

INFLUENCE OF FEMALE SEXUAL SCRIPTS DEPICTED IN HIP HOP ON AFRICAN  
AMERICAN YOUNG ADOLESCENT UNDERSTANDING OF SEXUALITY

by

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(Under the Direction of Lynda Walters)

ABSTRACT

This study examined young adolescent African Americans' understanding of sexuality through the analysis of female sexual scripts embedded in Hip Hop culture. It was found that these sexual scripts were widely recognized by these participants. Understandings of the values given to race, physical attractiveness, and appropriate sexual behaviors were integral to the usage of these conceptual frameworks. Furthermore, self associations and interpersonal relationships were central to the negotiation of these sexual scripts usage. Together, these findings provided insights into factors that influence conceptualizations of appropriate sexual behaviors for African American females and have implications for interventions addressing sexual health issues and behavioral outcomes within this unique population.

INDEX WORDS: African American, adolescence, sexual scripts, human sexuality, gender, race, mass media, parents, peers

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother, Elaine Elsie Trotman, and my aunt, Maria Laforey Amos. And to my parents, Bernard and Patricia Stephens, who have given unconditional love, guidance and support in all facets of my life.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

If you are a woman in Hip- Hop you are either a hard bitch who will kill for her man, or you're a fly bitch who can sex up her man. Or you're a fucked-up lesbian (Roberts & Ulen, 2000).

Although there are more representations of African American females available for consumption in the mass media than ever before, the content of these images has changed little over the past century (Gillespie, 1993; hooks, 1998; Staples, 1994; Weinberg & Williams, 1988; Wyatt, 1991). Furthermore, the influence of these visual cues on this populations' sexual development has received little attention in the research literature, despite growing evidence that they directly affect the sexual decision making processes and behavioral outcomes of African American adolescents (e.g., Gillum, 2002; Wingood, DiClemente, Harrington, Davies, Hook & Oh, 2001; Wingood, DiClemente, Berhnardt, Harrington, Davies, Robillard & Hook, 2003).

This purpose of this study was to increase our understanding of young adolescent African Americans' sexual health by exploring the meanings they attribute to sexuality through visual and behavioral cues known as sexual scripts. Sexual scripts are the set of ideas and norms that prescribe ways of thinking about and regulating sex and sexuality. To understand how individuals utilize sexual scripts, it is useful to think about sexuality as being 'socially scripted' in that it is a 'part' that is learned and acted out within a social context; different social contexts

have different social scripts (Jackson, 1996). Ideas about sexuality, as evidenced through physical traits (i.e., phenotypic characteristics, clothing styles, body language) and behaviors (i.e., earlier sexual onset, rape) become indicators for identifying and categorizing sexual scripts. Individuals use scripts to both define their own sexual beingness and predict others' sexual beingness. In the United States, sexual scripts are often conveyed through the media, in particular television programming and music genres (Cowen, Lee, Levy, & Snyder, 1988; Malamuth & Check, 1981; Smith, 1976; Waggett, 1989). However, as the various genres of the mass media are racially segregated in terms of who is being targeted (e.g., Botta, 2000; Comstock & Scharrer, 1999; Hazel-Ford & Sarvela, 1992; Heaton & Wilson, 1995; Makkar & Strube, 1995), the types of sexual scripts being projected and consumed differ across racial groups. For example, Stephens and Phillips (2003) identified eight female sexual scripts unique to the African American youth culture known as Hip Hop: the Diva, Gold Digger, Freak, Dyke, Gangster Bitch, Sister Savior, Earth Mother, and Baby Mama.

The specific purpose of the present study was to assess the values and meanings given to these eight sexual scripts unique to Hip Hop culture through the analysis of young adolescent African American females' and males' responses to them. The definitions of these scripts and their influence on beliefs about African American female sexuality were examined. It was contended that these sexual scripts organized young African American adolescent females' and males' understandings of adolescent African American female sexuality. They also shaped how they conceptualize appropriate sexual interactions. Based on these assertions, three broad questions served as a guide for this study:

1. How are the eight sexual scripts understood by African American young adolescents?

2. In what ways are these scripts unique to African American females, both in terms of their own individual experiences and in broader African American youth culture?
3. How do these scripts inform their attitudes and beliefs about African American female sexuality?

Researchers have greatly benefited from understanding how sexual scripts affect sexual identity development, decision making processes, and behavioral outcomes of Euro-American adolescents and gay and lesbian populations (e.g., Alksnis, Desmariais, & Wood, 1996; Klinkenberg & Rose, 1994; Maticka-Tyndale, 1991; Rose, 1998). Unfortunately, there have been no studies that specifically explore sexual scripts within African American populations, even with preliminary research finding that Hip Hop culture messages about sexuality influence behavioral outcomes (Wingood et al., 2001, 2003). This is unfortunate given sexual scripts in African American adolescent population may provide insight into two areas of significance in the human sexuality literature.

First, the importance of race for understanding ideas about sexuality has been widely debated in the literature for decades (e.g., Gould, 1981; Raimondo, 2003; Rogers, 1970; Sarich & Wilson, 1967). It is recognized that, in different cultures, women contend with sexuality messages that appear to outline subordinate roles (Gomez & Marin, 1996); furthermore, these messages are defined and valued differently within racially defined subgroups (e.g., Collins, 2000; hooks, 1992, 1998; Morton, 1991; Williams & Willis, 2002). African American women in the United States must make sense of their sexuality within a mainstream Euro-American culture that often offers contradictory racialized messages about sexuality. For example, media and narrative accounts still indicate the good, innocent, virginal female is the idealized image of womanhood for Euro-American females, but this image is considered unattainable for African

American females (Collins, 1991; hooks, 1995, 1992). Even within the conceptualizations of empirical research, African American women are presented as sexually experienced, engaging in high-risk behaviors, and amoral (Brown & McNair, 1995; Wyatt, 1991, 1997).

Second, there is a need to understand why behavioral outcomes— the traditional focus of adolescent sexuality research— appear to differ so greatly across racial groups (McLoyd, 1998; Murry, 1992). It is suggested here that race, along with gender and socio- historical realities, inform the development of sexual meanings. This, in turn, shapes decision making processes and interactions, information that prior research has found predicts behavioral outcomes. As such, understanding the ways in which sexuality is conceptualized by this particular population is important given their sexual health statistics. Across their gender cohort, African American adolescent women are at the highest risk for adolescent pregnancy, early sexual onset, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, multiple partners, and significantly older partners (Centers for Disease Control [CDC], 2000; Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 2001). This is particularly troubling, as this population experiences higher rates of non-voluntary first intercourse in comparison to their Euro-American and Hispanic counterparts (CDC, 2000; DHHS, 2001). Among adolescent males aged 12- 18, the rates of sexual activity and sexually transmitted diseases are highest among African Americans (Alan Guttmacher Institute [AIG], 1993; CDC, 2000). In fact, AIDS is the fifth leading cause of death among African American males in this age group (CDC, 1996).

To provide an in-depth understanding of how sexual scripts shape conceptualization of sexuality, data were gathered from young adolescent African American females and males, aged eleven to fourteen living in a college town in the southern part of the United States. Clearly,

issues of age and geographic norms and beliefs (particularly as it relates to music consumption, race, sexuality and gender) are important to consider.

As sexuality research on adolescents in the general population at this age rare, the findings provide unique insights into pre-adolescent attitudes about sexuality. Moreover, when considering African American populations, data collected at this phase of the life span is of particular importance, given that the average age of sexual onset among African American adolescents is 13 (CDC, 2000). Thus, these participants' responses provided information about the beliefs and attitudes of those on the cusp of potential sexual initiation. Furthermore, although these adolescents may not have yet engaged in sexual activity, this study supports previous findings that they have well defined attitudes and beliefs about appropriate sexual behaviors (e.g., Simmons & Blyth, 1987; Skowronski & Carlston, 1989).

Data was gathered from both males and females to provided insight into the ways in which race and gender affect sexual script development among adolescents at this age. As the frameworks for African American adolescent females' sexual scripts are informed through heterosexual relationship expectations, male and female responses together provided insights into potential sexual interactions and attitudes about these exchanges.

Critically analyzing qualitative data collected at this phase of the lifespan is of great importance due to the psychological and physiological changes taking place in this population, including the onset of pubertal development, first sexual initiation, and changes in self- concepts, particularly around sexual and racial identity (e.g., Debold, 1995; McCluskey, Krohn, Lizotte, & Rodriguez, 2002; Phinney, 1990; Phinney & Alipuria, 1996; Wade & Olayiwola, 2002). The use of qualitative methodology also ensured the acknowledgment of the meaningful conceptual

distinctions about appropriate adolescent behaviors that vary across ethnic groups (e.g., Benda & Corwyn, 1998; Jones, 1991; McAdoo, 1991).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This study aims to identify African American adolescents' subjective meanings of sexuality and how their experiences as members of marginalized groups may influence these understandings through an examination of sexual scripts. As schema used to categorize norms regarding appropriate sexual beliefs and behaviors, sexual scripts will be useful for identifying the ways in which this population gives meanings to and values race, gender, interpersonal relationships, and behavioral outcomes in the context of sexuality. Findings from this study are particularly important given previous researchers' tendency to ignore race and intraethnic variations in beliefs and attitudes about sexuality (Benda & Corwyn, 1998; McLoyd, 1996). As well, there is a tendency for researchers to normalize Euro-American adolescents' experience, and it is against these conceptualizations of appropriate behaviors that other populations are compared. (Few, Stephens, & Rouse, 2003; Wiederman, Maynard, & Fretz, 1996).

As there has been little research conducted on these phenomena, an overview of current African American adolescent sexuality research is provided. By drawing upon studies examining general African American female sexuality, sexual scripting, and imagery of African American womanhood, this review provides comprehensive information about the development of meanings given to African American female sexuality, which in turn, informs sexual scripts. The first section outlines the findings and trends in research addressing this population's sexual health. This is followed by an introduction to the concept of sexual scripting. Research that has

contributed to the development and identification of African American female sexual scripts is discussed in the next section. Finally, research on the sources that inform African American adolescent sexual scripts are reviewed.

#### Current Research on African American Adolescent Sexuality

There is clearly a need to investigate dimensions of African American adolescent sexuality given the negative health statistics that characterize this population. Across their gender cohort, African American adolescent women are at the greatest risk for HIV/AIDS transmission, gonorrhea, herpes, syphilis, multiple partners, unplanned pregnancy, non-voluntary intercourse, sexual abuse, and earliest ages of sexual onset (Centers for Disease Control [CDC], 2000). Among adolescent males aged 12 to 18, the rates of sexual activity and sexually transmitted diseases are highest among African Americans, followed by Latinos and Euro-Americans (Alan Guttmacher Institute [AIG], 1993; CDC, 2000). In fact, AIDS is the fifth leading cause of death among African American males in this age group (CDC, 1996).

Although these findings offer important information about sexual outcomes, there are concerns about the applicability of these findings for explaining African American adolescents' unique experiences. Much of what is known about adolescent sexuality has been based on studies that normalize the behaviors of Euro-American adolescents. Those norms are then used as the referent to which other adolescents-- including African Americans-- are compared (McLoyd, 1996). Using this approach fails to provide insight into the possible incongruence across ethnic groups regarding the *meanings* given to risk. This is problematic given that prior research on general adolescent behavior has found meaningful conceptual distinctions about appropriate behaviors across ethnic groups (Benda & Corwyn, 1998).

Recognizing this, it is asserted here that African American adolescents hold different beliefs and give different meanings to their sexual behaviors than their cohort cross culturally. In fact, Sterk-Elifson (1994) has asserted that African American male and females' understandings of appropriate sexual behaviors are processed through sex role socialization and vary by racial and ethnic group (Sterk-Elifson, 1994). Furthermore, Wyatt (1997) found that African American females feel their racial beliefs and experiences were central to the development of conceptualizations of their sexual selves. As such, it is important to understanding how meanings are developed and experienced by African American adolescents. A useful approach to addressing this issue is through an examination of sexual scripts.

### Sexual Scripts

Human sexuality scholars refer to stereotypic frameworks as sexual scripts, and they report that they are useful for the prediction of sexual actions and serve as guides for sexual decision making (Longmore, 1998). These are essentially schemas used to organize ideas about appropriate sexual experiences. Scripts influence norms for sexual behavior, and they are expressed and maintained through their usage (Simon & Gagnon, 1984, 1987). Sexual scripts are also instrumental in the creation of one's belief system, developing a set of attitudes about one's sexual being, and outlining prescriptions for behaviors that not only influence individuals' evaluation of their sexual "beingness," but also impact others' perceptions and evaluations them (Simon & Gagnon, 1987). People develop a sense of sexual meanings through social interactions and exposure to the sexual messages in sexual scripts. These meanings are part of continually changing cultural and social contexts (Longmore, 1998).

Studies on stereotyping may have implications for understanding the ways in which sexual scripts are both assumed and imposed. Stereotypes occur when we classify individuals as

members of a particular group or category of people because they have some characteristic in common (Crawford & Unger 2000, 37). These groupings serve not only as symbolic categories through which adolescents can predict interactions with others, but also create public identities that are recognized and shared by others (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001). They serve both a prescriptive (providing information about behavior) and descriptive (behavior meanings) purpose. For minority populations, obvious characteristics of race and gender are the primary cues that inform stereotypes (Wheeler & Petty, 2001). The meanings given to race, gender, and sexuality converge to inform assumptions about the sexual scripts of African American adolescent females (Gan, Zillman, & Mitrook, 1997; Gillum, 2002).

