the video vixen is playing as an artist makes a good income, but the actual woman in the video earns a low-income.

**Life Choices:** Male artist (Trey Songz) was a complement to the female in the video and did not overshadow her. Participants would like their man/boyfriend to be like him.

**Do you wish that you could be the person in the music video? Why or why not?**

**Sharon:** Yes, because of the artist.

**Quillian:** I wouldn't mind being the person in the video. She was portrayed as strong and successful was still seen as sexy.

**Patricia:** Somewhat. I do admire the fact that her mate can respect boundaries but I don't want to with someone who is rich or be an artist.

**Tiesha:** No. I'm comfortable in the skin I'm in.

**Wiz Khalifa – “Roll Up”**

**Synopsis of Female Video Image:** The women are dressed in summer sexy attire, but not too revealing. They can be seen in short shorts, sling tops, crop tops, and fitted jeans. The lead female has long hair with both sides shaved off and wears an expensive looking watch and jewelry.

**Hook:**

I'm a rider  
I'm a roller  
I'm a gangster  
So I'mma roll up  
I'm a rider  
I'm a roller  
I'm a gangster  
So I'mma roll up

**Pop Culture Image:** The song is about a girl cheating on her boyfriend, but the video looks like a cute boy meets girl kind of story. There are everyday scenes with the women having an ordinary type of persona. All of the participants expressed that adolescent girls want to be like this image in the hip-hop/rap music video.

**Life Chances:** Low-income and not very educated.

**Life Choices:** Following the latest trends.

**Do you wish that you could be the person in the music video? Why or why not?**

**Saundra:** Yes, she was an ordinary type of person and I appreciated that.

**Monique:** Yes, this video made me think of hanging with my girls.

**Monica:** No, I don't want to look like her or be Wiz Khalifa's object of affection.

**Tiesha:** No. I'm comfortable in the skin I'm in.

**Chris Brown – “She Ain't You”**

**Synopsis of Female Video Image:** The main focus is on the dancers and their dance appearances of two female singers, one dressed scantily (faded in and out), the other in a sleeveless top.

**Hook:**

Yeah, I think I better let her go, cause I can't leave you alone  
Baby all the time that I'm with her, all I want is you  
I wanna leave but I'm afraid, but you don't even feel the same  
Now I realize, that she ain't you, she ain't you  
Oh no no no no, oh no no no  
Na na na na na

She ain't you, oh no no no  
Cause she ain't no she ain't

**Pop Culture Image:** Women were not just props, were shown performing choreographed steps and singing. All of the participants expressed that adolescent girls want to be like this image in the hip-hop/rap music video.

**Life Chances:** A decent living could be made with the different skills, like dancing and singing.

**Life Choices:** Learning skills that will help you be independent and earn a decent income.

**Do you wish that you could be the person in the music video? Why or why not?**

**Octavia:** Yes, I would like to be one of the people in this video. The choreography is very interesting.

**Asia:** Yes, because I have a passion for dancing.

**Jewel:** No, because I don't want to entertain.

**Tiesha:** No. I'm comfortable in the skin I'm in.

### **Lil Wayne ft. Cory Gunz – “6 Foot 7 Foot”**

**Synopsis of Female Video Image:** Women are dressed in provocative clothing; short – tight dresses, jackets and blouses open down the front to the navel, and black corset body suites.

#### **Hook:**

Six-foot, seven-foot, eight-foot bunch

**Pop Culture Image:** The women are props and are flashed in different scenes. Some participants thought the video vixens had on more clothes than usual and others expressed that they were underdressed with the extremely short tight fitting dresses. All of the participants expressed that adolescent girls want to be like this image in the hip-hop/rap music video.

**Life Chances:** Low-income unless they have worked in the field for a longtime.

**Life Choices:** Girls would copy the women in the video because they want the fame.

**Do you wish that you could be the person in the music video? Why or why not?**

**Alexis:** This video shoot looked fun so I wouldn't mind being in this video. And the women in this video were not as exposed and degraded as they normally are.

**Tina:** No, I don't exactly know what their purpose was but I know I don't want to be like a video girl.

**Tasha:** No, because I think the video and people in it are ignorant.

**Tiesha:** No. I'm comfortable in the skin I'm in.

*Discussion*

Video vixens are a prevalent depiction of African American women that urban adolescent girls are exposed to. African American children and adolescents are heavy media consumers (Ward and Thomas 2007) and in this study I found many of the participants attest to watching hip-hop/rap music videos for the latest styles in hair, clothes, makeup, and dances. In addition, a few of the girls said they would like to perform in hip-hop/rap music videos if they could be a star and earn an income like Beyoncé, Nicki Minaj, or the women that send strong positive messages to females about respect and respecting yourself, like Queen Latifah, Alicia Keys, and Lauryn Hill. Several of the participants rejected the music video image as an aspiration by answering "no" in the questionnaire that they do not wish to be the person in the video, because they thought it was a negative and degrading representation of African American women. Furthermore, the perception of the girls for this type of career is that it would not pay very much; young women would not live a healthy life style and could possibly be mentally and physically abused.

The projection of hypersexualized bodies of African American women, like those in the music videos is not new, in fact, Collins (2004) argues that what we are witnessing is an aspect



of what she termed is the “new racism.” Moreover, this is where historical oppressing ideology is repackaged in different mediums, like movie videos. In turn, young African American youth are internalizing the misogynistic messages at an early age.

Results in this study show that the participants believe all African American adolescent girls want to be like the images in the videos, are strongly influenced by the images, are inspired for hair, clothes, and music choices, and want to emulate the images to impress their peers.

Below, Alexis indicates why urban adolescent girls want to be like the projected media image:

I think a lot of young girls want to be like the images of women in the music videos because they are attracted to the fame. They often try to follow trends and the women in the music videos usually set the trends so I do believe they are inspired by them. I also believe that young Black girls are often influenced by their favorite celebrities and what they see in the media.

Additionally, Evelyn offers: Yes. For instance, after *Roll Up* the Wiz-Khalefa video I saw many girls shaving off the hair on the sides of their heads.

These examples are in line with Gordon’s (2008 ) findings that African American girls in her study expressed a deeper affinity for music that objectifies women and the images that accompany it. For that reason, this would make them more likely to internalize the concept of beauty that the media markets.

In sum, the participants perceive that the hip-hop/rap music videos portray women as sex objects and that most of them were misogynistic. They trust that videos made with well known female artists like Beyoncé afford one to be self-reliant, “rich and famous,” and a master of her own destiny. In contrast, they believe that women seeking positions in life as video vixens do not earn a good income and are possibly mentally and physically abused. In general, they believe that adolescent girls want to dress, style their hair, dance, and talk like the women in the videos. Even though, when personally asked if they want to be like the images they see in the videos, most say “no.” I believe some of the participants answered “no” because they believe it’s the right thing to say. On some level they are rejecting the stereotyped image, but on another level

they are internalizing the message of how they should wear their hair, dress, speak, dance and act.

### **Focus Group Summaries**

Included are 16 summaries in my findings that individually and collectively illuminate the perceived image of African American women through the participants' lens. These summaries represent the total population of all 40 participants; there was more than one participant who shared a similar stance and they are listed along with their age for each summary. My review of each participant's statement resulted in a combination of concepts and themes to which a comprehensive understanding of their perceptions was made known; the richness of their thoughts in their words is listed below. The participants' summarized views and comments illustrated are in response to this question: *When you think about the image of Black women, what is your first thought?*

***Concept / Theme: Positive role model*** – the image and actions of an African American female who is a good example for other African American females.

#### **Summary 1: Char (16)**

In the focus group today we discussed the positive and negative viewings of famous Black Women. I think that some famous females are positive because they have to be and others just do it because they are a good person.

***Concept / Theme: Negative role model*** – the image and actions of an African American female who is not a good example for other African American females.

#### **Summary 2: Quillian (13), Tasha (13), Tina (14), Tanya (16)**

We had a very serious discussion in the focus group. Black women and girls really have a lot of negative images. Students were saying how celebrities are setting a bad rap for themselves. They were saying Nicki Minaj set a bad example for younger children. Rihanna was stupid for taking Chris Brown back and Jada Pickett Smith allows her 11 year daughter to cut off her hair and put color in it. Images are very powerful. People need to learn how to carry themselves proper so that we won't be embarrassed at ourselves and our peers. Images also affect people if some see a black woman or girl disrespecting herself they will think the same way about all of them from that point on. Images should be good so I can feel great about the people around me. I felt very embarrassed about the discussion and ashamed. Because the artist that I listen to is setting a bad example for me.

**Summary 3: Gwen (18), Cynthia (18), Tyonna (19), Angel (19)**

Images of Black Women are mostly negative. I say that because we found more negative images than positives. We learned that its differences between what the people are doing that is negative and their personal life. We talked about the rich Black woman and their images. We also talked about how images are affecting the young ones.

**Summary 4: Gail (16), Sharon (19), Sheryl (19)**

Well basically, today we were talking about how females have bad images and sometimes good images. We talked about how they dress and how they talked to one another. They call each other 'B' words when they are responding to each other. When it comes to their clothes they dress like they don't respect themselves. They wear booty shorts, cut up shorts and shirts. Also they wear really tight clothes showing off everything.

**Summary 5: Karen (18)**

What we learned today was that different people have different images that are positive or negative about different role models in the world. People view others characteristics by how they feel and don't really think about the bigger picture. It is the impact that the individual has on the world as a whole. To a young teenage girl Nicki Minaj may be the greatest person in the world. In actuality though the things she talks about and does may not be suitable for younger ages neither acceptable by older audiences.

*Concept / Theme: Positive and negative role models* – Examples of African American women who are both good and bad representations of African American females.

#### **Summary 6: Monica (13), Theresa (14), Tiesha (17)**

Today we talked about the image of Black Women and I learned that there are a lot of images of Black Woman and you cannot stop what people think or say about you because that's their opinion and it's not just us that have negative and positive images. Rich people do too and they cannot stop what we think. And at times just how people look doesn't mean that's the way they are and to me there are a lot of negative and positive and it's your job to not judge a book by its cover because we don't know Beyoncé, Jada Pickett Smith, Oprah etc. We just know the things that they do on T.V. are either negative or positive but you can do positive things or really not have a positive mind set.

#### **Summary 7: Octavia (15), Alexis (17)**

We discussed the images about Black women, we discussed the good or bad, the positive and negative. Like how someone is making a bad influence on other people and kids. We were telling about the positive influence like how they made other kids and people better and make them do

positive things. If they started their career of doing bad things or if they started doing good things. How they helped us and our community.

#### **Summary 8: Jewel (15), Patricia (15)**

Today we talked about positive and negative images. I said Ms. Carter has a positive image because she is giving us the knowledge and information that she knows and getting us ready for college. Also she teaches us how to use our sentences in a complete thought. As Ms. Carter has a positive image because she teaches us how to use our minds and think big instead of small. The person I pick for a negative image is Nicki Minaj. I say this because of the way she dresses and presents herself in a bad way. She uses bad words in her songs and kids listen to it.

#### **Summary 9: Paulette (17)**

In the focus group we talked about Black Women and how they have negative and positive images. We talked about Whitney Houston and how she was positive in the beginning of her career. Then Whitney Houston turned negative in the end of her career due to drug addiction. My thoughts are that you can learn a lot from Whitney Houston. Such as her determination she had for herself. Whitney Houston also never gave up on what she wanted to do in life. Out there are stuff that Whitney Houston did that I don't understand like doing drugs and messing up her career. Another person we talked about was Oprah Winfrey and how she was a negative and positive image. Oprah Winfrey gave back to the community and she was a strong lady that went through stuff like being raped which shows that she is strong and determined. But there are negatives about Oprah Winfrey which is she didn't make a school for her hometown of Chicago Illinois.

### **Summary 10: Kelly (19)**

My summary on Black Women is that we are positive and negative images out here. Positive images are that we are kind people. Another positive image is that we are independent. Positive images are that we are role models to little black girls everywhere. Oprah Winfrey for instance is a positive role model because she gives to the less fortunate. Another positive image is Queen Latifah because she teaches young Black Women how to keep yourself looking awesome.

Negative images are that we are sex addicts. For example, Nicki Minaj is negative because she portrays herself as a whore. Another negative image is Pinky because she is a porn star. All these images are saying you are what you are because of the way you are. You can't be talked about if you are doing good. But if you are doing bad then you are always criticized more by people. My images of Black Women are that we are smart, confident and strong. Even though we have been through a lot of things we still somehow manage to make it through. We turn a bad situation into a good situation.

### **Summary 11: Vivian (13), Candi (15)**

The conversation we had today was about positive and negative images of Black females that we all know. Some said Beyoncé, or Nicki Minaj. Which both were negative images. One reason was because Nicki Minaj spoke about too much nasty stuff that little kids hear and they repeat and do. They (emulate) the things she does in her videos. They spoke about Beyoncé saying that she prances around half naked. Some positive ones were Oprah and Michelle Obama. One reason is because Oprah helps to solve other people problems and gives them help. Michelle Obama is putting a message out to all kids that everybody should eat healthy and exercise.

***Concept / Theme: Conflicted*** – understands that there are both negative and positive images projected of African American females and that the negative ones could be damaging and

the positive ones encouraging, but the end result is that both images earns an income, and that's okay.

### **Summary 12: Karla (16), Erica (17), Evelyn (18)**

Black Women from what we discussed uphold negative and positive traits. Famous people are major role models in society today. They do things that are frowned upon and things that are shined upon. Some things that are frowned upon when it comes to famous people are the way they dress and what they say. For example, Nicki Minaj got denied from making it on T.V. because she was showing too much cleavage. Plus on YouTube, Beyoncé has lil girls singing "Dance for you" which I feel is inappropriate for a 5 year old to be singing on the internet. Some things that are shined upon when it comes to Black Women that are famous are their generosity. For example, Oprah Winfrey, she gives back all the time. Next we have Alicia Keys who carries herself with class and presents herself as a lady. My personal opinion is that famous people are just like any other human being. They do what they can to get their money. They also make real decisions like anyone else. Regardless famous or not they are all ladies.

### **Summary 13: Saundra (16), Starr (18)**

In the focus group we discussed about the images of Black Women whether they are positive or negative. People had positive names like Vanessa Williams, Alicia Keys, Oprah Winfrey and negative people like Beyoncé, Nicki Minaj, and Pinky. I think that those are correct but most people they said are good people. What I think about is that people had good points about why they are negative and why they are positive. I think a person that should be on the negative side is Trina because every song she made was a negative song that put negative images in the heads of the youth. But if you look at it most of those people that are negative really isn't because they

are rich and no matter what they did they got famous. Most of them came from a struggling past or a negative environment but they was smart enough to use their talent and got famous instead of holding it and hiding what they can do. Instead they took it and ran with it and now the whole world can listen to what they got to say.

***Concept / Theme: Stereotypes, positive or negative images*** – oversimplified set of beliefs about African American women, in addition to examples of African American women who are both good and bad representations of African American females.

**Summary 14: Louise (16), Jamekia (17), Bobbi (18), Donna (18)**

Our discussion today in the focus group was about the images of Black Women. We talked about the positive and negatives of Black females. We talked about what makes Black females powerful. We talked about the different famous people who either show positive or negative ways. For example, Beyoncé. We talked about the things she does to make herself positive. We talked about Rihanna and what she does to make herself positive or negative. We talked about the stereotypes young females are put into.

***Concept / Theme: Complex perspective*** – a negative image of African American females, the image that is not a good example for other African American females to imitate and doesn't change when the person exhibits positive behavior.

**Summary 15: Tracy (15), Kim (16), Asia (17), Danna (17), Monique (18), Michelle (18)**

In the focus group today we had a discussion on positive and negative Black famous people. I think some people they said was negative are really positive. I feel that people look at other people pass (judgment) and rub it in their faces when they looked past the past in become a positive person. I feel the people they said was negative are not always negative. There is some



positive in them. I think of someone comment on you on some negative type way you would be hurt or get mad because you feel you doing positive things now.

*Concept / Theme: Importance of images* – the representation of African American females in a positive or negative depiction is not the only element that defines the person.

#### **Summary 16: Shaun (14)**

Today in the focus group I had learned that images are very important. The reason why is because the way you present yourself can say a lot even if it's true or not. Today in the focus group we had went over a few Black Women and discussed if their image is negative or positive. Thanks to Ms. Carter I look at people images differently and how I focus on the big picture and not just what it looks like.

#### *Discussion*

Before the focus group discussion question was posed, when you think about the image of African American women, what is your first thought? I informed the participants that they could be honest and straight forward with their opinions. I think they were surprised that the session was informal and that they could talk freely. Their written summaries are informative, but lack a great deal of information that was communicated during the group's open session. The complex dynamics of the focus group discussion that I observed do not entirely come across in their summaries. When the focus group question was asked responses began immediately, without participants raising their hands, they said: the image of African American females is "negative," "bad," "loud," "pregnant before eighteen," and "terrible." She is called a "hood rat," "bitch," "chicken head," "slut," and "ho." About twenty five percent of the participants became defensive and stated that there are positive role models of African American women, they know some African American women who work really hard and try to take care of their family and go

to church. They expressed that they have a positive role model in one of their high school teachers who reaches out to them by sharing some of her own life experiences and telling them the truth and about the consequences of their behavior. They listen intently and follow her direction in class. Different from the aforementioned example are the many classes the participants declare they are not learning anything and that the teachers do not care about them – many shared that they do not have a grade point average high enough to graduate. They feel that attending Detroit Public Schools has failed them, noting that several teachers only pass out Xeroxed copies of worksheets for them to complete during class, they do not have books, and feel as if they are being baby-sat. The life chances of these girls are being derailed if they are not learning the K-12 curriculum like other school districts when they attend class. Although they may aspire to be like some of the positive African American women in the pop culture depictions they are disconnected from a pathway to get them there. They may have the drive and determination, but lack the opportunity and skill level. Everyone in society is not given the same means/opportunity to reach their desired goals (Merton 1957). The participants express that they want to graduate from high school and have dreams of attending college or finding work and assuredly comment with expectations that they will do so. In the next breath they speak of realistic situations that have already taken place with graduates from their communities: so and so is selling weed, so and so is stripping and one participant said that her sixteen year old cousin is dancing in a club.