The degree to which an individual, it is suggested here, would assume these sexual scripts would be influenced by both contextual and individual factors. The negotiation of views of ones' self has been found to be moderated by self-identification, particularly as it relates to gender and race (see Longmore, 1998). For example, McCreary and Slavin (1996) found that African American adolescents who constantly see, hear and accept negative stereotypes of African Americans may be more likely to act negatively and to feel negatively about themselves. However, those adolescents who hold positive attitudes about their race may be partially protected against negative stereotypes and may be better prepared to withstand internal and/or external pressures to behave and to feel negatively. Crocker and Major (1989) suggested that members of marginalized groups are able to maintain high self esteem even with the negative images or stereotypes that may exist about them, in part because they use such strategies as in-group comparison.

Furthermore, the use of these scripts is specific to social context. An African American female, for instance, may draw upon aspects of the highly sexualized Freak at a club on Saturday

night; the next morning this same woman might make use of Sister Savior characteristics as she enters church. Identification processes are not static; how one perceives and projects themselves differs according to relationship and interactions with others at different times (Gagnon, 1990). Thus it is important to gather comprehensive information about all levels of sexual script socialization. The meanings developed in these contexts will provide sexual messages that are unique to each individual's worldviews and experiences. Data on sexual scripts is not easily collected and is often overlooked in African American adolescent sexuality research.

#### African American Sexual Scripts Research

Although evidence supporting the importance and relevance of sexual scripts for understanding conceptualizations about sexual interactions, interpersonal relationships and general sexual health has been found among Euro-Americans and gays and lesbians (cf., Alksnis, Desmariais, & Wood, 1996; Klinkenberg & Rose, 1994; Maticka-Tyndale, 1991; Rose, 1998; Ross & Davis, 1996), research specifically on sexual scripts and their links to sexual meaning among different African American groups is virtually non-existent. The most relevant studies of this phenomena focus on *images* of African American womanhood. For example, there is a body of narrative research that focuses on the foundational images of African American womanhood--the promiscuous Jezebel, asexual Mammy, breeding Welfare Mama, and emasculating Matriarch (cf., Collins, 1991; Morton, 1991).

There has also been preliminary research that suggests that images of African American female sexuality in the media influence behaviors. In one study, African American female adolescents who viewed films with African American females engaging in high levels of sexual content were found to (a) be approximately twice as likely to have multiple sex partners, (b) have more frequent sex, (c) not use contraception during last intercourse, (d) hold negative attitudes

toward condom use, (e) testing positive for chlamydia, and (f) to have a strong desire to conceive (Wingood et al., 2001). Similarly, African American adolescent females who had greater exposure to Hip Hop videos were twice as likely to have had multiple sexual partners, and 1.5 times more likely to have a sexually transmitted disease (Wingood et al., 2003).

Furthermore, images of African American women have also been found to affect African American males. Gillum (2002) investigated the link between stereotypic images of African American women and intimate partner violence in the African American community and found that a large percentage of African American men endorsed stereotypic images of African American women. Endorsements of the images, in turn, were positively related to justification of violence against women.

While these studies contribute valuable information about meanings attributed to African American female sexuality, it is important to recognize that representations consumed by African American adolescents today go beyond providing a mental picture. Using the term “images” assumes that these are simply visual representations or two dimensional symbols of people or objects. The reality is that these are more than mere pictorials that guide behaviors. Rather, the meanings and values exemplified through sexual scripts provide a more comprehensive framework to understand African American female sexuality.

#### Manifestations of African American Female Sexual Scripts

Only recently has there been research that identified sexual scripts unique to African American adolescent women. Specifically, Stephens and Phillips (2003) conceptualized eight sexual scripts unique to this population today: Diva, Gold Digger, Freak, Dyke, Gangster Bitch, Sister Savior, Earth Mother, and Baby Mama. The following section contains a review of the content and meaning of sexuality associated with each sexual script.

The Diva script is commonly applied to women who appear independent and self-supporting economically. The script predicts that the Diva selects partners that primarily bolster her social status and provide companionship. Although she would prefer finding a long-term stable partner, the Diva is willing to trade this off for the attention that a less committed but higher social status partner may offer. The avoidance of overt sexual overtures and relying on conventional heterosexual male-female courting processes is celebrated.

In contrast, the Gold Digger is viewed as someone who trades sex for material and economic rewards. Sex is her commodity because Gold Diggers are not traditionally viewed as being successful in educational, employment, or other economic spheres (Jones, 1994). Gold Diggers are aware that sex is their most powerful commodity; it may be used to barter for basic needs (e.g., purchasing groceries, paying rent, or an electric bill) or leisure items (e.g., pedicures, new clothing, or vacations).

If a woman decides to forego financial gains and only seeks to satisfy her own sexual desires, she moves into another sexual script, the Freak, who participates in high-risk sexual activities viewed as outside conventional behaviors, with any number or type of people, and enjoys testing the limits of what is considered morally acceptable (Cleage, 1993). The script gains male attention through an overt sexual persona that appears sexually liberated and empowered. She seeks sex solely for physical satisfaction, not for a relationship.

Those who decisively resist males' sexual overtures and choose not to engage in sexual acts with men or those who enter relationships exclusively with women are labeled as Dykes. Within this frame, heterosexuality is viewed as the natural emotional and sexual inclination for women, and those who go against this are seen as deviant, pathological, or emotionally and sensually deprived (Lorde, 1984; Pharr & Raymond 1997). Her apparent lack of need for male

involvement in her success or self-definition give rise to the tensions that exist around this script. These women's ability to exist within the culture without embracing characteristics that satisfy males' sexual desires is viewed as problematic and abnormal.

Like the Dyke, another script that embodies aggression and emotional strength is the Gangster Bitch. However, this script does not challenge the pervasive patriarchy or sexism, as their focus is on survival with males as their partners in this endeavor. It is assumed that those enacting this script have become emotionally hardened enough to know that sex is first and foremost a means to release stress and feel good for that moment. Sexuality only becomes a tool to please males, but to prove their loyalty to them.

The Sister Savior script decrees that sex is to be avoided because of the moral issues it poses within a religious context. Sister Savivors project a demure, moral, obedient attitude, particularly toward men. Devoid of sexuality, the Sister Savior script illustrates the foundation of African American religious institutions in a tradition of patriarchy that places women in submissive and oppressed positions. This has a tremendous impact on the development of sexual scripts for Sister Savivors, as patriarchal interpretations of God's word are the only legitimated source for information about human sexuality (Brown-Douglas, 1999; Grant, 1992; Hoover, 1993).

Spirituality versus religion is one element that distinguishes the Sister Savior from the Earth Mother. The Earth Mother script has a more developed sense of self as expressed through an Afrocentric political and spiritual consciousness that manifests in their everyday discourse and worldview. Traditional views of beauty are openly challenged by the Earth Mother's beauty expectations and ideals embedded within an Afrocentric framework. Sexuality is not seen as a physical act, but an aspect of Afrocentric eroticism and sensuality (Jones, 1995; Lorde, 1984).

Thus, sexual interactions are viewed as communal acts that must embrace all aspects of being Afrocentric.

For African American adolescent women, the Baby Mama script is enacted once a child is born. The title Baby Mama aptly and wholly describes the female's role, that is, she is primarily the mother of a male's baby. This attitude reflects the popular belief that the Baby Mama purposely got pregnant so that she could maintain a relationship, make a man financially indebted to her, or keep a part of him (Aaron & Jenkins, 2002). This is not meant to suggest that pregnancies among African American teenagers are intended; indeed the majority of African American teenage pregnancies in the United States are unintended (CDC, 2000; Curtin & Martin 2000).

Although sexual scripts exist for males and females across cultures, these eight sexual scripts are specific to stereotypes about race and gender, and are unique to the African American adolescent female sexual experience. Despite the obvious dominant-culture influences, the scripts reflect attitudes embedded in the African American youth culture and tell us about their social interpretations of sexuality. The following section examines these specific sources informing ideologies about African American females' race, gender, and sexuality.

#### Contextualizing Sexual Scripts

Although the eight female sexual scripts are widely understood within today's African American youth culture, there is a need to identify the ways in which they are developed and maintained among specific populations of African American adolescents. How individuals view themselves as sexual beings and their sexual behaviors (in terms of where, when, how often, with whom, and why) are manifestations of what has been learned and its meanings. These are obtained in multiple contexts (Kimmel & Fracher, 1992).

Simon and Gagnon (1984, 1986, 1987) delineated levels of sexual socialization that illustrate the various contexts in which this process takes place: cultural, intrapsychic, and individual. These three contexts interact as African American adolescents synthesize their triadic sexual socialization (race, gender, and sexuality) and develop ways to understand how to integrate macro and micro meanings of sexual scripts. These levels interact to influence sexual script negotiation as adolescents “learn” to engage in sexual risk-taking from observing not just the actions, of but also the approval of their peers, the media and other valued social units they interact with daily (Tess & Servile, 1992; Ingra & Irwin, 1997).

### Culture Level

At the cultural level, general outlines of appropriate objects of sexual desire, appropriate relationships between sexual actors, the appropriate places and times for sexual activity, and what participants in the activity are assumed to be feeling are delineated (Hinge et. al., 1998). Cultural level sources of information reflect the attitudes and beliefs of the general society.

Perhaps the most direct and influential source of sexuality information for adolescents at this level is the mass media. The messages offered here are important tools for exploring cultural constructs, as they serve to both emulate and disseminate a range of race, gender, and sexual stereotypes. Among the types of media, television is perhaps the most widely utilized forum by African American adolescents. Research has shown that television, particularly entertainment programming, is the most important source of information and socialization for African American adolescents (Comstock & Scherer, 1999; Hazel-Ford Tess & Servile, 1992), who report the highest averages of daily television exposure across all groups of adolescents (Beta, 2000; Comstock & Scherer 1999; Roberts, 2000).

Regardless of culture, television viewers consistently pay more attention to those on the screen who look like them, whether the distinguishing characteristic is race or gender (Comstock & Scherer, 1999). Some adolescent developmental theorists have suggested that adolescents are learning the ways they are like all other people, like some others, and like not like others (Brown, 2000). Maker and Strobe (1995) found that African American adolescents are more likely to make comparisons with their age cohort on television. Thus, television programs with their embedded sexual scripts provide a means for individuals to gauge how they measure up to images projected as ideal (Beta, 2000; Comstock & Scherer, 1999). How the media projects these possibilities, either positively or negatively, will shape how an individual sees himself or herself.

Music videos have emerged as one of the most popular genres of television programming among adolescents (Smart Young, 2002). Of the musical styles consumed by adolescents today, Hip Hop receives the most programming time on Black Entertainment Television (BET), Music Television (MTV), MTV2, and the Box, all of which devote the majority of their programming to music videos. Hip Hop is an African American, youth-developed, urban-based culture of creativity and expression that specifically expresses adolescents' concerns, beliefs, and worldviews. The most recognized genre of the culture to broader society is Hip-Hop music, which has been referred to as "the CNN of young Black America" (Chuck D., 2001). Insiders to Hip Hop culture know, however, that it contains deep, subtle messages about cultural expressions, such as body language (Firth, 1996), language usage (Spiderman, 1997), clothing styles (Kim, 2001), value and belief systems (Baker, 1992), racial/ethnic identity (Ro, 1996; Rose, 1992; Rubio, 1993), and general behavioral expectations (Henderson, 1996; Venable, 2001).

Although Hip Hop music began as an underground and often highly political art form, it was quickly appropriated and at least partially depoliticized within the prevailing business climate of the 1980s. For example, although those visible at the forefront of Hip Hop are African American, 70% of those consuming the music and other artifacts of Hip Hop culture are Euro-American, with the majority of money fueling the industry coming from Euro-American owned corporations (Chuck, 2001; Cutler, 1999; Henderson, 1996; Wahl, 1999). However, the music of Hip Hop reflects the anger and fears about African American youths' present lives and unknown futures (Ransby & Matthews, 1995; Smitherman, 1977; Williams, 1992). The Hip Hop culture that has emerged from these developments has retained the contradictory underpinnings represented by both the political and materialistic aspects of the commercial and economic opportunities available. Within this discourse, the meanings given to the sexuality of adolescent African American women were developed.

This is made particularly evident in Hip Hop music videos, where the sexual scripts for African American women have most boldly emerged and have been maintained. On a basic level, music videos are a vehicle to promote particular artists and songs. However, it is widely accepted that these videos magnify the content of the music, which exposes the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of those consuming them (Smart & Young, 2002). Unfortunately, this means that traditional ideas about sex roles, race, gender, and sexuality continue to shape ideas about sexuality of African American adolescent women. The continuous consumption of these sexual scripts affects how African American women develop a framework of sexuality that directs their sexual decision making processes.

Although the cultural level scripts provide some information about the sexuality messages for African American women, they offer only a limited picture of sexual experiences.

To further understand these messages, it is important to consider their views of themselves and those with whom they interact. Thus, it is useful to consider the interpersonal level of sexual socialization.

### Interpersonal

Cultural messages about sexual scripts are understood within information gathered from the interpersonal level. At this level understanding of self and sexuality is influenced by socialization and by unique experiences. Researchers have noted that parents are key sources of sexuality and race socialization (e.g., Baca Zinn, 1994; Demo & Hughes, 1990; McGuffey & Rich, 1999; Plummer, 1996; Ribbens, 1994; Ross & Van Willigen, 1996; Stevens, 1997; Watson & Protinsky, 1988; Wood, 1995). Furthermore, it is parents' transmission of attitudes about self and sexuality that provides the adolescent with a basis for rejecting stereotyped scripts (Cross, 1971; Rotheram & Phinney, 1987; Wilson & Constantine, 1999). However, the degree of parental influence on sexual script negotiation may differ for a number of reasons.