A conversation around earning an income led to comments like “music and videos influence young people to sell drugs,” “It’s okay to sell weed just don’t make it your life, if you aren’t really making any money off of the nickel and dime bags and can only pay your Metro bill... then sell crack,” “You can make as much money as a doctor in a week, if you put the time

in from the time you get up to the time you go to sleep,” and “Everybody’s not blessed with a silver spoon, so you gotta do what you gotta do!” The cousin of the teenage stripper states that she thinks it’s sad but she does not have a problem with it, but that the mother should because she just turned sixteen. The girls let it be known that on the radio, strippers are frequently promoted for upcoming parties – some of them feel that stripping is okay “go on and get it while you can get it, make that fast money, just don’t make it a habit or career.” Also, the girls told me about Pinky, a porn star that can be seen on YouTube, has her own business and website, and holds celebrity status to a lot of young girls. These examples represent an aspect of what Merton (1957) defines as anomie, when those who cannot become financially successful – achieve the American Dream by traditional means, find a deviant route to do so. The prevalent life choices that lie before some of the participants in this study are not the mainstream society options that my traditional questionnaire for this project brings forth.

The lives and perceptions of the participants are much more complicated than indicated in the responses for the magazine and music video questionnaires. Several of the girls verbally denounced Beyoncé and others for selling out from Black culture in their view. Their discussions expand on my original line of questions, which brings out the need for more in depth research.

Tyonna made her feelings known about how she felt about Beyoncé:

I ain't feeling that half white bitch Beyoncé with her fake ass. She ain't like me, she ain't like us. Why cuz she married that pimp ass Jay Z? She ain't like us, she don't represent our hood. She is about her light skinned bougie acting white talking ass. (laughing) Bitch named her baby Blue, what the fuck is that Blue Baby?

Similarly, Asia expressed her feelings regarding Michelle Obama:

Michelle Obama is the First Lady or whatever and she ain't like us. She smart got his cute ass. He is half white, she came to Detroit. But we couldn't say hey? Because they let those rich Black girls stand up with her. It ain't shit, they ain't like us. You think we gonna be like that ever? No way, never gonna happen, trust me.

According to the participants many of girls want to look like Beyoncé, Rihanna, Nicki Minaj, and other celebrities to get attention from the guys because guys like those women. This group of girls let me know that they were not impressed with girls that go to the extreme to impersonate celebrities, “you can change your image, but not who you are. When you say that you have changed, it’s fake!” It’s their belief that girls that do this have low-self esteem.

Overall, the consensus of the group is that the image most often shown in the media of African American females is negative and that adolescent girls want to be like the distorted images they are bombarded with in entertainment, music videos, video games, magazines, television programs, and commercials, because they see this as a form of admiration, acceptance, and empowerment. However, my findings indicate that the participants in this project do not have low self-esteem, according to the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Furthermore, they believe that society at-large does not respect African American females and that the life chances and life choices of African American adolescent girls hinder on the opportunity afforded them. My conclusion is presented in the next section.

## **Conclusion**

In this dissertation, I sought to give voice to urban African American adolescent females’ interpretation of popular culture images of African American women depicted on Black magazine covers and broadcasted in hip-hop/rap music videos. This project addresses two questions relevant to how African American adolescent females perceive popular culture images of African American women in American mass media regarding their self-esteem, life chances, and life choices. First, do popular culture portrayals of African American women disseminated through mass media influence the interpretation of the self-esteem of urban African American adolescent girls? And second, do images of African American women shown in popular culture

influence the interpretation of life chances and life choices of urban African American adolescent girls, and if so, how? I suggested that in prior research there is very little known about the media portrayals of African American women and the interpretation of them by African American adolescent girls, a dearth of information exists in the academic literature. Contrastingly, research with White adolescent girls and the association of media portrayals of White women have been documented with various outcomes.

This project, using a mixed method approach has illuminated information about the participants' attitudes, emotions, thoughts, feelings, and current outlook on their perceived self-esteem, life chances, and life choices. I did not have a hypothesis formulated for this study, instead I anticipated that I would gain an understanding of whether the participants would reject or accept certain popular culture images of African American women and their perceptions of these images.

Using a mixed research method approach can increase the validity and promote greater understanding of the findings. In particular, quantitative data demonstrates whether change occurred and how much change took place, while qualitative data can help with the understanding of why something happens. With a triangulation of methods this framework provided information from the participants in their own words through qualitative means and through closed-ended questions resulting from the Rosenberg Self Esteem-Scale. This work identifies what African American adolescent females think of popular culture images of African American women with their perceptions giving rise to the complexity of their lifetime experiences.

After examining the data collected by means of questionnaires, video and audio tapes, observation, focus group participation and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale distinctive themes

and patterns were established. A result of this project sheds light on how these teenage girls feel about their own self-worth and the mediated image of African American women in popular culture. The findings from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale indicated that the participants either had high or normal self-esteem. No one in the group indicated that they had low self-esteem. I did not have a preconceived notion or hypothesis. Yet, I assumed that some of the girls would have low self-esteem due to the bombardment of distorted or stereotyped images of African American women in the media. The measure was taken twice, once at the onset of the study before viewing the selected popular culture images and again during the third meeting after viewing the images. Fourteen of the participants had a slight change in their score the second time around, but the level of self-esteem stayed the same (i.e., high self-esteem or normal self-esteem).

I wondered how the participants would respond to the questionnaires regarding the magazine and hip-hop/rap music video images. Would they really tell me how they felt about the image, regardless of whether it was a positive or negative depiction? I received affirming comments about the positive images and displeasing comments about the stereotyped images. Only eight of the girls said they wanted to be like the women in the videos. I find this somewhat confounding because all of the participants stated that they believe that adolescent African American females want to be like the popular culture images in U.S. mass media, especially the videos.

Did the participants answer what they thought I wanted to hear, what they thought was appropriate, on some level they were resisting the stereotyped image, or how they truly felt? I believe it was all of these. Answering a survey is a solitary task and ones answer points directly at them, some feel they may be judged for what they write and do not want to be looked upon in

an unpleasant light. On the other hand, some may have resisted the stereotyped image because they relate to female hip-hop artists that wreck the misogynistic image in hip-hop/rap music videos through their lyrics (Hobson and Bartlow 2008; Pough 2004) or show agency by the way they position themselves on set or with their gaze in the camera (Balaji 2008). Moreover, they may have learned coping strategies or received confirming messages from their parents and community, respectively.

In respect to question two, Do images of African American women shown in popular culture influence the interpretation of life chances and life choices of urban African American adolescent girls, and if so, how? The answer is both yes and no. The participants in this study did not have identical responses or interpretations from the images of African American women they viewed in the ten hip-hop/rap music videos and on the ten Black magazine covers. Data from the magazine covers and hip-hop/rap music videos provides insight about the participants' perceptions of the images of African American women. Their answers reflected whether or not they deemed the popular culture image as a positive or negative depiction. Five of the magazine covers were interpreted as positive depictions, one was considered negative, and four fell into both the negative and positive categories. The girls perceived the hip-hop/rap music videos as portraying the women as sex objects and that most of them are misogynistic. Littlefield's (2008) research, points out that a negative image of African American women is systematically being perpetuated in society today, one that casts her as deviant and oversexual. This concept is demonstrated by the girls' responses.

Hence, there was some commonality regarding the interpretation of these images; each participant's perception was shaped by the connections she made with the projected images (Hall 1997a). Influences from popular culture depends how it is defined? Is popular culture clothing,

then yes; is it hair, then yes; music, then yes. Influences for life choices is challenging since many times African American women and girls do their version of what popular culture is doing. Rihanna, Beyonce, Trina, Nicky Minaj are called pop culture? Dianna Ross was pop to traditional America, she influenced some urban girls. Influence is tricky because Tina Turner was R&B first, upon her new career without Ike allowed the world to see a new Tina that was not R&B she was now rock/pop culture. What is popular culture? Traditionally, it is white, mainstream America.

Popular culture does influence some urban adolescents to see pop culture figures and their rise to success. How? If a black pop culture figure goes to college? If the popular culture person is married, has a family some youth will want that. Pop culture figures might ignore bad traps like illicit drugs or sexual doings that label them sluts, other bad names; popular culture figures like Jennifer Hudson who lost weight is appealing to some urban girls. Popular culture figures might have cosmetic enhancements; their teeth fixed, fake hair, or butt-enhancements, that encourage youth to change their appearance.

Pop culture figures influence can simply inspire some youth in urban communities. The question is whether images of African American women shown in popular culture influence the interpretation of life chances and life choices of African American adolescent girls and the findings point to both yes and no; some urban youth females will reject popular culture models because they have no value, or respect for either traditional society or the role models presented. As urban girls negotiate their identity, there is a total rejection by some youth and their socialization about being "white" or embracing anything remotely close to pop culture. Many African American youth will reject pop culture models calling them sell-outs or envision a different lifestyle for themselves altogether, as did some of the participants in the study.



Some young women identified with the video vixens (Steffans 2005) and would like to participate in what they see as glamorous and a famous occupation. As a matter of fact, the participants that answered “no” to wanting to be the women in the videos articulated that they look to these images for the latest trends for styling their hair, wearing makeup, and dance moves. While, others recognized the celebrities and would like the same type of careers as the individuals on the magazine covers. Even though the desire to emulate the same type of lifestyle as the popular culture images was expressed, the road to achieving these jobs is not always a realistic goal for many of them to accomplish (Merton 1957) due to their challenging circumstances (e.g., poor education, low-income, lack of skills).

When urban girls see popular culture images in the media, are they seeing a reflection of themselves? Harris-Perry (2011) gives credence to the “crooked room” concept, meaning that the stereotyped representation of the African American woman is an off kilter image. Thus, the image reflected is a distorted one. While, my testing shows that the participants had high or normal self-esteem, my observations and speaking with them tell me otherwise and bring additional questions to mind, other than those in the questionnaire. Specifically, I found that the lives of these young women are extremely complicated. They reveal a distortion – they say one thing and they behave another way. My findings point to an array of cultural gender issues where there is no one size fits all explanation. The age difference is a potential problem for limiting the conversation amongst participants in a focus group. As well as the participants may have answered “no” to wanting to emulate the popular culture images because they believe it is what I wanted to hear or the appropriate thing to say. Additionally, the findings from this small sample limit the generalizability of the results to the population.

The experience of growing up in an urban community is not monolithic for African American females. Learning to navigate this environment can be complex and each participant's comments were underscored with multifaceted life experiences that warrant more research. As a result of this study, it is hoped that further research will investigate how urban African American adolescent girls see themselves; their own personal image, violence in their lives/communities, and what factor(s) do hair (e.g., length, texture, color, weave or not) mean to them?

## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### **Research Participant Information and Consent Forms and Exit Form**

## Research Participant Information and Consent Form

*You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the research study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.*

**Study Title:** The Image of African American Women as Presented by American Mass Media and Popular Culture: Interpretations by Urban African American Adolescent Females Regarding Their Life Chances, Life Choices, and Self-Esteem

**Researcher and Title:** Pamela R. Smith, doctoral candidate

**Researcher and Title:** Carl S. Taylor, professor

**Department and Institution:** Department of Sociology, Michigan State University

**Address and Contact Information:** Pamela R. Smith, 410A Berkey Hall, 509 E. Circle Drive, East Lansing, MI 48824, [minifeep@msu.edu](mailto:minifeep@msu.edu) or (517) 353-9237

**Address and Contact Information:** Dr. Carl S. Taylor, 410B Berkey Hall, 509 E. Circle Drive, East Lansing, MI 48824, [taylor36@msu.edu](mailto:taylor36@msu.edu) or (517) 353-9257

### PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

- You are being asked to participate in a research study that will explore whether the image of African American women as seen on popular Black magazine covers and in hip-hop/rap music videos influence urban African American adolescent girls in their life choices, life chances, and self-esteem.
- You have been selected as a possible participant in this study because you are an urban African American female between the ages of 13-19 and live in the City of Detroit, MI.
- Your participation in this study is totally voluntary which involves four group meetings that will last approximately 1.5 to 2 hours each time and correspondence on Twitter to view designated hip-hop/rap music videos.
  - If you are under 18, you cannot be in this study without parental permission. If you are interested in participating in the study take the time to talk to your parent(s) before making your final decision. You will be given a permission (consent) form for your parent(s) to sign. Even if your parent(s) sign the permission form and you decide that you do not want to be part of the study, you do not have to participate. If your parents give permission and you want to take part in the study, you must give your assent (permission) by signing a consent form that acknowledges that you understand what this research project is about and that your participation is voluntary.

### WHAT YOU WILL DO

As a participant in this study you will meet in groups with your peers to view magazine covers from several popular Black magazines that feature an African American woman on the cover. Also, you will view several hip-hop/rap music videos from links sent through Twitter and tweet your comments about the African American women in the videos. Additionally, you will be asked to fill out a number of different surveys. One survey asks questions about demographic (e.g., race, gender) information. Another focuses on questions designed to measure self-esteem. The other surveys ask questions that pertain to viewing the images of African American women from the magazine covers and hip-hop/rap music videos.

The group sessions will be audio taped and video taped for later analysis. At anytime in the study you can ask to have the audio or video tape turned off or choose not to participate. All of the information gathered in the study will be securely stored in a locked file cabinet or password protected computer in Dr. Taylor's office at Michigan State University. No identifying information will be stored with the data.

### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS**

You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study. However, your participation in this study may contribute to the understanding of how mass media and popular culture images of African American women influence the interpretation of the life choices, life chances, and self-esteem of adolescent urban African American females.

### **POTENTIAL RISKS**

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study. The participants will give their perspective regarding the images of African American women pictured on selected magazine covers and hip-hop/rap music videos and whether they believe the images are influential to them and their peers.

### **PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

The data collected for this project will remain confidential; it will not contain your name or any identifying information such as a nick name, social security number or address (including Twitter address). No one except the primary investigators will have access to the data collected from the interviews and tweeted responses. All of the information collected will be de-identified and you will not be tied to your responses.

Results from the project will be based on answers from all of the participants, keeping individual responses confidential. The results of this project may also be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain anonymous and kept confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law. Audiotapes and videotapes will be stored in the locked office of Dr. Taylor at Michigan State University and erased after five years.

I agree to allow audiotaping/videotaping of the interview.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Initials \_\_\_\_\_

### **YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW**

Your participation in this research project is completely your choice. You have the right to say no. You may choose not to answer specific questions that make you uncomfortable or to stop participating at any time. You can withdraw from the project at any time for any reason without penalty.

### **COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY**

You will not receive money or any other form of compensation for participating in this study.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher Pamela R. Smith at (517) 353-9237 or email [minifeep@msu.edu](mailto:minifeep@msu.edu) or regular mail at 410A Berkey Hall, 509 E. Circle Drive, East Lansing, MI 48824. You may also contact the principal investigator, Dr. Carl S. Taylor at (517) 353-9237 or email [taylor36@msu.edu](mailto:taylor36@msu.edu) or regular mail at 410B Berkey Hall, 509 E. Circle Drive, East Lansing, MI 48824.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if

you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail [irb@msu.edu](mailto:irb@msu.edu) or regular mail at Olds Hall, 408 West Circle Drive #207, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

## **DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT**

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (18+)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Assenting Child (13-17)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

## Research Participant Information and Consent Form

*Your daughter has been asked to participate in a research study conducted by researcher, Pamela R. Smith and principal investigator, Dr. Carl S. Taylor from Michigan State University. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the research study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.*

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- Your daughter has been selected as a possible participant in this study because she is an urban African American female between the ages of 13-19 and lives in the City of Detroit, MI.
- Your daughter's participation in this study is totally voluntary which involves four group meetings that will last approximately 1.5 to 2 hours each time and correspondence on Twitter to view designated hip-hop/rap music videos.
  - If she is under 18, she cannot be in this study without parental permission. If she is interested in participating in the study I have recommended that she takes the time to talk to her parent(s) before making a final decision. Your daughter has been given this permission (consent) form for you to sign. Even if you sign the permission form and she decides that she does not want to be part of the study, she does not have to participate. If you give permission and your daughter wants to take part in the study, she must give her assent (permission) by signing a consent form that acknowledges that she understands what this research project is about and that her participation is voluntary.

### WHAT THE PARTICIPANT WILL DO

As a participant in this study your daughter will meet in groups with her peers to view magazine covers from several popular Black magazines that feature an African American woman on the cover. Also, she will view several hip-hop/rap music videos from links sent through Twitter and tweet your comments about the African American women in the videos. Additionally, your daughter will be asked to fill out a number of different surveys. One survey asks questions about demographic (e.g., race, gender)



information. Another focuses on questions designed to measure self-esteem. The other surveys ask questions that pertain to viewing the images of African American women from the magazine covers and hip-hop/rap music videos.