First, unlike African American musical forms of the past, Hip Hop is the first musical genre in the African American community that does not have great cross- generational involvement. Previous African American music genres could be enjoyed by everyone in the African American community, from grandmothers to toddlers (Smitherman, 1997). [It should be noted that the first generation of Hip Hop listeners now have their own children. However it can be argued these parents are less likely to consume the culture via music videos; this medium is geared toward adolescents and young adults as evidenced through the lyrical content, video style and general time and focus of music video programming on television.]. Second, African American adolescents are rarely consuming television and other media forums with a parent present (Roberts, 2000). Thus, parents have are not aware of, nor do they have a full

understanding of the ways that sexual meanings are being developed at the cultural level. Finally, adolescents' normal attempts at autonomy tend to shift the degree to which parents can directly affect the negotiation of sexual scripts.

In contrast, influence of peers during puberty and adolescence increases (Woodarski, 1996). By participating in peer culture and peer groups, adolescents are able to satisfy their needs for acceptance and yet be different from the adults in their life (Sosnowitz, 1995; Zimmerman, Copeland, Shope, & Dielman, 1996).

Peers are usually of the same racial group, which leads to the development of understandings about race, gender, and sexuality within a unique racial framework. This is important to consider as adolescents' attributions regarding their friends' sexual activities are more strongly associated with their sexual behaviors than are friends' actual behaviors (Cvetkovich & Grote, 1980). This reinforces the importance of understanding the influence of peer socialization for predicting attitudes toward sexual scripts and risk-taking behaviors in this population. For example, it was found that the rates that sexual activity progressed and the extent to which condoms was used were associated with the perceived behavior of friends (AIDS Reporter, 1996). Thus, peer perceptions of sexual scripts in African American youth culture are assumed to have a direct impact on sexual self-assessments and decision making processes.

### Intrapsychic

The daily consumption of cultural and interpersonal messages regarding sexual scripts has a direct impact on young African American women's sexual self-identity, behaviors, and experiences. However, their ability to accept, reject or negotiate the usage of these scripts will depend on understanding of themselves as not only sexual beings, but how they associate themselves or their female peers with ideologies about race and gender, and the attendant beliefs

about appropriate sexual behaviors. This is particularly important given that African American female sexual scripts are embedded within a specific gendered and racialized framework of sexuality. Thus, it is argued here that it is important to examine both race and gender factors that moderate African American adolescent women's sexual script interpretations at the intrapsychic level.

Gender refers to social construction of what is feminine or masculine based on societal definitions of appropriate gender roles (Burke & Cast, 1997). From birth and throughout the lifespan, conceptualizations of appropriate gender behaviors and beliefs are being developed. However, perceptions about gender develop over time according to life experiences. And these perceptions differ by racial group experiences (Baca Zinn, 1994). Traditionally, social scientists used the term race to refer to groups of people with phenotypic commonalities arising from genetic or biological dispositions. Clearly, there is an ongoing debate on the accuracy of racial categorizations, but it is widely accepted that the meanings and values given to characteristics are socially constructed and hierarchical among humans globally. In terms of those being studied here, race is viewed as one of the most important and salient domains of identity development (Shorter- Gooden & Washington, 1996). It is generally agreed that minority adolescents must forge a positive view of their race as an important adaptive development (Phinney, 1996; Shaffer, 2002). Unfortunately, there is a void in our knowledge of how race and gender together inform ideas about sexuality in the African American community.

It is necessary to draw upon findings that illustrate the differences in gendered sexual experiences across cultures. For example, Hale-Benson (1986) found that African American families indicated that both sons and daughters are socialized toward independence, a trait not commonly celebrated for females across cultures in heterosexual relationships. Other research

has shown that Euro-American college-age women are encouraged to marry to find happiness, whereas their African American cohort is expected to focus on occupational status to find success in life (Collins, 1991; Weber, 1992).

Differing gender patterns also emerge when considering dating patterns and options for this population. The pool of African American males is much smaller than that of other racial groups; the ratio of young adult males to females in the African American community is 89 to 100, versus 132 to 100 for Euro-Americans (Wyche, 1993). Due to high rates of incarceration, lack of education and employment opportunities, and greater willingness to marry outside the race among young African American males, many African American women have been made to feel they must be more competitive or take greater sexual risks when dating. For example, Bynum (2001) found that African American college women at predominately African American schools were less likely to engage in sexual risk taking than was their cohort in predominately Euro-American schools because of the larger pool of eligible mates. The sexual pressure that males may place on females are further complicated by the fact that African American males are more likely than African American females to endorse pre-marital sexual relations and find it acceptable to have sex outside of committed relationships (Fullilove, Fullilove, Hayes, & Gross, 1993). This further affects African American females' attitudes, as 'good girls' and 'bad girls' and may help us understand their commitment to one partner rather than multiple partners (Lewis, 1995).

These conflicting messages regarding gender appropriate behaviors indicate that there are differing expectations for adolescent African American females when compared to other females. Sexual scripts are useful tools for identifying ways in which ideas about race and gender integrate to develop conceptualizations about sexuality emerge through these processes.

The influence of the multiple levels of messages about race, gender, and sexuality is important to understand when considering the development and use of sexual scripts. The cultural, interpersonal, and intrapsychic levels interact as African American females integrate meanings expressed in sexual scripts both within Hip Hop culture and among individuals. From this, both the personal and socially constructed meanings given to African American female sexuality can be identified.

### Conclusion

Sexuality is more than just behavioral outcomes; it represents the personal, cultural, and interpersonal interpretations of what sexuality is or is supposed to be. Sexual scripts, as types of schemas, are instrumental in helping individuals organize ideas of appropriate sexual experiences and create norms regarding sexual behavior that are expressed and maintained through their usage (Simon & Gagnon, 1984, 1987). Understanding the Diva, Gold Digger, Freak, Dyke, Gangster Bitch, Sister Savior, Earth Mother and Baby Mama sexual scripts is clearly important for researchers seeking to understand the unique views and experiences of African American adolescents' views of female sexuality. Furthermore, framed within a cultural, cohort, and socially relevant context, these sexual scripts illustrate the ways in which sexuality is bounded by conceptualizations about race and gender on multiple levels.

Drawing from the research reviewed here, this study was designed to identify the subjective meanings of sexuality and how experiences as members of a marginalized group influence understandings of sexuality of young adolescent African Americans. Within a very race and gender specific context, the beliefs about appropriate sexual attitudes and behaviors were explored, showing the ways in which sexual meanings and values about race, gender, interpersonal relationships, and behaviors were constructed. Thus, findings from this study may

enhance our understanding of the unique contributions of race, gender, and sexuality conceptualizations among African American adolescents in shaping their views about themselves and, in turn, their sexual behaviors. In particular, insights about perceptions and internalization of these sexual scripts may have implications for explaining the disproportionate number of African American youth at sexual risk. An examination of African American adolescents' views of sexuality and sexual behavior will provide information about sexual scripts in this population, which, in turn, can influence sexual identity development, self-concept, and behavior.

### CHAPTER III

#### METHODOLOGY

To address this void in scholarship examining meanings of African American females' sexuality as illustrated through sexual scripts, the juxtaposition of views, values and beliefs of African American young adolescent females and males regarding sexual scripts was explored. The goal was to explore what expectations and attitudes these adolescents claimed, dismissed, denied and/or embraced about themselves as it related to African American adolescent female sexuality. African American youth's culture was by no means the only conduit through which these adolescents learned about these sexual scripts. However, it is through this context that sexual scripts are most accessible and widely disseminated. As such, this study sought to untangle the ways in which African American youth cultural tools influenced the development of certain views that African American adolescents hold about themselves and others as authoritative or definite knowers.

This chapter provides a review of why a qualitative approach was employed, articulates the guiding framework utilized, and discusses selected aspects of the study design. Issues of validity and reliability are also addressed in this section. Finally, the methodologies for data collection and analysis are outlined in detail.

## Qualitative Methodology

The majority of research examining African American sexuality focuses on behavioral outcomes usually framed from a deficit approach (McLoyd, 1996), which fails to acknowledge the ways in which meanings about sexuality are conceptualized. While these findings can provide valuable information, the majority of these studies draw upon quantitative measures that do not accurately reflect the unique race or gender experiences of African American women. In an appraisal of psychological research on minority populations, Jones (1991) found that the most common approach to quantitative research is to take an idea, measurement instruments, or research findings, and evaluate whether African Americans differed from Whites or other racial/ethnic groups. Often what are presumed to be effects of race are really byproducts of statistical controls for race or ethnicity (McLoyd, 1996). Such sampling and research design partiality not only gives a distorted view of African American women's intimate sexual behaviors, but also contributes to the fostering of stereotypes and continued perpetuation of myths (Murry, 1995).

Recognizing the need to provide comprehensive detailed information regarding the meanings about sexuality expressed through African American female sexual scripts has led to the use of qualitative methodologies for this study. One of the strengths of qualitative research is derived from its inductive approach, its focus on specific context and people, and its emphasis on personal narratives (Maxwell, 1996). The questions that qualitative research best addresses are oriented toward exploration, discovery, and inductive logic (Patton, 1990). This research approach is rooted in a phenomenological paradigm, which holds that reality is socially constructed through individual or collective definition of the situation (Firestone, 1987). To better understand human behavior and the human experience, qualitative research requires an

examination of the processes by which individuals and groups construct meaning, and a description of what those meanings are (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Moreover, the use of qualitative methods, particularly interviews or narrative documents, has been extremely effective for gathering accurate and comprehensive information from “hard to reach” populations. Specifically, qualitative methodologies have been instrumental in informing researchers of the various dynamics that shape sexuality, race, and gender interactions. For example, mixed methodologists Brooks-Gunn and Paikoff (1996) suggest that interviews with youth provide the most direct window into adolescent sexual experiences through rich descriptions that can detail facts that are not easily quantified. Few, Stephens, and Rouse-Arnette (2003) argued that qualitative research provides the most inclusive method for validating and centering experiences of members of a marginalized group, in particular African American women.

Comprehensive, rich descriptions of the participant’s interpretations of the phenomenon being studied in specific contexts or social settings are a key characteristic of qualitative research (Janesick, 1994). As the research focus of this study was of a phenomenological nature, there is a greater interest in deriving general statements of general social processes than statements of commonality, the later of which is the focus of quantitative methodologies (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Through these processes, this study’s goal of understanding how meanings, decision making processes and behaviors associated with African American females’ sexual scripts were shaped by the unique circumstances in which these African American adolescents lived was achieved.

The following sections outline the specific components of qualitative research that were employed in this study.

## Instrumentation

### Naturalist Paradigm

This study is phenomenological in nature, meaning that there is an assumption that phenomena are apodictic. Essentially, this means that because the focus of the study is so unique to the context and individuals involved, participants must speak for themselves and shape the outcomes of the data (Boeree, 1998). Consequently, assumptions of the naturalist paradigm guided this research process. To understand the basis of this paradigm and how naturalist research differs from the more traditional positivist paradigm it is important to consider the five tenets of the naturalist paradigm identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985). First, there are multiple socially constructed realities rather than a single tangible reality (i.e., ontology). Second, the researcher and participant interact to influence one another. Third, objectivity in inquiry is impossible because inquiry is value-bound through the researchers' selection of problem, values and, and/or theory. Fourth, the aim of inquiry is to develop a "working hypothesis" that pertains to individual cases in specific contexts. Finally, causes and effects are indistinguishable because all entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping (e.g., everything affects everything else). These five frameworks simultaneously inform the development of the research throughout the entire process.

More importantly, a key aspect of naturalist inquiry is its centralization and validation of the participant's perspectives and experiences. More specifically, naturalist methods seek to achieve an "insider's view" of a phenomenon (Olson, 1977). As such, participants are not merely passive objects of study; rather they are empowered with the ability to negotiate meanings and interpretations of the data with the researcher in a natural social setting. This kind of approach is

important given that the population being studied has historically been marginalized within research processes due to their race, age and gender.

To achieve this centralization of the participant, it is important that 14 characteristics of naturalist inquiry are integrated into the research process: (a) data collection in a natural setting; (b) researcher as the primary data-collecting instrument; (c) use and legitimation of tacit knowledge; (d) employment of qualitative methods; (e) purposive sampling; (f) inductive data analysis; (g) grounded theory; (h) emergent design; (i) negotiated outcomes; (j) use of case studies; (k) idiographic (particularization) rather than nomothetical (generalization) interpretation; (l) tentative applications; (m) focus-determined boundaries; and (n) criteria for trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each characteristic emphasizes the importance of studying individuals in context for fuller understanding of the multiple realities constructed by individuals, a central tenet of this study. In this way, qualitative research is a “systematic, purposeful, and disciplined process of discovering reality structured from human experience” (Merriam, 1995, p. 5).

### Design

As a naturalist inquiry approach is being used, the design of the study is not structured prior to its commencement. Rather, the design of a naturalist inquiry driven study emerges or unfolds during the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is because it is through the study processes that the multiple realities that shape the phenomena being studied materialize. As such, the patterns of mutual shaping that eventually emerge are not known in advance. As the design of the study emerges, the researcher responds to the nature of the data collected in this process (Patton, 1981).

## Theory

As a naturalist paradigm is being employed, there was an assumption in this study that there are multiple ways of interpreting the participants' experiences and interactions with others. Specifically, the meanings individuals give to their experiences that constitute their reality (Greene, 1978). Drawing from this standpoint, it is asserted here that reality is "socially constructed", such that beliefs about sexuality are informed by social interactions and experiences unique to the African American adolescent experience (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). As such, the goal of this study was to generate a grounded theory for understanding how social constructions of adolescent African American female sexuality are expressed through sexual scripts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The grounded theory method was selected because of its focus on process and its ability to generate explanatory theory based specifically on African American adolescents' unique experiences (Few, Stephens, & Rouse, 2003; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Instead of using preconceived logically deduced theoretical frameworks, grounded theory is used by researchers aiming to construct theory about the data they are analyzing (Charmaz, 1983; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Through this process meanings that this population assigned to African American adolescent females' sexual scripts emerged.

## Validity and Reliability

Although it is important to center and validate the experiences of the participants, there is a need address issues of rigor as a means of ensuring that findings are to be trusted and believed. This has often been referred to in qualitative research as trustworthiness (Guba, 1981; Krefting, 1991). The traditional criteria for trustworthiness in research, particularly quantitative methodologies, are internal validity, external validity, and reliability. However, in qualitative

research these concepts have been reformulated to better fit with the goals and methodologies utilized. Agar (1986) has suggested that it is better to use the terms credibility, accuracy of representation and authority of the writer when considering trustworthiness. Guba (1981) further refined these concepts into three components of a trustworthiness model: “credibility” for internal validity, “transferability” for external validity, and “dependability” for reliability.

### Credibility

The concept of credibility involves ensuring that the research accurately represents the multiple realities of participants of the study (Janesick, 1994). Also known as the truth-value of the findings, credibility is determined by whether or not the researcher has established confidence in the truth or accuracy of the findings for participants being studied (Krefting, 1991).

This study utilized two approaches to increase the likelihood of achieving credible findings: member checks and peer debriefing (Eisner, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1995; Patton, 1990). Member checks involve taking the raw data and tentative interpretations during the data collection and stating them back to the participants as a means of ensuring that early interpretations were accurate (Constas, 1992). Peer debriefing built on this process by checking ideas and statements against other participants’ comments throughout the interview processes. By asking participants to comment on one another’s’ statements, while maintaining respect for participants original ideas and beliefs, responses can be rechecked for clarity and accuracy (Emerson & Pollner, 1988).

### Transferability

The degree to which another researcher is able to reconstruct a study in which there are similar contexts and populations being examined is known as transferability (Krefting, 1991). Some would liken this idea to generalizability in quantitative research. However, it is important to note

that in qualitative research, there is no assumption of generalizability of results beyond the participants in the original study. Unlike quantitative research which provides statistical measures of the degree of findings' transferability, a qualitative study's rich descriptions of phenomena can provide the necessary information for others interested in generalizing the findings with careful consideration through comparison of demographic data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the assessment of the probability that the study findings have meaning to others in similar situations is the responsibility of other potential users of the findings and not with initial the researcher.

### Dependability

In qualitative research the issue of reliability (the extent to which one's findings can be found again) is complex and assessed through dependability. As reliability is dependent on the ability to produce the same results in another study, there is an assumption that a fixed reality exists. This idea does not fit with the frameworks of qualitative research. Recognizing this, qualitative research instead focuses on issues of consistency in the findings. This means the goal is to ensure the results of the study are consistent with data collection processes findings and influences.

There are specific ways in which dependability, through assessments of consistency, is achieved. To address these concerns, this study sought to provide a dense description of research methods, conducting dependability audits and triangulating multiple sources. The audit (i.e., data collection methods, decision making processes, categorization) involved providing detailed methodological information. This would make available to other researchers' a kind of blueprint to replicate the study or derive comparable results in future work (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Recognizing the interpretative nature of the data collection and data analysis in qualitative methodologies, triangulation was used a means addressing concerns about validity. Triangulation

refers to the use of multiple sources of data and/or multiple methods to confirm emergent findings (Denzin, 1978). In this study, focus group transcripts, participants' written feedback documentation, and researcher notes were utilized. Details of how this research process took place are discussed in the following section.

## Procedures

### Sampling

This study used purposeful sampling, which involved identifying participants who might give the most comprehensive and knowledgeable information about female sexual scripts in African American youth culture. The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research (Patton 1990, 169). Although the purposeful sampling methods incorporate participants with a broad spectrum of perspectives and views, participants were selected for specific reasons-- such as age, self-identification as African American, knowledge of African American youth culture-- not randomly (Krefting, 1991). Recognizing this and because a grounded theoretical approach was being used, the study recruited a homogenous group of individuals who have commonly experienced the sexual scripts being discussed- African American male and female young adolescents.

### Participants

15 African American adolescents aged 11-13 participated in the study, 7 males and 8 females. It should be noted that when using purposeful sampling there is no prior specification of sample size; it is an emergent sampling design that cannot be drawn in advance (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All attended public middle schools and had resided in the community all their lives. None of the participants were currently involved in a romantic or sexual relationship. The majority had never

experienced any form of sexual activity; all self-reported never had experiencing sexual onset, specifically sexual intercourse. Only four males and two females indicated that they had ever kissed or “made out” with a member of the opposite sex. No participant reported currently being involved in an intimate relationship with a person of the opposite sex, although several discussed having “boyfriends” or “girlfriends”.

### Recruitment

Twenty-two young adolescent African American males and females in a large Georgia college town after school program were invited to participate (10 males and 12 females). Before the focus groups began, participants and their parents were provided with assent/consent forms and an informational letter outlining the purpose, procedures, benefits, and risks two weeks in advance (See Appendices A, B, and C). Only those who returned both of these forms signed by both the participant and their primary caregiver were permitted to become part of the study. Although all adolescents were willing to participate, only 15 participated in the study; four adolescents forgot to return their consent forms, two opted in advance to not participate in favor of another activity taking place at the same time, and one who did submit the required consents opted not to participate the same day of the focus group. No reason was given for this choice.

Confidentiality was maintained by not including any identifying information during the collection and write-up of data. Audiotapes, narrative forms, researcher journal entries, transcripts, and computer files do not contain participants’ names. All interviews were audio taped by the researcher and transcribed by a student researcher.

For participating in the focus group, the participants were provided with a pizza dinner at the end of the study. The stipend was made possible by a graduate scholarship awarded to the researcher by the National Women’s Studies Association.

## Data Collection

Three data collection techniques were used: 1) semi-structured focus group interviews, 2) written feedback documentation, and 3) researcher notes. These multiple sources of data, discussed in the following sections, were collected in order to triangulate the data and to confirm emergent themes and inconsistencies in the data.

### Focus Groups

Focus groups are widely used in research seeking to generate hypotheses for research exploring questions such as why people do (or do not) behave in certain ways (Whitley 1996, 431). This is because focus groups provide researchers with the ability to probe for responses, incorporate the use of visual aids, and motivate responses from participants. Moreover, the narrow purpose of a focus group, which is to determine the perceptions, feelings, and manner of thinking about a given phenomena, suits the goals of this study (Krueger, 1994).

The focus groups were planned to coincide with the open period of the after-school programming schedule. Participants were brought to a private classroom in the academic area of the facility. Male and females were interviewed on separate days. Each focus group lasted from one to one-and a-half hours. At the start of the interview participants were first asked general questions about Hip Hop culture, its importance in their own lives and the role of women within that context. It was during this phase of the process that a rapport between the participants and researcher was developed. Issues of sincerity and trust were addressed as participants were able to test out the researchers' knowledge, skills and comfort of their experiences through a dyadic dialogue. It was also an opportunity for the participants to learn why the researcher was interested in doing a study on African American female sexual scripts.

After some initial discussion, the questioning process became more focused on sexuality,

as outlined in the questioning route (see Appendix D). A questioning route provided a framework for developing and sequencing a series of focused, yet flexible questions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Probes were prepared for each question to elicit further information from the participants if the responses given were not comprehensive or failed to provide understandable information.

### Written Feedback Documentation

In addition to using the questioning route to elicit information, each participant was given a handout with visual cues of each script without descriptive information (See Appendix E). First, participants were asked what they thought the script label meant and what behaviors were associated with the script. Then they were provided with the handout to list beliefs about these scripts as they related sexual behaviors and attitudes from the perspective of (a) themselves, (b) their female cohort, and (c) their male cohort. The scripts were introduced individually, so that participants were not made aware in advance of what scripts were being discussed.

During each interview, notes of participants' body language, questions that drew long pauses or silences from the participant, communication styles and dynamics, and issues that emerged as salient to the participants. As mentioned above, near the end of each focus group, participants were invited to share in a meal as compensation for their time. The recording of the focus group continued during this time as participants continued to share their thoughts and beliefs about sexuality.

### Researcher's Notes

Finally, throughout this process, the researcher made notes about the participant-researcher interactions and salient issues that emerged through the focus group discussions. Participant-

researcher interactions, body language, subsequent interview questions, and outlines of possible categories, themes, and patterns were also included in the researcher's notes.

It is important at this point to highlight and acknowledge the dynamics of the interactions between the participants and researcher interactions in this study. Beliefs and values given to color, class, gender, nationality, age and power emerged through questioning directed at the researcher. Despite the fact that she was a female graduate student of African descent who was very comfortable and knowledgeable about both Hip Hop and sexual health issues, one cannot readily assume that the researcher would be granted an unmitigated "insider" status. These issues, in fact, arose as important points for discussion, as participants "checked out" the sincerity and authenticity of the researcher by questioning her about her own sexual health beliefs and practices, skin color and hair experiences, and age appropriate behaviors. Through self-disclosures relevant to the topics being discussed, the researcher gained the participants trust while simultaneously empowering the informants. This technique required the researcher to let the participants lead the discussion to explore the themes and issues focused on in the research. It also equalized the relationship through the assumption of an equal, nonhierarchical stance (Pinderhughes, 1989).

### Data Analysis

This two-part section addresses: (a) the process by which data were coded and (b) the methods used to analyze data. Principles of the constant-comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was used to guide data analysis in study. An integration of Simon and Gagnon's (1984) sexual scripting levels and symbolic interaction theory were used to develop the coding schemes. Reissman's (1993) levels of representation model guided continuing attempts through analysis to represent and interpret data.

## Coding Processes

Coding involves the reviewing of transcripts, transcribed or synthesized, and the dissection of these data into their meaningful categories (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Coding is a process for both categorizing qualitative data and for describing the implications and details of these categories. Initially one does open coding, considering the data in minute detail while developing some initial categories. Later, one moves to more selective coding where one systematically codes with respect to a core concept. Each of these will be discussed in later sections.

The analysis process began with open coding, also known as generative coding. This process involved the development categories of concepts, and themes that emerged from the data. It is an “open” process through which an exploration of the data takes place without making any prior assumptions about what might be discovered. The researcher began the identification of coding cues by writing in the left margins of the transcripts directly across from the relevant statements. Through this line-by-line process, key thoughts of the participants and voids or inconsistency in statements were highlighted.

Building on this information, the next step of analysis involved selective coding, whereby first level codes were condensed and recategorized. Also known as focused or axial coding, this process involved reflecting on the connections within categories-- that is, between categories and sub-categories, serving to deepen the theoretical framework underpinning your analysis. Prior research and the body of literature on African American sexuality were integrated into this process, which sought to devise core categories about the phenomenon being studied.

In addition, the constant-comparative method of data analysis was used in this study to guide these coding techniques. Using the constant-comparative method requires using four stages: (a) simultaneous data collecting and analysis by researcher; (b) sorting and creating

categories (axial and focused coding) based on researcher interpretation of emerging patterns and themes from the data; (c) generating hypotheses from the data and testing hypotheses with further data collection; and (d) using theoretical memos in the analysis, integration, and delineation of existing multiple relationships between categories in order to write the theory grounded in the experiences of the participants (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

Once these coding techniques were completed, the transcripts were further triangulated with the researchers notes (which were made after each interview and during analysis), and participants' written documentations. Triangulation involved the search for confirming and disconfirming data trends as an important part of the validity claim in qualitative studies (Creswell, 1998). Codes and the relationships between these codes were identified, which allowed for the moving of analysis from the descriptive stage to a more theoretical one (Glaser, 1978).

### Data Representation

As a tenet of qualitative approaches is to examine how participants impose order on their experiences and assign meaning to events/actions in their lives, there is a concern about ensuring the data do accurately represent the participants' interpretations of their reality. To address this concern, Reissman's (1993) model of levels of representation was utilized in this study. This model includes five systems: (a) attending to the experience, (b) telling about the experience, (c) transcribing the experience, (d) analyzing the experience, and (e) reading the experience.

Attending to the experiences of the participants required the researcher to assist them in reflecting, remembering, recollecting, and reframing the phenomenon being observed. At this first level, key questions and probes were utilized to elicit explicit details of how the sexual scripts being examined were interpreted, given meaning and significance in the participants lives.

These details were identified by the researcher during the actual focus groups and recorded in her notes.

The second level concentrated on participants' methods of sharing their meanings and interpretations. This focus on the flow and focus given to various issues addressed in the focus group questioning is important as in the telling one's story, there is an inevitable gap between the experience as one lives it and any communication about it (Reissman, 1993). This means that the meanings participants' assign to sexual scripts could shift or change during the focus group.

The actual transcription of the focus group interviews took place at the third level. Although it appears that transcription is simply the moving of the spoken language into written text, Reissman (1993) suggests that decisions about how to transcribe are subjective. The influence of externalized theory, biases or other alternative transcription influences could lead to and support different interpretations (i.e., meanings) of and ideological positions from the same conversation. To address these possibilities, the transcripts were a written record of the inflections, verbal cues (e.g., laughter) and emphases of the participants' speech. By incorporating these components of the conversation, the dynamics of researcher-participant interactions and the participant's reactions to salient issues raised in the interview are captured.