The group sessions will be audio taped and video taped for later analysis. At anytime in the study your daughter can ask to have the audio or video tape turned off or choose not to participate. All of the information gathered in the study will be securely stored in a locked file cabinet or password protected computer in Dr. Taylor's office at Michigan State University. No identifying information will be stored with the data.

### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS**

Your daughter will not directly benefit from her participation in this study. However, your daughter's participation in this study may contribute to the understanding of how mass media and popular culture images of African American women the interpretation of influence the life choices, life chances, and self-esteem of urban adolescent African American females.

### **POTENTIAL RISKS**

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study. The participants will give their perspective regarding the images of African American women pictured on selected magazine covers and hip-hop/rap music videos and whether they believe the images are influential to them and their peers.

### **PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

The data collected for this project will remain confidential; it will not contain your daughter's name or any identifying information such as a nick name, social security number or address (including Twitter address). No one except the primary investigators will have access to the data collected from the interviews and tweeted responses. All of the information collected will be de-identified and your daughter will not be tied to her responses.

Results from the project will be based on answers from all of the participants, keeping individual responses confidential. The results of this project may also be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain anonymous and kept confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law. Audiotapes and videotapes will be stored in the locked office of Dr. Taylor at Michigan State University and erased after five years.

I agree to allow audiotaping/videotaping of the interview.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Initials\_\_\_\_\_

### **THE PARTICIPANTS RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW**

Your daughter's participation in this research project is completely by choice. She has the right to say no. Your daughter may choose not to answer specific questions that make her uncomfortable or to stop participating at any time. She can withdraw from the project at any time for any reason without penalty.

### **COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY**

Your daughter will not receive money or any other form of compensation for participating in this study.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher Pamela R. Smith at (517) 353-9237 or email [minifeep@msu.edu](mailto:minifeep@msu.edu) or regular mail at 410A Berkey Hall, 509 E. Circle Drive, East Lansing, MI 48824. You may also contact the principal investigator, Dr. Carl S. Taylor at (517) 353-9237 or email [taylor36@msu.edu](mailto:taylor36@msu.edu) or regular mail at 410B Berkey Hall, 509 E. Circle Drive, East Lansing, MI 48824.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail [irb@msu.edu](mailto:irb@msu.edu) or regular mail at Olds Hall, 408 West Circle Drive #207, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

## **DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT**

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (parent or guardian)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

## Research Participant Exit Form

This form acknowledges that you no longer want to be part of the research study.

**Study Title:** The Image of African American Women as Presented by American Mass Media and Popular Culture: Interpretations by Urban African American Adolescent Females Regarding Their Life Chances, Life Choices, and Self-Esteem

**Researcher and Title:** Pamela R. Smith, doctoral candidate

**Researcher and Title:** Carl S. Taylor, professor

**Department and Institution:** Department of Sociology, Michigan State University

**Address and Contact Information:** Pamela R. Smith, 410A Berkey Hall, 509 E. Circle Drive, East Lansing, MI 48824, [minifeep@msu.edu](mailto:minifeep@msu.edu) or (517) 353-9237

**Address and Contact Information:** Dr. Carl S. Taylor, 410B Berkey Hall, 509 E. Circle Drive, East Lansing, MI 48824, [taylor36@msu.edu](mailto:taylor36@msu.edu) or (517) 353-9257

I \_\_\_\_\_ have decided that I no longer wish to participate in *The Influence of the Image of African American Women as Presented by American Mass Media and Popular Culture on the Life Chances, Life Choices, and Self-Esteem of Urban African American Adolescent Females* project. My decision to leave the project means that I will no longer voluntarily attend the group sessions or be expected to tweet any comments in reference to information from this study. From this day forward I will no longer be part of the group.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (18+)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Assenting Child (13-17)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

You will be given a copy of this form to keep

## APPENDIX B

### **Interview Questions**

*Pop culture images* – are images selected from depictions of African American women on magazine covers and rap videos that are heavily viewed by African Americans.

- 1) What do you think of this picture/video?
- 2) Does this person in this picture/video represent you?
- 3) Do you wish that you could be the person in the picture? Why or why not?
- 4) Do you think African American adolescent girls want to be like the images of the African American women on the magazine covers or videos?
- 5) Do you think that young African American girls are inspired by the magazines or videos for hair, clothes, and music choices?

*Life chances* – A term used in Max Weber's analysis of class and status...The term subsequently passed into general usage, notably in studies of social mobility, where the closed nature of a society diminishes the opportunities (chances) for advancement of social classes, women, and ethnic or racialized minorities. It includes chances for educational attainment, health, material reward, and status mobility (Marshall 2003).

- 1) Do you want to do what any of the African American women on the magazine covers or in the music video are doing?
- 2) How would you describe the educational background of the African American women in these images?
- 3) What type of income do you think you can earn if you want to do what the African American women on the magazine covers or in the music video are doing?
- 4) Are you going to finish high school or go to college to have a career like any of the African American women on the magazine covers or in the videos?
- 5) Do you believe that obtaining a career like one of the African American women in

these images will offer you a better life?

- 6) The African American women in these images appear to be healthy, is this important to you?
- 7) Do you think that African American adolescent girls are strongly influenced by the images of African American women on magazine covers or in the videos?

*Life choices* – I find that life choices is related to *self-efficacy* – A theory of situation-specific self-confidence that proposes that self-efficacy is fundamental to initiating certain behavior necessary for competent performance. According to the theory, self-efficacy is enhanced by four factors: successful performances, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. Successful performance, which can be achieved by participatory modeling, is regarded as the most important factor (Kent 1998).

- 1) Do you ever try to be like any of the African American women on the magazine covers or in the videos?
- 2) Are the clothes that you choose to wear like any of the African American women in the images?
- 3) How do you decide how to wear your hair?
- 4) Do think that other African American adolescent girls try to copy your style?
- 5) Do you think that African American adolescent girls want to be like the images on the magazine covers or in the videos?
- 6) Do you think that African American adolescent girls want to be like any of these images to impress their peers?
- 7) Do you feel the opinion of your peers influences which magazine covers or music video images you think are important?

## APPENDIX C

### **Demographic Variables and Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale**

## **Demographic Variables**

**Please list your demographic information below:**

Gender\_\_\_\_\_

Race\_\_\_\_\_

Age\_\_\_\_\_

Grade\_\_\_\_\_

Income Level\_\_\_\_\_

Parental Unit\_\_\_\_\_



### Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale

BELOW IS A LIST OF STATEMENTS DEALING WITH YOUR GENERAL FEELINGS ABOUT YOURSELF. SELECT WHETHER YOU **STRONGLY AGREE**, **AGREE**, **DISAGREE**, OR IF YOU **STRONGLY DISAGREE** WITH THE STATEMENT.

STATEMENT		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.	I feel that I have a number of good qualities..	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4.	I am able to do things as well as most other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5.	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6.	I take a positive attitude toward myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7.	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.	I wish I could have more respect for myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.	I certainly feel useless at times.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10.	At times I think I am no good at all.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## APPENDIX D