In the fourth level of representation, the researcher analyzed the entire experience. For this study, this involved deciding about the form, ordering, and style of presentation are decided, along with the creating a *metastory* about the participants' conceptualizations about African American female sexuality as evidenced through sexual scripts. Essentially, the researcher developed the framework to illustrate what the narratives signified by editing what was told. This, in turn, lead to the creation of a *hybrid* narrative (Behar, 1993) from the original *metastory* first told by the participants. Thus, the hybrid narrative combined both the participants'

interpretations of the sexual scripts and the researcher's interpretations of the participants' narrative.

The researcher's writing about the participants' experiences for others to read and interpret took place at the final level. This process is important to qualitative researchers as it is thought that readers become active agents of the text when they interact with it (Bruner, 1986). Due to readers' interpretations on their own personal experiences and ideologies, differing meanings can evolve from the research. In this interaction of reader and written text, it becomes apparent that "all texts stand on moving ground [and that] there is no master narrative" (Reissman, 1993, p. 15).

### Researcher Subjectivity

Qualitative researchers must take care to develop and maintain an "informed reflexive consciousness" (Allen, 2000) to contextualize skillfully one's own subjectivity in data interpretation and the re/presentation of metanarratives in the research process. Feminist qualitative research requires the researcher to be reflexively attuned to dynamics of the informant-researcher relationship, with the goals of minimizing the hierarchical constellation of power in this relationship (Collins, 1998).

The researcher recognized the privilege of being a conduit of African American adolescents' experiences—not necessarily the author of such experiences—and also felt responsible for debunking racist and sexist stereotypes of African Americans, while being careful not to perpetuate multiple oppressions in her own work. This is made evident in the ways in which the wisdom or knowledge that received from the participants was represented. In this study the focus was on the need for greater consideration of the association between sexual behavior and sexual meanings as expressed through African American female sexual scripts.

This approach challenges the deficit perspective traditionally used in sexuality research, which typically addresses behavioral outcomes, ignores the larger socio-historical, political and racial constructs that inform sexual behaviors, while normalizing and validating only dominant culture experiences. Careful monitoring of the researchers biases in the research process (e.g., in particular, reviewing the questions that asked beyond the guided questioning route and researcher notes), as well as the relationship with the informants were critical components for maintaining a focus on the research agenda.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

In this chapter, the significant themes that became clear through data analysis are presented. The data from three sources (focus group transcripts, participant notes written on sexual script handouts, and researcher notes) were integrated into this overview of three broad questions that served to guide this study:

1. How are the eight sexual scripts (Stephens & Phillips, 2003) understood by African American young adolescents?
2. In what ways are these scripts unique to African American females, both in terms of their own individual experiences and in broader African American youth culture?
3. How do these scripts inform their attitudes and beliefs about African American female sexuality?

Several themes emerged from discussions with these young adolescent African Americans about female sexual scripts in Hip Hop. The seven key themes were related to issues of: existence of the sexual scripts, saliency of race in the scripts, physical attractiveness, self-concept, sexual behaviors, interpersonal relationships, and parental monitoring of sexual script consumption. Each of these themes is discussed in the following sections.

### Existence of the Scripts

Despite the lack of empirical research that describes or records sexual scripts among African American populations, each of the eight sexual scripts identified by Stephens and Phillips (2003) were recognized by the participants in this study. The visual cues provided by the handouts assisted these adolescents in providing concrete definitions for the various labels given. Through this process it became clear that how individuals looked and behaved simultaneously influenced perceptions about sexual scripts.

The centrality of sexual scripts in these participants' daily lives was also evident in two ways: (a) self reported frequent usage of the sexual scripts' labels, and (b) self reported frequent consumption of the scripts. Study participants were immediately familiar with the labels presented to them. There was never a need to clarify the meaning of the terms used to classify each script. They acknowledged that these scripts were encountered on a daily basis as they embraced their "passion"--Hip Hop culture. Several noted that their radios were tuned into Hip Hop stations or they played the music on their CD players as soon as they got up in the morning. They continuously listened to it through moments in their day, such as at lunch and between class periods. They felt it was an integral part of their daily lives and stated it taught them things about life.

I love Hip Hop. I love it. I listen to it everyday, all day. When I hear it...*(starts hitting beat on table, laughter)*. I love it. All day long I listen to it.

Female

It's about us, you know. It's about being in America and how  
[Black kids] are.

Female

I just love the music. I listen to the lyrics, but the beat... yeah I like  
how it makes you feel. I just start moving. I don't listen to  
anything but Hip Hop.

Male

Yeah, yeah, it's good. It tells you what's going on. I love watching  
videos to see all the cars and stuff... you know what I mean? To  
see how others live, you know.

Male

Perhaps due to this continued consumption of Hip Hop, there was congruency in the definitions and meanings associated with each by both male and female participants. The labels used for seven of the scripts were instantly recognized. Only the word Dyke was unfamiliar to these participants, although they understood meanings and behaviors associated with this script.

Beyond the labels, the participants were able to easily identify examples of the sexual scripts enacted by others who embrace Hip Hop culture. These participants readily sang out lyrics from songs and identified artists that represented each script. Furthermore, through these associations they were able to articulate their feelings and share the meanings they gave to these sexual scripts. They, in turn, would give real life examples of peers who they felt were representations of these scripts.

I see it all the time at school; one girl got in trouble for wearing a top like Tweet [Hip Hop artist]. She thinks she look like her and she tries to act, dress so she can be her. She think she's like the Diva, right?

Female

[Hip Hop artist] Snoop is a pimp. You see all 'dem girls he's got going off on him in [the music video] . You saw that video? Those girls were all over him- freaks all over him. Yeah, Snoop ran all that.

Male

For these participants, music videos provided the most visible evidence of sexual script existence and the sexual behaviors associated with them. Although Music Television (MTV) is perhaps the largest and most powerful source of music programming in the country, Black Entertainment Television's (BET) focus on Hip Hop music video programming had made it a bigger draw among this study's participants. In particular, BET's *106 and Park* was the most popular program among these males and females. Now in its third season, *106 & Park* has become the highest-rated music video countdown show on television. Hosted by two youthful African Americans, Free & AJ, *106 & Park* has a live studio audience and features the most popular Hip Hop artists of today as guests five days a week. The show also includes an interactive format that allows viewers to participate on stage in the show's "Freestyle Friday" MC showdown; and from the internet by voting for Top 10 music videos of the day. Essentially, the show goes beyond showing music videos, but serves as a key source of Hip Hop culture dissemination.

Although the frameworks of the eight sexual scripts centered on music videos, it should be noted that Hip Hop artists were not viewed as the only individuals projecting the identified sexual scripts. The plethora of female dancers and actors in music videos were continuously referred to in the discussions. In fact, among female participants, there was a greater degree of negativity toward non-artist females in videos who enacted these scripts, particularly the dancers. They acknowledged that these women were attractive and desirable to males, however, they spoke about them with a level of resentment and disrespect.

I think that the girls in the video thought they could be some background and that they could get with the singer, but they can't.

Some of them are really good [dancers] and do all the moves. Like the girls in Missy's videos? But there's those others, and they just shake their butts and try to look pretty so the guys will notice them.

Females

Among males, this distinction between actual female Hip Hop artists and other females in the video was not as evident. Rather, to explain the meanings they gave to the sexual scripts the males referenced both artists and dancers without giving value to either role. The sexual scripts were valued and given the same meanings across all groups of women in Hip Hop by these males; dancers and artists in music videos were not categorized differently when the sexual scripts were being applied.

### Salience of Race

Race emerged as a key factor in identifying the values and meanings given to these eight sexual scripts. In their notes, participants cited specific phenotypic traits associated with and distinctive to people of African descent to categorize appropriate characteristics of the individual sexual scripts. For example, when asked to describe what they and their peers thought of the various scripts, participants almost always detailed hair texture and skin color. Interestingly, the original intent of that question was to identify the behaviors that were being ascribed to the scripts.

Although, males and females both felt the scripts could be applied to women across cultures, several participants noted that when they used the script labels they were generally referring to African American women.

Black girls, white girls- they can all behave alike. It can be any girls. But these girls [in the sexual scripts], they are usually Black girls because it's Hip Hop.

### Male

Comprehension of the meanings given to the sexual scripts labels was also considered to be race specific. Participants indicated that African American women mainly understand the terms. Thus, even when these scripts were being used to describe women across cultures, many participants thought non-African American women would not understand the meanings of these terms.

I know all kinds of girls like this- [Euro-American girl] acts like [the Freak]. But she just acts like it. She don't look like these pictures here. And she doesn't think she acts like it, but she does. But if she was Black she would be like [the Freak] and she'd know it.

Female

These participants indicated that these sexual scripts drew upon African American cultural cues, including linguistic, clothing, socializing networks, and musical traditions. "Blackness" was not discussed simply as being the phenotypic characteristics of a person. Rather, the racialization of these scripts was discussed in a way that indicated a complex framework of socially constructed ideas of what it meant to be part of African American culture. Thus, "Blackness" could be assumed by non- African Americans through the utilization of African American traditions and cultural identifiers. For example, the female participants spent a significant amount of time discussing a particular Euro-American female who they attended school with whom they saw as embodying the Freak script. However, it was clear they thought she enacted many behaviors associated with being African American.

[Euro-American girl] thinks she's black because she's friends with [African American male] and she's on the basketball team. But she's still a freak. She just want to be black.

I think she lives in [predominately African American public housing project], though.

Yeah, she do. She walk there- I see her.

Similarly, the males believed that although African American females are the focus of those being projected in Hip Hop culture and spaces, any female who utilized African American cultural cues could have the sexual scripts applied to them. As was found among the females' responses, males' applications of the sexual scripts to non- African American females relied upon the ways in which African American cultural symbols were being used. More specifically, Euro- American girls who appeared to utilize behaviors or cues perceived as being typical for African American girls could also be associated with these sexual scripts

[A white adolescent girl] is a freak, but she hangs out with [ African American girls] and braids her hair. And talks like she's black.

Male

Interestingly, when either group gave examples of white females who enacted the sexual scripts, they referenced the Freak, which is the most highly sexualized script. Furthermore, these Euro- American females association with Blackness laid specifically in their African American peer affiliations and use of traditional cultural practices (e.g., braided hair, dialect).

#### Physical Attractiveness

Related to these ideas about racially defined behaviors and images were the values given to physical appearance and traits. As was discussed in the previous section, hair texture and skin color were phenotypic traits central to participants' descriptions of appropriate sexual script characteristics. The value and meaning given to these characteristics also emerged as important for determining physical attractiveness in the context of sexuality.

Specifically, issues of hair, skin color, and body size were central to these discussions about beauty. Overall, the Diva was viewed by males and females as most beautiful and desirable. Traditionally, this script is projected as having westernized features: long, straight hair, slim nose, slender body and lighter skin. These features were all cited by the males as being attractive. These factors also influenced their beliefs about her sexual health. The males viewed her as sexually “clean” and noted that “no condoms” were necessary for engaging in sexual relations with Divas.

In contrast, the Afrocentric Earth Mother was not labeled as attractive or seen as desirable to the males in this study. For example, although they did not make specific comments about the valuing of skin color, the males clearly noted that Earth Mothers are often darker skinned. Some males openly viewed issues of hairstyles and textures typical for women of African descent, more harshly.

[The Earth Mother] is bald headed or has braids; I don't like girls like that. She's got to have a fat booty and nicely kept hair.

Thos Erica e girls are all right. I would get with them- they're alright. Just their hair....

[Referencing artists who are examples of Earth Mother] Like Lauryn Hill looks good. But Erykah Badu- they is all bald and looks crazy. India [Arie] look too rough.

Several males mentioned they liked females with long hair and shapely bodies. These males spent a considerable amount of time discussing which Hip Hop artists had the best buttocks, breasts, and face. Even though they often used the incorrect spelling when describing these physical features in their notes (e.g., but- butt, brest- breast, bote- booty) participants' had a clear idea of what was deemed attractive.

One male participant described in detail how a woman's buttocks should be "round" and "fat," referencing several examples and how he would sexualize these aspects of the women. The males around the table sat transfixed during this dialogue, either nodding their agreement or giggling. At the end of the formal focus group questioning he also asked the researcher about her own body, in particular her breast development when she was his age. The other males appeared shocked at this participants' attempt to embarrass the researcher, but when she answered directly, other males proceeded to ask further questions about females' bodies. This discussion about females' physical development continued for approximately half an hour after the time originally allotted for the focus groups. This divergence from the main discussion reinforced the value and importance given to physical appearance among males in this study.

Females also addressed the importance of physical attractiveness. However, beauty emerged as being linked to behaviors. How a woman acted and presented herself appeared to influence the female participants' perceptions of their physical attractiveness. As such, they gave less value to Westernized standards of beauty. Explained one female:

No, I think Mary J [darker skinned artist] is a Diva. You can be darker skin and be beautiful. Like all light skinned girls are not pretty- people think they are. But not all are. A Diva is about how you carry yourself.

It is important to note that females often referred what males liked in conjunction with what they liked, a pattern that did not emerge among the males' responses. For example, some acknowledged that males may not like women with short hair, although many females expressed how beautiful they thought representations of the Earth Mother script were. However, they themselves did not like the idea of shaving their hair short or putting in dreadlocks for fear of how they would be perceived by others, namely men.

I think [Lauryn Hill] is beautiful. Even with her dreads.

Yeah, she is. I like her hair.

Yeah, [Lauryn Hill] is beautiful.

But I wouldn't put in dreads. I don't want it for me.

*Researcher:* What about shaving your hair off short?

No, oh no, no.

No, [Eryka Badu] looks good. But no.

My dad wouldn't like it.

Yeah, yeah.

### Self Associations with Scripts

The degree to which these scripts were viewed as reflecting the participants' experiences was important. Particularly among the females, a significant amount of time was spent sharing feelings about how these sexual scripts related to their personal lives. None of the females felt they relied on the scripts to shape their daily behaviors, but acknowledged others sometimes

applied them to them. Furthermore, even though they were able to understand why these scripts were being imposed, they were also able to identify the inaccuracies.

I guess you could say I'm like a Gangster B, although I'm not a B, because I'm like a tomboy-I like to hang out with the boys. But I'm not doing anything with them [sexually] and I don't get into trouble.

Overall, these females disassociated themselves from highly sexualized scripts. They expressed strong dislike for the Freak, Gold Digger and Dyke sexual scripts. Words like selfish and dirty were used to describe these women in the females' notes. "My definition of a freak, is somebody dresses slutty and acts trashy," explained one female. She proceeded to point her finger to groups of females congregated outside the door causing the other participants to begin to laugh knowingly.

Peers were usually reference points for illustrating the negative attitudes about the sexual scripts. For example, when describing two females who appeared to like each other in a sexual way, there were tones of alarm about a rumor they would be attending the next school dance together. Other females who were not as negative appeared disinterested in these "Dyke" females, but made it blatantly clear that "they were not friends, they just went to school together." Similarly, the females openly discussed females in school who they felt were Gold Diggers, characterizing them as the "fast" females who didn't want to work and sought males at school with cars. Their lack of independence irked these participants. However, these females

did not appear as concerned about females possibly having a man pay for day to day items, such as getting their hair to be “done” or their cell phone bill paid.

*Researcher:* So are there girls that are your age that act like gold diggers?

[Yells out girls name] (*laughter*)

There he go there he go. Then [girls] give it to these guys because they have money or something .

If he wants to [pay for her hair to be taken care of], he can. It's his choice if she asks him.

I want him to pay for my nails. I want to look good. My man will have do it because it will make me look good for him. (*laughter*)

In contrast, based on their appearance and assumed sexual behaviors there was a greater degree of acceptance to being called a Diva, Sister Savior, or Earth Mother than to be called a Dyke or Gold Digger. Again, the fact that the former scripts were viewed as physically attractive, not sexually aggressive emerged as key reasons for these choices

Males and females both thought females who appeared to associate themselves with these sexual scripts could have a low self esteem or wanted attention from males. It was suggested that females seeking to attract men would enact behaviors that would entice men sexually. Also, two females stated that the females who constantly hear these labels start believing and accepting them to be accurate assessments of themselves. It was believed that this might cause women to engage in sexual acts. However, it was interesting to note that only males acknowledged that

some females who appear to be utilizing these sexual scripts may simply be willing explore their sexuality.

It could be all that, but some girls just want to have sex.

Yeah, cause maybe they just have urges, too.

### Sexual Behaviors

Discussions about sexual behaviors encompassed several issues related to sexual knowledge and appropriate sexual behaviors. It was found that both males and females were able to identify kinds of sexual behaviors associated with each script by quoting from Hip Hop songs. However, this did not necessarily mean they understood what those behaviors entailed or knew the accurate terminologies.

Well, Freaks also like to have oral sex.

What is oral sex? (*giggling*)

It's when you blow on the guys--thing.

Females

A key issue was the focus not on the actual behavior, but the value and meanings that were given to these behaviors. For example, kissing, hugging or cuddling were acceptable behaviors and not viewed as being associated with sex. In fact, sexual intercourse (specifically penile/vaginal penetration) and oral sex were the only two behaviors identified as "sex." Sexual scripts that were perceived as including these behaviors were viewed as promiscuous and negative.

The less sexualized the script, the less sexual risk the female was assumed to present in terms of health and reputation. Sister Saviors and Divas were described as the most “clean” and the least likely to engage in sexual acts or did so with select male partners. Males believed that these were women who would not put them at risk for acquiring sexually transmitted diseases. Furthermore, these two scripts were described as being “good girls” and deserving of respect; having sex with these women required using deferential sexual advances. Females’ responses agreed with the males’ assessments.

[Divas] generally they don’t have sex a lot.

I basically think that they are good and clean.

In contrast, both males and females called Freaks “easy.” It was felt across all groups that males would not have to put any effort into engaging in sexual activity with them. Freaks were referred to as dirty, and required the usage of condoms as a means of protecting males from catching sexually transmitted diseases. Moreover, both males and females thought that by freely engaging in sexual acts with males, sexually aggressive females willingly put themselves at risk for negative reactions and behavioral outcomes.

They want sex whatever it takes and whatever happens is fine.

They like stripping, they show their body, they don’t care.

Male

I say that girls think Freaks are hos.

They are bitches, they are whores.

Yeah, they walk into that.

## Females

Females believed males would have sex with all the sexual scripts if they had the opportunity. Males' desires for sex were perceived as being innate and central to males' relationships with females. As such, it was expected that the males would seek sexual interactions wherever and whenever they could. In fact, when discussions about male promiscuity arose, there was a greater level of acceptance in both females' and males' responses.

In reality, males were willing to have sex with all the scripts except the Baby Mama and Dyke. The lack of interest in the Baby Mama was related to age and her desire to have children. Males noted she has "babies with no daddy" and possibly "several daddies." They viewed this script as being applicable to older females who were more sexually experienced.

She is mature and will give it up, though she might have diseases.

If they had sex one time, they can have it more than one time

The males were willing to engage in sexual relations with a Baby Mama and even acknowledge they "would go out with them," but not in this phase of their development. The fact that she was raising a child indicated maturity and a level of sexual experience they had not yet reached.

The attitudes toward Dykes' sexual behaviors were related to issues of morality and lack of knowledge. It was clear that these participants' homophobic attitudes were shaped by a lack of information about same sex relationships. While they did not want to engage in same-sex sexual

behaviors associated with the Dyke script, the participants clearly did not have a comprehensive understanding about what homosexuality is. They would reference issues of morality, stating that same sex sexual behaviors were prohibited by the church, and were against what was “natural” human behavior. Males appeared to be less disgusted by the dyke script; five said males would “get with them” with the belief that it could lead to a threesome with another female. Females were more negative in their assessment of the Dyke script referring to them as “gayfers” and their behaviors as “nasty” in their notes. However, their reasons for why women might enact these scripts were diverse.

*Researcher:* So why do women become dykes then?

Because they can't get a man.

Because they can't get a man.

Like she said because they can't get a man and maybe they think that women are prettier. Because there are some beautiful people out there.

They might not want to get pregnant by men so....

So it is safer to be with women.

You never know.

I think a dyke is.... I mean I don't think that it is right to be one, because if were supposed to be with another woman then we would.

Females

Although these participants all stated that they had never been sexually active, they thought these scripts could influence younger children and currently sexually active adolescents' behaviors. They believed it was important to address the behaviors in these scripts as a means of negotiating sexual relationship dynamics.

### Interpersonal Relationships.

It was clear that ideals about potential partners drew on traditional ideas about African American adolescent female sexuality as it relates to the gender expectations, sexual permissiveness and physical beauty attitudes discussed in previous sections. Both male and female participants tended to view men as "sexually driven" and knowledgeable about sexuality. It was conveyed that males would experience sexual activity with a variety of women before marriage. However, all males planned to marry a "good" woman. A good woman was perceived as being highly feminine and physically attractive. Specific scripts males cited that fit this criteria included the Diva and the Sister Savior. Three males noted that they would never date a Sister Savior but would be willing to marry one. As one male wrote, a Sister Savior is "not a good person to have sex with" but he would marry her.

These two sexual scripts were also selected to identify other women they held in esteem. When asked which scripts were appropriate for their siblings or other family members, males stated only the Diva, Earth Mother and Sister Savior scripts were acceptable due to their apparent lack of sexual aggressiveness and their attractive appearance. It is interesting to note, however, that males also liked the Gangster Bitch script. But it was only in the context of a platonic relationship and not as a script for a sister or mother. They wrote about Gangster Bitches as being "cool," "funny," "nice," and "just like another boy." Clearly, the acceptability of this script for these males was in its asexual persona.

Females also stated that their fathers, brothers, or uncles would want them to be a Diva or a Sister Savior. Again, the lack of an overtly sexual persona appeared to influence this attitude. These females stated that their male relatives would accept their utilization of these scripts because they represented what is “good” and “nice” in terms of sexual behaviors and general decorum.

Despite the positive and high status given to these “good girl” sexual scripts, females thought that males could potentially cheat with “bad girls” who would entice them sexually. The females suggested that males’ favorite scripts would be the Freak and Diva.

They want the girl who will give them sex and looks good, too.

Boys like girls like these and want us to be like them.

I really don’t like being friends with [Freaks] because they give you a bad reputation. If they’re your friend and they do something nasty [others] might think that you do that. It just gets all out of a hand and people get to asking you to do stuff... they’ll think you are like her when you not. But like her more than you still.

To me, it might matter, if I have a friend that is a Freak and we go shopping and stuff or to the club. The way she dress or the way she acts when she sees a fine boy that might make me dislike her because maybe he wanted to talk to me.

If she is going around boys and being nasty anywhere, disturbed me because there she is trying to go and be with the boy that I may like.

Females

Clearly certain scripts do not promote positive female-female platonic relationships. Only the Sister Savior was viewed as “easy to make friends with.” Although it was not explicitly explored in the females' focus group, their tone relating to peers who utilized “bad girl” sexual scripts was clearly negative. Males noticed that females used these sexual scripts to accept or reject peers. They indicated that females would be jealous of other females enacting highly sexualized or physically attractive scripts (e.g., Diva, Gold Digger, and Freak):

I think they really want to be like [the sexual scripts] and hate the girls that do dress like that.

Girls get jealous of other girls just because we're not paying attention to them, but another girl instead.

#### Parental Monitoring of Sexual Scripts.

When asked about ways to address the negative impact of African American female sexual scripts, several suggestions were made. They included changing the ways women were presented in Hip Hop videos and teaching females about these sexual scripts. Females and males stated that changing the presentation of women in music videos was important but not something they could do beyond not watching them. They noted that it was necessary to teach young people that it is just entertainment and not real.

However, participants consistently referred back to parents as important “gatekeepers” of information about appropriate sexual behaviors and attitudes. Parents’ responses towards the scripts in terms of monitoring were a constant theme through the study. Through these discussions, the role of parental influence appeared to shape sexual script negotiation in two ways: (a) actual parental enactment/modeling of the sexual scripts, and (b) direct monitoring of the consumption of sexually scripted information.

In both the male and the female group, participants raised the possibility of mothers wearing clothing or acting in ways that are similar to the Hip Hop based sexual scripts. One female talked extensively about how mothers in her neighborhood dress in clothing that mimic several of the Hip Hop artists discussed that day. She thought that these mothers were setting a bad example that their daughters would model when they began engaging in sex.

I see some grown women dressing in the short tops... crop tops and tight jeans.

Yeah, they shopping in C and G, too! [adolescent clothing store]

So they wear this and I see them walking around, and men whistling at them. So their daughters see this and think it is all right and they grow to be just like their mama.

You see [after school program participant] mom! She comes and pick her up and she’s dressed like that- not like other moms.

Females

If her mom is dressing like that or acts like that, and she sees it,  
she'll become like that.

Male

The second aspect of parental influence was the monitoring of sexual script consumption and usage. Often participants would state how their parents would feel if they caught them in sexual situations or dressed in particular outfits. These statements highlighted the importance of parental influence in these females and males' sexual lives.

Two females shared that their parents often would comment on the females in Hip Hop videos or females who were dressing like negative sexual scripts on the street. Another female remembered her mother talking about her same aged cousin's revealing clothing and "wild" behavior on the way home from a family gathering. From these brief, indirect statements they were made aware of what their parents indicated was acceptable and not acceptable in terms of adolescent African American females sexuality. Interestingly, males did not share similar examples.

Both males and females, however, thought that parents should actively supervise and potentially screen the videos being consumed by their children.

I think parents have to don't let little kids watch these videos.

Male

My mama watches what my little brother sees. [Parents] need to be careful that little kids aren't seeing all that stuff on TV.

Female

Participants suggested that parents should talk directly to their children about these sexual scripts. The contexts of these discussions, according to the participants, should center on what these scripts mean and how they should be rejected. The focus of these discussions, these participants indicated, should be on how to avoid sex. It is important to note that although these participants ranged in age from 11- 13, they did not see themselves as needing this kind of parental monitoring or influence. Their concerns were directed at those who were younger.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to shed light on African American female sexuality through an examination of sexual scripts. An area of research that has provided extensive information about heterosexual and gay/ lesbian sexual beliefs and behavioral processes, the utilization of sexual scripts among African American populations has, until now, not been examined. Consequently, the findings from this study add both a perspective and information to the body of literature on African American adolescent sexuality.

Overall, it was found that both male and female participants perceived sexual scripts their meanings and values similarly. These findings indicate that African American early adolescents utilize sexual conceptualization processes that are consistent with script theory (Simon & Gagnon, 1987). Appropriate and acceptable sexual behavior for African American early adolescent females sexual scripts are clearly learned about within the context of their cultural backgrounds, and these cultural scripts can be seen in the interaction between intrapsychic and interpersonal level scripts. From the seven themes that emerged from the data analysis, the following highlights were made evident:

1. The identified sexual scripts were acknowledged as existing in the Hip Hop culture and among African American adolescents.
2. Although applicable cross culturally, these scripts are clearly African American based, as expressed through unique cultural artifacts, traditions and processes.