### **Demographic Chart and Self-Esteem Scale Before & After Results**

**Table 3 Demographic Chart and Self-Esteem Scale Before & After Results**

Participant AKA	Grade	Parental Unit	Income Level	Race	Gender	Age	*SES Before	*SES After
1. Karla	11 - Junior	Both Parents	unanswered	AA	Female	16	30=H	30=H
2. Donna	12 - Senior	Mother	unanswered	AA	Female	18	27=H	26=H
3. Jamekia	12 - Senior	Mother	Low 7.4 hr.	AA	Female	17	25=N	25=N
4. Cynthia	12 - Senior	Mother	none	AA	Female	18	25=N	23=N
5. Sandra	11 - Junior	Mother	none	AA	Female	16	29=H	28=H
6. Paulette	11 - Junior	Mother	None	AA	Female	17	26=H	27=H
7. Michelle	12 - Senior	Mother	Low 7.72hr	AA	Female	18	26=H	26=H
8. Quillian	9 - Freshman	Mother	10,000+	AA	Female	13	25=N	24=N
9. Theresa	9 - Freshman	Mother	None	AA	Female	14	27=H	27=H
10. Candi	10 - Soph	Mother	None	AA	Female	15	28=H	28=H
11. Patricia	10 - Soph	Mother	Unemployed	AA	Female	15	27=H	28=H
12. Vivian	9 - Freshman	Mother	30,000	AA	Female	13	27=H	28=H
13. Kim	11 - Junior	Mother	25,000	AA	Female	16	27=H	27=H
14. Char	11 - Junior	Mother	40,000	AA	Female	16	30=H	30=H
15. Gail	11 - Junior	Mother	25,000	AA	Female	16	30=H	30=H
16. Evelyn	12 - Senior	Mother	low	AA	Female	18	20=N	21=N
17. Tyonna	12 - Senior	Mother	0	AA	Female	19	30=H	30=H
18. Danna	11 - Junior	Mother	40,000	AA	Female	17	25=N	25=N
19. Erica	11 - Junior	Mother	35,000	AA	Female	17	30=H	30=H
20. Alexis	11 - Junior	Mother	NA	AA	Female	17	22=N	22=N
21. Louise	10 - Soph	Grandmother		AA	Female	16	25=N	25=N
22. Sharon	12 - Senior	Grandmother Mother	Low income	Black	Female	19	29=H	29=H
23. Karen	12 - Senior	Mother	\$2,500	AA	Female	18	30=H	30=H
24. Tracy	10 - Soph	Both Parents	Unanswered	AA	Female	15	30=H	30=H
25. Angel	12 - Senior	Mother		AA	Female	19	25=N	24=N
26. Kelly	12 - Senior	Mother	20,000	AA	Female	19	30=H	30=H
27. Starr	12 - Senior	Both Parents	Unanswered	AA	Female	18	23=N	23=N
28. Sheryl	12 - Senior	Mother	7,000	AA	Female	19	25=N	25=N
29. Monique	12 - Senior	Both til 12	75,000	AA	Female	18	23=N	20=N
30. Gwen	12 - Senior	Both til 5	75,000	AA	Female	18	24=N	24=N
31. Bobbi	12 - Senior	Grandmother	5,000-8,000	AA	Female	18	30=H	30=H
32. Shaun	9 - Freshman	Mother	10, 000	AA	Female	14	23=N	19=N
33. Tanya	11 - Junior	Mother	10-50,000	AA	Female	16	18=N	21=N
34. Monica	9 - Freshman	Mother	unemployed	AA	Female	13	22=N	22=N
35. Tasha	9 - Freshman	Mother	25,000	AA	Female	13	25=N	24=N
36. Jewel	10 - Soph	Mother	35,000	AA	Female	15	25=N	25=N
37. Octavia	10 - Soph	Mother	unanswered	AA	Female	15	25=N	25=N
38. Tina	9 - Freshman	Mother	25,000	AA	Female	14	30=H	30=H
39. Asia	11 - Junior	Mother	unemployed	AA	Female	17	23=N	24=N
40. Tiesha	11 - Junior	Mother	Unanswered	AA	Female	17	30=H	30=H

\*SES denotes Self-Esteem Scale. Total Participants: age 13=4 14=3 15=5 16=7 17=7  
18=9 19=5

## APPENDIX E

### **Themes and Codes**

**Pop Culture** – are images selected from depictions of African American women on magazine covers and rap videos that are heavily viewed by African Americans.

- 1) What do you think of this picture/video? **OPIN PIC/OPIN VID**
- 2) Does this person in this picture/video represent you? **PIC REP/VID REP**
- 3) Do you wish that you could be the person in the picture/video? Why or why not?  
**PERS PIC/PERS VID**
- 4) Do you think African American adolescent girls want to be like the images of the African American women on the magazine covers or in music videos? **OPIN AAG IMG AAW MC/OPIN AAG IMG AAW VID**
- 5) Do you think that young African American girls are inspired by the African American women on magazine covers or in music videos for hair, clothes, and music choices? **OPIN AAG INS MC HC&M/OPIN AAG INS VID HC&M**

**Life Chances** - A term used in Max Weber's analysis of class and status...The term subsequently passed into general usage, notably in studies of social mobility, where the closed nature of a society diminishes the opportunities (chances) for advancement of social classes, women, and ethnic or racialized minorities. It includes chances for educational attainment, health, material reward, and status mobility (Marshall 2003).

- 1) Do you want to do what any of the African American women on the magazine covers or videos are doing? **D MC/D VID**
- 2) How would you describe the educational background of the African American women in these images? **EDUC BCK**
- 3) What type of income do you think you can earn if you want to do what the African American women on the magazine covers or videos are doing? **INC MC/INC VID**
- 4) Are you going to finish high school or go to college to have a career like any of the African American women on the magazine covers or in the music videos? **FSH/C MC CAR/FSH/C VID CAR**
- 5) Do you believe that obtaining a career like one of the African American women in these images will offer you a better life? **MC BTTR L/VID BTTR L**
- 6) The African American women in these images appear to be healthy, is this important to you? **HLTH IMP**
- 7) Do you think that African American adolescent girls are strongly influenced by the images of African American women on magazine covers or in the music videos? **INF IMG**

**Life Choices** – I find that life choices is related to *self-efficacy* – A theory of situation-specific self-confidence that proposes that self-efficacy is fundamental to initiating certain behavior necessary for competent performance. According to the theory, self-efficacy is enhanced by four factors: successful performances, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. Successful performance, which can be achieved by participatory modeling, is regarded as the most important factor (Kent 1998).

- 1) Do you ever try to be like any of the African American women on the magazine covers or in the music videos? **BLK MC/BLK VID**
- 2) Are the clothes that you choose to wear like any of the African American women in the images? **CLTHS IMG**
- 3) How do you decide how to wear your hair? **WR HR**
- 4) Do you think that other African American adolescent girls try to copy your personal style? **OPIN CPY STYL**
- 5) Do you think that African American adolescent girls want to be like the images on the magazine covers or in the music videos? **BLK IMG MC/BLK IMG VID**
- 6) Do you think that African American adolescent girls want to be like any of these images to impress their peers? **IMG IMP PRS**
- 7) Do you feel the opinion of your peers' influences which magazine covers or music video images you think are important? **OPIN PRS INF MC/OPIN PRS INF V**

## APPENDIX F

### **Participant Recruitment Fliers**

# How do YOU feel about the way African American women are portrayed in the media?



As an African American woman that grew up in Detroit, I am interested in hearing your thoughts. If you are a female age 13-19 and feel like making **YOUR** voice heard, please come to the gathering this Tuesday (2/12/13) after school.

Drinks and snacks will be served.

**WHERE:** Conference Room

**TIME:** 3:45pm

Thank you,  
Pamela Smith  
Michigan State University

**Figure 2 Participant Recruitment Flier-Community Center**



# How do YOU feel about the way African American women are portrayed in the media?



As an African American woman that grew up in Detroit, I am interested in hearing your thoughts. If you are a female age 13-19 and feel like making **YOUR** voice heard, please come to the gathering this Tuesday (2/12/13) after school.

Drinks and snacks will be served.