3. Physical attractiveness of females, particularly within racialized frameworks, was a determinant for interpersonal relationships with males, and perceptions of sexual health.
4. The usage of these sexual scripts was assumed to be moderated by individual self-esteem.
5. Through these sexual scripts, traditional gender attitudes and beliefs about appropriate sexual behaviors are expressed; in particular, female sexual assertiveness is repressed, whereas virginity is celebrated.
6. Appropriate frameworks for relationship dynamics with both males and females are evident through these sexual scripts.
7. Parental influences are considered to be the most important factor for providing adolescents with accurate information and skills to negotiate sexual script usage.

Taken together, the findings from this study provide new insights into the values and meanings given to African American female sexuality within this culture. To understand this phenomenon, a discussion of the findings and their relevance to prior research follows.

### Emergent Themes

#### Existence of the Scripts.

Each of the eight sexual scripts identified by Stephens and Phillips (2003) was recognized by the participants in this study. Their daily consumption of Hip Hop culture normalized the script and increased participant recognition of these conceptual frameworks. This worked to ensure that there were general common understandings of the meanings and values given to these sexual scripts. Hip Hop is an African-American, urban-based culture of creativity and expression that specifically expresses adolescent concerns, beliefs, and worldview. The music of the Hip Hop culture is reflective of a very specific African American youth experience

that began in the late 1970s and continues today (Ransby & Matthews 1995; Smitherman, 1977; Williams 1992). As such, Hip Hop now serves to maintain African American youth culture and its norms.

These early adolescents made it clear that Hip Hop was important to them; they actively sought to consume or express aspects of it everyday. The centrality of Hip Hop to these participants ensures their daily observations of these sexual scripts. Still, Hip Hop is a vast culture with a matrix of meanings and values; why were the sexual scripts and their meanings so widely understood?

Studies examining risk prototypes and stereotypes may shed light on why this finding was reached. Research indicates that adolescents are generally very aware of and continuously develop prototypes within their social settings (Simmons & Blyth, 1987; Skowronski & Carlston, 1989). These prototypes then serve as guides for categorizing behaviors and people associated with them (Chassin, Presson, Sherman, Corty, & Olshavsky, 1981; Feit, 2001). Adolescents then realize that by engaging in the behavior they are likely to be identified as being a member of a definable group-- "typical" smokers or drinkers, for example. In this sense, accepting a prototype is part of the process through which individuals develop frameworks for understanding social hierarchies and networks in their social contexts.

Similarly, stereotyping research shows African American adolescents have a greater awareness of racial stereotypes than their Euro-American peers (Crocker & Major, 1989; McCreary & Slavin, 1996). As such, it is asserted here that the acceptance and knowledge of sexual scripts, as frameworks for behavior within a specific racial context, are important for understanding the social structure of Hip Hop culture.

You see the Freak a lot in videos-- she is always in the videos.

No, there is the Diva. [Hip Hop artist] Ashanti is a Diva.

But she is like a leader and everyone like her.

Yeah, people don't really like [Freak persona] Lil' Kim.

She's good--she has good songs.

But she's not really respect. Boys want to sleep with her but not be with her long term.

### Females

The eight sexual scripts identified by Phillips and Stephens (2003) were important for understanding roles and attitudes as self-identified members of this culture. More specifically, understanding these sexual scripts was necessary for developing conceptual frameworks of appropriate gender, race, and sexuality attitudes that help individuals negotiate their roles in African American youth culture.

At this time, ideas about gender and sexuality are varied, yet remained embedded within a framework of patriarchy, which includes the accumulation of material wealth and sexual conquest. This is because the traditions of Hip Hop are embedded in a male culture; it is a space that was developed and initially controlled by men (Smitherman, 1977). Women's entrance was not readily accepted and still requires negotiation of male values and attitudes toward women. This reality was particularly evident in music videos where, for example, women are typically depicted as having great sexual desires, which they can only quench by being degraded for male pleasure (Brown, 2000; Morgan, 2000; Roberts, 1996). Women are not individuals; rather they are projected as characters and a mass of body parts for male consumption. It is common in

videos to have multiple women vying for one man's attention through the use of highly sexualized verbal and non-verbal cues (Stephens & Phillips, 2003).

Participants were particularly aware of these projections and spent a considerable amount of time discussing their existence in various popular videos. Through these visual forums, concrete examples of the eight sexual scripts were made evident. Furthermore, they illustrated the culture's views regarding female sexuality. Although music videos are primarily a vehicle to promote particular artists and songs, it is widely accepted that these videos reflect the content of the music, exposing the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of those consuming them (Smart & Young, 2002).

The consumption of these videos ensured that these adolescents would clearly recognize the eight scripts being discussed. They cited these videos as being important for "seeing what's going on" in Hip Hop culture and the world in general. This supports prior research findings that indicate African American adolescents watch television programs for both entertainment and information (Botta, 2000; Comstock & Scharrer 1999; Roberts, 2000). Furthermore, the programs they choose to watch tend to involve characters and themes that reflect their racial/ethnic group (Brown, 2000; Comstock & Scharrer, 1999; Makkar & Strube, 1995). As there were few television programs that center on African American youth at the time of data collection (Nielsen Media Research [NMR], 2002), it is suggested here that music videos served as one means of filling a void in culturally relevant programming. Simultaneously, frameworks for understanding African American female sexuality are being developed and maintained.

Support for the existence of sexual scripts and their recognition among African American adolescents adds important information to the adolescent sexuality research literature. Clearly, adolescents have unique conceptualizations about sexuality informed by gender and racial

contexts. Building on this exploratory study, future research must seek to examine how these develop and get formulated into sexual scripts.

### Saliency of Race

The understanding of sexual scripts revealed in this study points to a need for exploring how these conceptual frameworks are unique to this population. As a culture drawing from African American traditions, it was assumed that racial groupings would be central to delineating to whom these sexual scripts are applicable. However, when asked if these sexual scripts were unique to African American females, both males and females felt that these sexual scripts could be applied to women cross culturally.

Although participants thought that women enacting these scripts did not have to be African American, it was clear that the appearance and behaviors of women in the scripts were embedded within specific African American cultural cues, for example, hair or clothing styles, socializing networks, and musical traditions. The Euro-American females who were referred to by participants had African American peers, wore braids, and lived in areas that were considered to be predominantly African American. It appears that when symbols of African American culture are enacted by others they serve as a means of linking these particular sexual scripts to non-African Americans.

[Euro-American female] acts like she is Black.

*Researcher:* What do you mean?

Like how she talks and dresses- like we do

Female

African American linguistic traditions are important cultural symbols. As in any culture, linguistic traditions are important for defining membership and belonging (Smitherman, 1977). It can also be the key to understanding the social structures. For example, the words *Dyke*, *Freak*, *Gangster Bitch* and *Baby Mama* are embedded in African American linguistic traditions and reflect socio-historical ideas about womanhood stretching back to the turn of the century (Major, 1994). They have been rearticulated to express current understanding of female sexuality from an African American perspective. African American language traditions, however, go beyond words and include meanings, nuances, tones, and gestures used by 80–90 % of African Americans at least some of the time (Smitherman, 1977). Thus, language serves as an expression of unique African American experiences and of a group identity (Brody, 2000).

Participants continuously used African American language and semantics throughout the focus groups. The ability to understand the talk served to determine “membership” in African American culture (Brody, 2000). As such, any adolescent viewed as unable to understand the African American terminologies or dialects central to Hip Hop were viewed as not part of the culture by these participants. Furthermore, they were not considered candidates for these sexual scripts. A discussion about an African American female who lived in the females’ neighborhood illustrates this.

Like if you talk like you are white

Like [peer’s name] (laughter)

She’s just quiet.

Black on the outside but not on the inside- Oreo [laughter]

She don’t listen to Hip Hop.

What she listen to?

I don't know, but I know she don't listen to Hip Hop

She don't look like she do.

#### Females

Clearly, a multi-dimensional perspective must be considered when examining the role of race in explaining sexual scripts. Being African American was not enough to guarantee acceptance in the Hip Hop culture of young African American adolescents. Similarly, through acculturation, a term used to describe the process by which one group adopts the beliefs and practices of another cultural group (Mills & Henretta, 2001), non-African Americans gain entry into this culture. For non-African American females who have acculturated into Hip Hop culture through the adoption of African American attitudes, behaviors, style, etc., they can also be associated with these sexual scripts. Clearly, there is a need to examine the ways in which race is conceptualized. Evidence from this study and prior research (e.g., Murry, Smith & Hill, 2001; Phinney, 1990; Phinney, & Alipuria, 1996) verifies that it is a multi-dimensional construct that is both assumed and imposed. How this affects and is applied to non-African Americans must be examined in future research.

Despite the fact that participants felt these scripts were applicable to other women, there was evidence pointing to the centrality of African American female identity in these conceptual frameworks. For example, only when directly asked if these scripts were cross culturally applicable were non-African American women discussed. In reality, African American women were used as the referent group when giving examples of these scripts throughout the study. In

addition, it was found that ideas about race directly informed beliefs about beauty, a phenomenon explored in the following section.

This finding supports Wyatt's (1997) research on African American female images that found race, even more than age, education, or socio-economic status, was the most significant factor in predicting African American women's knowledge of negative sexual statements regarding their sexuality. Wyatt asked a group of women to identify which statements about hypersexuality and conservative sexual behaviors accurately reflected ideas about their sexuality. African American respondents thought that all of the statements applied to all African American women; in contrast, Euro-American women thought that these statements could be relevant to women in general. This finding highlights the degree to which African American women have internalized and accepted statements that depict them as racially specific, negative stereotypical characters (Wyatt, 1997).

There are clearly conflicting ideas about how race affects the development and maintenance of these eight sexual scripts. On one hand, these sexual scripts appear to have cross-cultural applicability, yet other evidence shows that they remain grounded in a unique African American female cultural experience. Thus there is a need to delve further into this area of sexual scripting--the influence of race. This may involve future questioning into how racial identity develops among this population and how it manifests itself in conceptualizations about sexuality. Moreover, the racial socio-historical influences that shape these sexual scripts cannot be ignored. Thus, it is important that prospective research investigate the ways in which actual racial experiences and assumed beliefs about race are integrated and shape the acceptance and usage of these scripts.

### Physical Attractiveness

In this study, in addition to race, physical attractiveness was central to how these scripts were given values. Physical traits associated with African Americans and cultural attitudes expressed within the Hip Hop culture together informed how physical appearance was validated across these sexual scripts. In particular, hair texture and skin color were two phenotypic traits central to participants' descriptions of appropriate sexual script characteristics. This is not surprising as these two characteristics have historically been used as measures of social, political, and economic worth for African Americans (hooks, 1990, 1993, 1995; Collins, 2000). Traditionally, those who possess hair or skin color that is more closely like that of Euro-Americans had been given higher status in American culture. This attitude trickled down into the psyche of African Americans, creating a system of beliefs and values that informed social hierarchies and interpersonal relationships (Hill, 2000; Herring, Keith & Horton, 2003; Morton, 1991). This reality continues to shape the beliefs and attitudes of individuals today, as was made evident through the findings in this study and prior research (e.g., Bank, 2000; Coard, Breland, Raskin, 2001; Herring, Keith & Horton, 2003; Jones, 1994; Makkar & Strube, 1995).

In both the males and females' group, it was found that lighter skin was viewed as more attractive in the African American community and in the broader society. As has been found in prior research, this skin tone differentiation was thought to be externally imposed on the African American community as well as an internally-driven process aided and abetted by the community members themselves (Herring, Keith, & Horton, 2003). This reality is grounded in the historical value given to "whiteness" in American society. The lighter a person's skin, the more likely they were to receive privileges afforded Euro-Americans (Herring, Keith & Horton, 2003; Hill, 2000; Morton, 1991).

Although the females in this study acknowledged that lighter skin is often viewed as more attractive by males in general and in the broader society, they thought that darker skin was just as beautiful. In contrast, the indirect comments of males in this study about what they found attractive indicated their preference for lighter skin. The following is an example:

My favorites? [lighter skinned Hip Hop artists] Beyonce's sexy  
and so is Mya. They're the prettiest.

I don't like only light skin girls, but I think they are usually pretty.

Males

Hair in the African American community has also long been a contentious issue. It has been associated with both a negative self-image and Black pride (Bank, 2000; Wentz, 2002). For women in particular, hair has had a great impact on assessments of physical beauty due to its status as "a woman's crowing glory" (Banks, 2000). As in the case of skin color, hair that looks more European is given greater value; straight, long locks are viewed as the ideal. In contrast, more African textured hair, such as natural tight curls has been referred to as "nappy," a negative term indicating the wearer's hair was unkempt and less civilized (Debre, 2000; Richardson, 1999). Only in the last three decades have more natural hairstyles become the vogue, particularly as more well-known artists and non-African Americans begin wearing them. Still, research has shown certain African American hairstyles are still viewed as expressions of gang or street culture in certain workplace and school settings, causing racial tensions and leading to forms of censorship (Bank, 2000; Debre, 2000). This kind of negativity toward natural African hair was

also evident in both the females' and males' responses. Males openly stated their distaste for females with dreadlocks and natural short hair. Females were less rejecting of these styles, but acknowledged their hesitation in wearing them due to the stigma's attached by others, particularly their male peers and family members.

Body type also emerged as an important aspect of physical attractiveness. Males in this study spent a considerable amount of time discussing the shapes and sizes of African American females' bodies. It was clear that traditional Euro-American body images were not considered the most attractive. Rather, these males preferred the more curvaceous body types typically associated with African American females (Arogundade, 2000; Willis & Williams, 2002). Buttocks that were "large and round," "big breasts" and "thick thighs" were listed as ideal in these males' notes. Within the African American community and other communities of color, this attitude among males is common (Nasser, 1988).