**WHERE:** High School - Room 120

**TIME:** 3:45pm

Thank you,  
Pamela Smith  
Michigan State University

**Figure 3 Participant Recruitment Flier-High School**

## APPENDIX G

### **Selected Magazine Covers**



Figure 4 First Lady Michelle Obama ESSENCE October 2011 Issue





Figure 5 BLACK MEN May 2011 Issue



Figure 6 Tyra & Iman BLACK ENTERPRISE September 2011 Issue





Figure 7 Nicki Minaj JUCY May/June 2011 Issue



Figure 8 Chandra Wilson HEART & SOUL April/May 2011 Issue



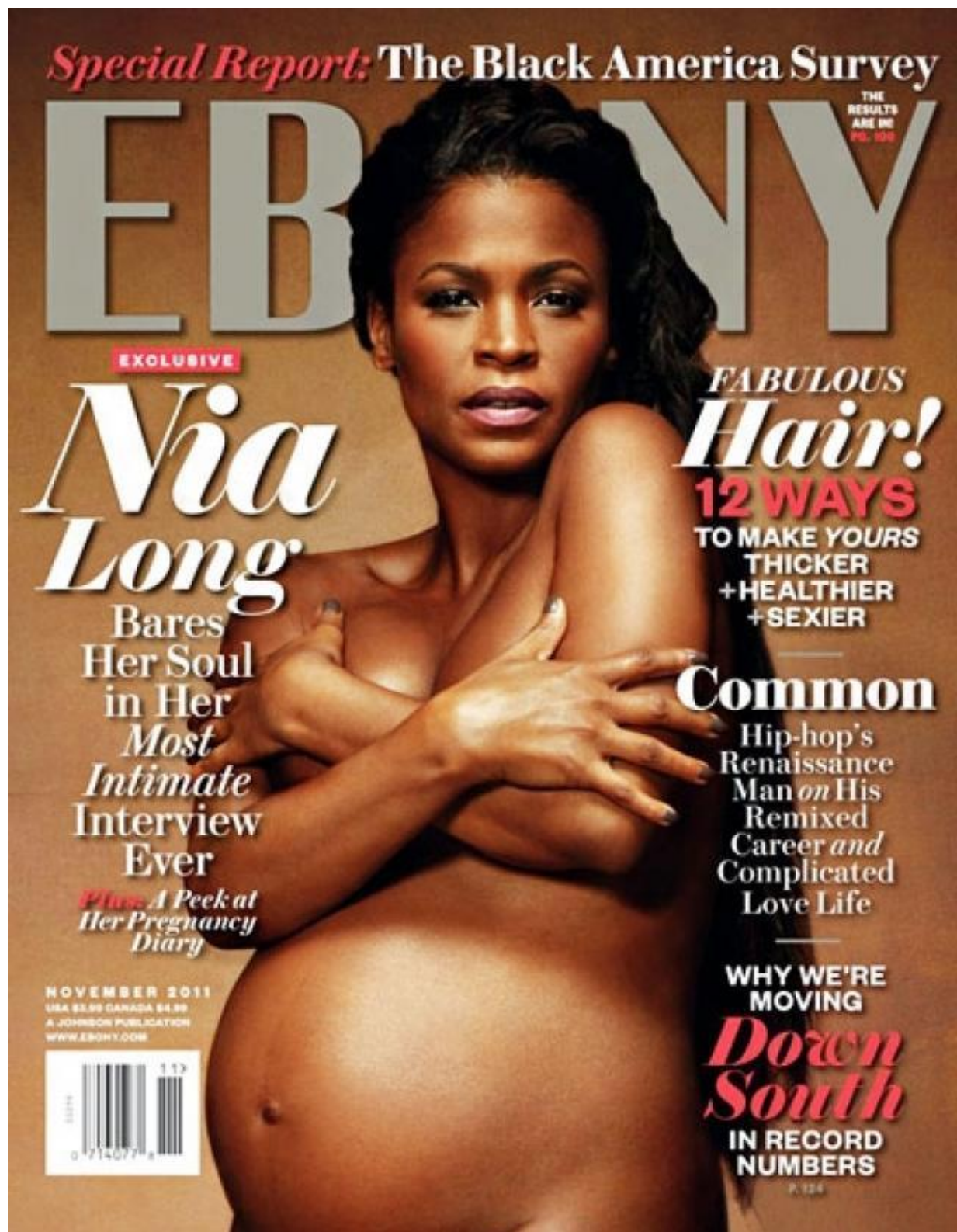


Figure 9 Nia Long EBONY November 2011 Issue





Figure 10 Oprah Winfrey JET February 2011 Issue



AIN'T NOTHIN' SWEET: THE 16TH ANNUAL JUICE ISSUE  
LIL WAYNE'S CASH COW ☘ ARE YOU A REALITY STAR? ☘ MARY'S MY LIFE II

**Kelly Rowland**  
FINALLY BARES ALL  
**Amy Winehouse**  
DEATH OF A TROUBLED SOUL  
1983-2011

☘  
**JUICE**  
THE NEW  
GUARD  
  
**ADELE**  
**BRUNO MARS**  
**ODD FUTURE**  
**KEVIN HART**  
**DERRICK ROSE**  
**KEN JEONG**  
**@50CENT**  
**TECH N9NE**  
**CHRISTOPHER WALLACE, JR.**  
**BIG SEAN**  
**ZOE KRAVITZ**  
**MIGUEL**  
**LAZ ALONSO**  
AND MORE

SCAN HERE FOR  
KELLY ROWLAND  
EXCLUSIVE  
DIGITAL COVER



**VIBE**  
**COM**



0 49226 00000 0  
\$4.99 US

◆  
LEARN TO SHAVE,  
YOU BARBARIAN!  
NEW YORK'S  
THOROUGH FASHION  
\* [You not feelin' us fine/Cevts you nothin' /Pay us na mind]

+

**\*JAY-Z'S**  
**G.O.A.T. ALBUM**  
**URNS 10**

Figure 11 Kelly Rowland VIBE July/August 2011 Issue





Figure 12 Tameka (Foster) Raymond SISTER 2 SISTER April 2011 Issue



Figure 13 Beyoncé HYPE HAIR July/August 2011 Issue

## APPENDIX H

### **Hip-Hop/Rap Music Video Links**

1. Beyoncé- “Run The World (Girls)”

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBmMU\\_iwe6U&feature=topics](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBmMU_iwe6U&feature=topics)

2. Lil Wayne- “How To Love”

<http://youtu.be/y8Gf4-eT3w0>

3. Miguel- “Sure Thing”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4GJVOMjCC4&ob=av3n>

4. Kelly Rowland (Feat. Lil Wayne)- “Motivation”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1XozsBN5Z4&ob=av3n>

5. YC (Feat. Future & Nelly)- “Racks”

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5w21\\_Vphbg&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5w21_Vphbg&feature=related)

6. DJ Khaled (Feat. Drake, Rick Ross & Lil Wayne)- “I’m On One”

<http://youtu.be/Z09lYqdxqzo>

7. Trey Songz- “Love Faces”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzhKarW3ylo&ob=av2n>

8. Wiz Khalifa- “Roll Up”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhQz-0QVmQ0&ob=av2e>

9. Chris Brown “She Ain’t You”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7V2GzYcRK9E&ob=av2e>

10. Lil Wayne ft. Cory Gunz – “6 Foot 7 Foot”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7tOAGY59uQ>

## APPENDIX I

### **Single Random Sample Data**



## BLACK ENTERPRISE 2011 MAGAZINE COVERS



Figure 14 Black Enterprise January 2011 Issue



Figure 15 1) Black Enterprise February 2011 Issue



Figure 16 2) Black Enterprise March 2011 Issue



Figure 17 3) Black Enterprise April 2011 Issue





Figure 18 4) Black Enterprise May 2011 Issue



Figure 19 Black Enterprise June 2011 Issue



Figure 20 Black Enterprise July 2011 Issue



Figure 21 5) Black Enterprise August 2011 Issue



Figure 22 6) Black Enterprise September 2011 Issue



Figure 23 Black Enterprise October 2011 Issue



Figure 24 Black Enterprise November 2011 Issue



Figure 25 7) Black Enterprise December 2011 Issue

## BLACK MEN 2011 MAGAZINE COVERS



Figure 26 1) Black Men January 2011 Issue



Figure 27 Black Men February 2011 Issue

Cover Unavailable: Black Men March 2011 Issue

Cover Unavailable: Black Men April 2011 Issue



Figure 28 2) Black Men May 2011 Issue

Cover Unavailable: Black Men June 2011 Issue



Figure 29 3) Black Men July 2011 Issue

Cover Unavailable: Black Men August 2011 Issue





Figure 30 4) Black Men September 2011 Issue



Figure 31 Black Men October 2011 Issue



Figure 32 Black Men November 2011 Issue



Figure 33 Black Men December 2011 Issue

## EBONY 2011 MAGAZINE COVERS

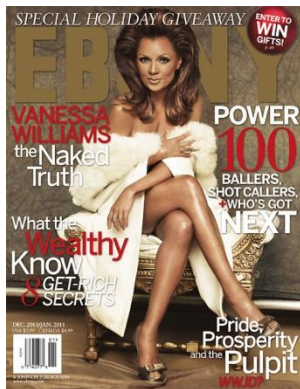


Figure 34 1) Vanessa Williams Ebony January 2011 Issue



Figure 35 2) Beyoncé Knowles and Jay-Z Ebony February 2011 Issue



Figure 36 3) Halle Berry Ebony March 2011 Issue



Figure 37 4) Monique Ebony April 2011 Issue



Figure 38 5) Paula Patton, Loretta Devine, Angela Bassett, Ebony May 2011 Issue





Figure 39 6) Jill Scott, Ebony June 2011 Issue



Figure 40 7) Taraji, Ebony July 2011 Issue



Figure 41 7) Taraji, Ebony July 2011 Issue



Figure 42 8) Zoe Saldana, Ebony September 2011 Issue



Figure 43 8) Zoe Saldana, Ebony September 2011 Issue



Figure 44 10) Nia Long, Ebony November 2011 Issue



Figure 45 11) Jennifer Hudson, Ebony December 2011 Issue

## ESSENCE 2011 MAGAZINE COVERS

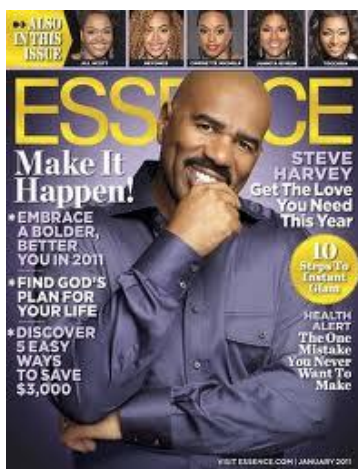


Figure 46 Steve Harvey, Essence January 2011 Issue



Figure 47 1) Regina King, Essence February 2011 Issue

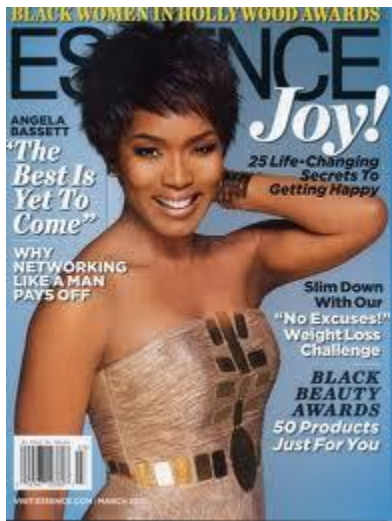


Figure 48 2) Angela Bassett, Essence March 2011 Issue



Figure 49 3) Jennifer Hudson, Essence April 2011 Issue



Figure 50 4) Wendy Williams, Essence May 2011 Issue



Figure 51 5) Alicia Keys, Essence June 2011 Issue

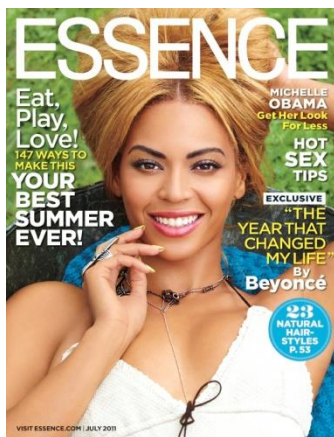


Figure 52 6) Beyoncé, Essence July 2011 Issue





Figure 53 7) Viola Davis, Essence August 2011 Issue



Figure 54 8) Tracee Ellis Ross, Essence September 2011 Issue



Figure 55 9) Michelle Obama, Essence October 2011 Issue



Figure 56 Idris Elba, Essence November 2011 Issue



Figure 57 10) Tasha Smith, Essence December 2011 Issue

## HEART and SOUL 2011 MAGAZINE COVERS

Cover unavailable: Heart and Soul December/January 2011 Issue



Figure 58 1) Heart and Soul February/March 2011 Issue



Figure 59 2) Heart and Soul April/May 2011 Issue





Figure 60 3) Heart and Soul June/July 2011 Issue

Cover unavailable: Heart and Soul August/September 2011 Issue



Figure 61 4) Heart and Soul October/November 2011 Issue

Cover unavailable: Heart and Soul December/January 2012 Issue

## HYPE HAIR 2011 MAGAZINE COVERS



Figure 62 1) Hype Hair January 2011 Issue

Cover unavailable: Hype Hair February 2011 Issue

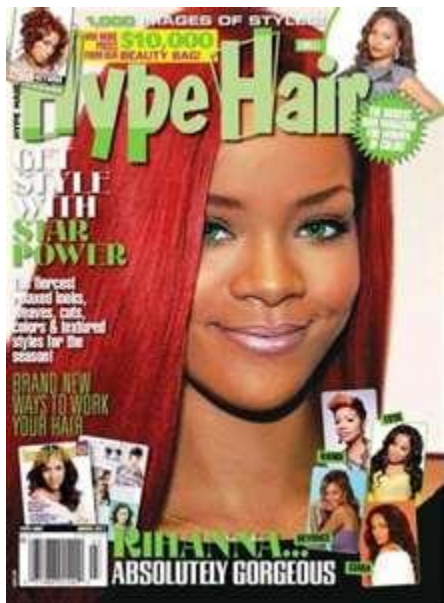


Figure 63 2) Hype Hair March 2011 Issue

Cover unavailable: Hype Hair April 2011 Issue

Cover unavailable: Hype Hair May 2011 Issue

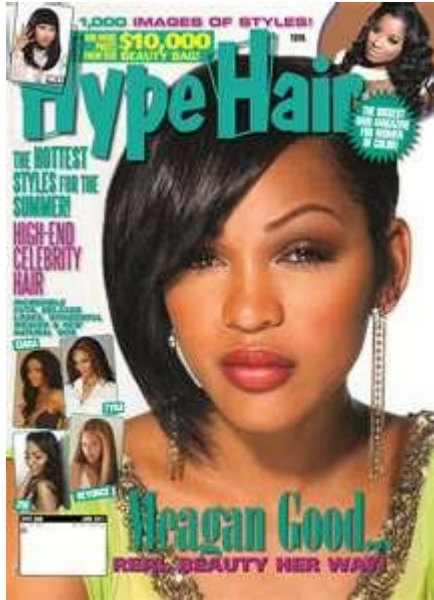


Figure 64 3) Hype Hair June 2011 Issue



Figure 65 3) Hype Hair June 2011 Issue



Figure 66 5) Hype Hair September 2011 Issue

Cover unavailable: Hype Hair October 2011 Issue



Figure 67 6) Hype Hair November 2011 Issue

Cover unavailable: Hype Hair December 2011 Issue

## JET 2011 MAGAZINE COVERS



Figure 68 1) Halle Berry, Jet January 2011 Issue



Figure 69 2) Oprah Winfrey, Jet February 2011 Issue





Figure 70 3) Kimora Simmons, Jet March 2011 Issue



Figure 71 Tyrese, Jet April 2011 Issue



Figure 72 4) Jennifer Hudson, Jet May 2011 Issue



Figure 73 5) Garcelle Beauvais, Jet June 2011 Issue



Figure 74 6) Tisha Campbell-Martin, Jet July 2011 Issue



Figure 75 Chris Tucker, Jet August 2011 Issue





Figure 76 7) Sanaa, Jet September 2011 Issue



Figure 77 50 Cent, Jet October 2011 Issue



Figure 78 8) The Real Housewives of Atlanta, Jet November 2011 Issue



Figure 79 9) Kelly Rowland, Jet December 2011 Issue

## JUICY 2011 MAGAZINE COVERS



Figure 80 1) Juicy January/February 2011 Issue



Figure 81 2) Juicy March/April 2011 Issue



Figure 82 3) Juicy May/June 2011 Issue



Figure 83 4) Juicy July 2011 Issue



Figure 84 5) Juicy August 2011 Issue



Figure 85 6) Juicy September 2011 Issue



Figure 86 7) Juicy October 2011 Issue





Figure 87 8) Juicy November 2011 Issue



Figure 88 9) Juicy December 2011 Issue

## SISTER 2 SISTER 2011 MAGAZINE COVERS



Figure 89 1) Sister 2 Sister January 2011 Issue



Figure 90 2) Sister 2 Sister February 2011 Issue

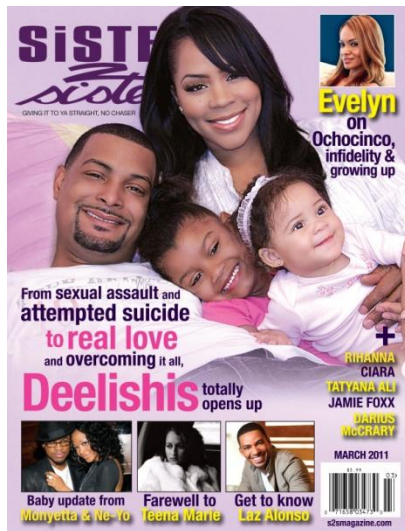


Figure 91 3) Sister 2 Sister March 2011 Issue



Figure 92 4) Sister 2 Sister April 2011 Issue



Figure 93 5) Sister 2 Sister May 2011 Issue



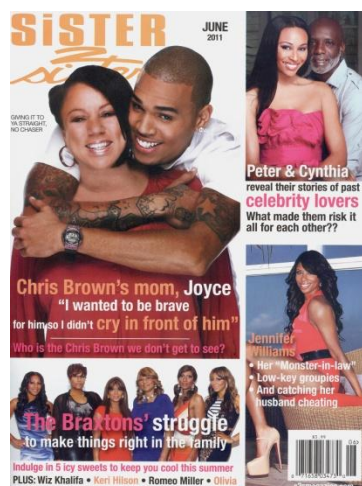


Figure 94 6) Sister 2 Sister June 2011 Issue



Figure 95 7) Sister 2 Sister July 2011 Issue



Figure 96 8) Sister 2 Sister August 2011 Issue



Figure 97 9) Sister 2 Sister September 2011 Issue



Figure 98 10) Sister 2 Sister October 2011 Issue



Figure 99 11) Sister 2 Sister November 2011 Issue



Figure 100 12) Sister 2 Sister December 2011 Issue

## VIBE 2011 MAGAZINE COVERS



Figure 101 1) Vibe January 2011 Issue



Figure 102 Vibe February/March 2011 Issue



Figure 103 Vibe April/May 2011 Issue



Figure 104 Vibe June/July 2011 Issue



Figure 105 2) Vibe July/August 2011 Issue





Figure 106 Vibe Magazine August/September 2011 Issue



Figure 107 Vibe October/November 2011 Issue



Figure 108 Vibe December 2011/January 2012 Issue

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