However, in the context of the study, males further partitioned the female body, such that it was discussed in terms of individual parts. They could be attracted to a woman's large breasts, for example, but have no interest in her flat buttocks. A one male explained, "If her [buttocks] is nice and round, who cares about the rest--you don't have to look at it." Thus, her body was viewed in pieces, not as a whole person. In research on pornography, this objectification of specific female body parts is widely studied (e.g., Cameron & Frazer, 1996; Dworkin, 1996; Jackson, 1996; Walkowitz, 1996). It is suggested that males focus on parts of females' bodies and not the whole as a means of disregarding their identity as a person. This makes it easier for males to sexualize women without consideration of their feelings or desires.

The discussion on body type ideals was not as extensive or detailed among the females. This may be because, unlike Euro-American females, African-American females often report

that “looking good” is related more to public image and personality than to weight (Russell & Cox, 2003), a belief that was articulated by two participants in this study. This may explain why African-American females are more positive and flexible in their ideal body image than Euro-American females (Henriques, Calhoun, & Cann, 1996; Parker, Nichter, Vuckovic, Sims, & Rittenbaugh, 1995; Rand & Kuldau, 1992; Striegel-Moore, McVay, & Rodin, 1986). Still, one cannot ignore the importance given to body type among African American women. Parker et al. (1995) noted that African-American women did not evaluate their body in relation to the Euro-American ideal in the media, but in comparison to other African-American women. Furthermore Frisby’s (2004) studies found that even though they were not affected by images of Euro-American women, African American women reported lower levels of body satisfaction when they viewed media images of other African American women. Thus, the continued consumption of these sexual scripts may affect these females as they move into adolescence and start giving more value to appearance.

African American body types, skin color, and hair texture clearly served as an identifying racial marker about beauty, as noted in both prior research and this study . Overall, it was found here that males gave more value to Westernized standards of beauty than females did by selecting those sexual scripts that embodied such traits as long hair and lighter skin as more attractive. Females indicated that all skin shades and textures of hair can be attractive; the personality of the individual was what was more important. However, at the end of data collection for this study, traditional beliefs about African American beauty emerged when they casually questioned the researcher’s racial background.

Your parents are white?

*Researcher:* No. They're both mixed Black and Portuguese.

That's why you got that good hair

And your skin so light. It's real pretty.

Yeah, cause you got freckles.

Your hair curls like that itself?

*Researcher:* Uh huh

I like that. I wish my hair curl like that.

I didn't want to say anything about white people cause I figured  
your daddy or someone was white.*(laughter)*

You look like you got white in you

Yeah, your hair's really pretty.

#### Females

Thus, when not directly questioned, the traditional value given to more Euro-American phenotypic features appeared to dominate the thoughts of these females. Breland and Raskin (2001) and Hill (2002) found a similar pattern in their research with African American young adults whereby males were more likely to view lighter skinned women as more attractive than female respondents were. But the influence of those males' views affected women's views of themselves. This may explain why females in this study often referenced what males liked in conjunction with what they liked, a pattern that did not emerge among the males' responses. It is suggested here that this phenomenon occurs because of the added value men give to physical traits over psychological traits when considering dating processes, findings that have been

consistently found in mate selection research (e.g., Feingold, 1990; Perlini, Marcello, Hanson, & Pudney, 2001; Regan & Joshi, 2003). Studies on African American populations have shown males' interpretations of women's physical appearance, including body language and dress, are an important part of mate selection and relationship quality (Landolt, Lalumiere, & Quinsey, 1995; Lundy, Tan, & Cunningham, 1998; Ross, 1997). Thus, to remain competitive in the dating market, females must ensure they meet male standards of beauty. Although the females in this study were not as yet dating, it was evident that they were knowledgeable and gave value to males' opinions. Future research should examine the degree to which male values regarding physical attractiveness increase or decrease as these females age.

Overall, it is clear that traditional Western standards of beauty continue to be normalized and valued among these participants despite changing role models of attractiveness in general society. Those sexual scripts embodying these traits (long hair, shapely yet slender build and lighter skin) were generally viewed as the most attractive. The ways in which Hip Hop culture specifically promotes these ideals must be explored further in future research. This is particularly important given the centrality of and value given to females' physical appearance in music videos and Hip Hop culture.

#### Self Associations with Scripts

Much of the research on sexual scripting centers on how individuals utilize these frameworks as guidelines for behaviors. However, less is known about what factors influence acceptance or rejection of sexual scripts. Adolescents in this study thought that the factors determining whether or not females utilized these sexual scripts were dependent on the individual's level of self-esteem. Both males and females agreed that African American adolescent females who utilized these scripts would have lower self-esteem and would be seeking attention from others.

They don't feel good or confident about themselves. So they act like those sexual scripts] because they think they'll fit in and people would like them.

#### Female

Research on adolescent peer groups, self-esteem, and sexual risk taking provides evidence supporting these assertions. A desire to conform to behaviors viewed as acceptable by peers is common during adolescence (Clasen & Brown, 1985). In fact, a yearning to be included in peer groups might sometime override the influence of parental and broader societal attitudes when it comes to negotiating sexual risk taking behaviors (Conger & Simmons, 1997; Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992). Furthermore, the need for adolescent females to conform can cause them to change their appearance as a way to meet peer standards and improve self-esteem (Henriques & Calhoun, 1999).

Although it can be argued that the self-esteem of African American adolescent females tends to be higher than their Euro-American cohort (e.g., McCreary & Slavin, 1996; Wilson & Constantine, 1999), less is known about the ways in which stereotypes about their sexuality affect their self esteem, particularly in the context of sexual identity development. These sexual scripts require the balancing of a triadic social identity (race, gender, and sexuality) leading them to emulate mainstream gender norms while negotiating racial stereotypes of sexual behaviors (Stevens, 1997). It has been suggested that their double minority identity, that is, African American and female, can make them feel less empowered in social contexts as they attempt to live up to ideals about appropriate female and African American sexual identities, identities that

are often diametrically opposed (Hill Collins, 2001; Stevens, 1997). This is particularly problematic given today's atmosphere of increased adolescent sexual risk opportunity.

Adolescent African American females may feel less sure of or capable of negotiating their own belief systems, and they may rely on sexual scripts to identify appropriate models for behavior.

Sexual risk-taking research on African American adolescents supports this assertion. African American adolescent females who feel least assured of their friendships may be more likely to yield to peer pressures and norms to feel included, even if it leads them to engage in troublesome behavior (McCreary & Slavin, 1996). Walker-Barnes, Chanequa, and Mason (2002) also found that a desire "to fit in" to a peer group was the largest influence on willingness of African American females to normalize sexual risk taking behaviors. However, their choice was embedded in the belief that membership in these risk taking peer groups promised advantages that more legitimate societal institutions cannot. Participation in risk taking peer groups was associated with excitement, respect, and money, all values promoted in current Hip Hop culture (Walker-Barnes & Mason, 2001). It is argued here that ideals such as these are then filtered into the sexual scripts of adolescent African American females. Drawing from this body of research, it is proposed that African American females who have less positive views of themselves have a greater need to be accepted by peers. These females will also be more likely to accept sexual scripts to provide guidelines of acceptable peer group behaviors for females.

When the females in this study were asked whether or not they made any self associations with these sexual scripts, they disassociated themselves from the highly sexualized scripts (i.e., Freak, Gold Digger), which they viewed as negative. In the case of the stereotypical gendered sexual scripts (i.e., the Diva or Sister Savior), they felt they enacted the positive

aspects of their framework. However, they did not rely on these sexual scripts to define or guide all of their behaviors because they reported having a strong sense of self and high self esteem.

*Researcher:* Why [wouldn't you use these sexual scripts]?

I don't need them, I know what I want to do

Yeah

I feel good about myself

Females

These participants' self-assessments of why these sexual scripts were not being utilized supports prior research findings. How an individual views self has been shown to be instrumental in overriding the effects of external stereotyped messages (see Wheeler & Petty, 2001). Thus, if these females felt good about themselves and secure about their sexual health options, they would be less likely to need or want to associate themselves with these sexual scripts. Unfortunately, self-esteem data were not collected; thus explanations of this group's high self-esteem are not forthcoming.

It is important to pursue this area of research in future studies. The participants in this study were early adolescents; thus, they were just reaching the age when research has shown females levels of self-esteem begin to decrease. Research has shown that females' self-esteem remains high until the onset of adolescence, when it tends to drop about twice as much as males self-esteem (Debold, 1995). Although cross cultural research indicates that this phenomenon is less acute among African American adolescent females compared to their Euro-American counterparts, prior research findings do indicate that self-concept issues still affect African

American females more than their African American male peers (Stevens, 1997). It is important for future researchers to investigate females' attitudes about how sexual script usage manifests itself as they begin to transition into and through adolescence.

### Sexual Behaviors

When considering participants' beliefs about the sexual behaviors associated with these eight scripts the control, meaning, and power of female sexuality appeared to be mediated by a patriarchal framework. Both within Hip Hop culture and the broader society, males are normally viewed as the aggressors seeking sex, while females are gatekeepers resisting male overtures (e.g., Carpenter, 2001; Jackson, 1996; Lichtenstein, 2000). Frameworks embracing these traditional scripts of female sexuality were found to dominate beliefs of participants in this study. Most notable were the normalization of heterosexuality and the celebration of female virginity.

Virginity has long been ascribed a high value for females in most cultures. Preserving female virginity until marriage is still celebrated, although not the norm, in many societies. Among these participants, virginity or low levels of sexual activity were viewed as positive for women; none of the females identified themselves as sexually active nor seemed embarrassed about this. The values given to virginity (and in turn, promiscuity), directly informed attitudes about appropriate female sexual behaviors. In this study, participants noted that sexual scripts that did not appear to assert sexuality (i.e., Sister Savior, Diva) were "safe" in terms of sexual risk. Both males and females stated in their written notes that women enacting these scripts were sexually "clean" and "no condoms" were needed when engaging in sexual intercourse.

This reinforces prior research on college students that had found that the appearance of partners ("She doesn't look sick" or "She is too good looking to have AIDS") and familiarity with the partner ("I know them and the type of person they are") causes them to underestimate

their AIDS risk and need to use condoms (Malloy, Fisher, Albright, Misovich, & Fisher, 1997). Lichtenstein, (2000) also found that African American young women engaged in unsafe sex at first intercourse because their male partners said that neither was at risk due to her virginity. These young women relied on romantic notions about love and other traditional gender norms regarding female sexual passivity to guide their decisions.

As in other studies (Reiss, 1967), none of the females in this study endorsed a permissive or recreational attitude toward sexual behaviors, namely having sex. The hypersexual sexual script challenged the “good girl” model of sexual behaviors that African American young females are usually socialized to accept (Fullilove et al., 1993; Windham, 1995; Wyatt, 1997). These females responded to women’s interest in sexual pleasure as threatening to both themselves and the sexually empowered female (Simon & Gagnon, 1987). General cultural level sexual scripts portray unemotional and casual sex as negative for women. Rejection of negative sexual scripts appears to reflect the acceptance of traditional gender roles among these females. If the goals of sexual desire for women entail interpersonal and romantic involvement (Regan & Berscheid, 1996), being seen as promiscuous endangers these goals, particularly if men prefer partners with moderate sexual experience (Sprecher, McKinney, & Orbach, 1991).

The negotiation of the balance between being promiscuous and virginal was evident when the Baby Mama script was considered. The presence of a child clearly indicated that these women had already engaged in sexual intercourse. However, some males noted that they “may date” a Baby Mama in the future. It was felt that the degree of her sexual activity was important to consider; if she had multiple “baby daddies” or several male friends she was not an acceptable, sexually “safe” or “good” female for sexual intercourse. But if she appeared to

have had just one child within confines of a committed relationship she was still a potential sexual partner.

It is important to note that sex was viewed only as penile-vaginal intercourse. Although there was a detailed discussion about gender appropriate sexual behaviors, specific acts were not discussed in detail. Anything beyond these behaviors was viewed as promiscuous and abnormal. This was made particularly evident during discussions about the sexual behaviors associated with the Dyke script. Despite the fact that the Dyke is not a feminine or sexually wild script, she was still not viewed as sexless. Rather, her sexuality, in terms of engaging in same-sex intimate behaviors, was stereotyped by participants as repulsive, abnormal, and contrary to African American cultural norms, reflecting findings from prior research (e.g., Chideya, 1993; Lewis, 2003; Smith, 1994). This belief systems fits with the frameworks about homosexuality embedded in African American youth culture. Hip Hop artists know that declaring one's sexual identity—if it's not a typical straight one—is a huge personal decision that can have social, political, as well as financial/ career repercussions (Coker 1999; Iwamoto, 2003; Outlaw, 1995; Venable, 2001). These influences clearly extended to the participants in the study, particularly the females, who expressed negative attitudes and intolerance toward the Dyke script sexual behaviors. As was found among males in prior research, males in this study shared the same resistance to accepting this sexual script, yet still found the potential of engaging in female-female-male sex alluring enough to lessen their rejection of females who appeared to follow this sexual script (e.g., Jackson, 1997; Odih, 2002; Rehin, 2003).

Clearly, the acceptability of female sexual desire is inextricably linked to male expectations, beliefs, and goals. “A woman's identity rests not only on her own behaviors but on her partner's actions and others' appraisals and evaluations of her actions” (Horowitz, 1983, p.

119). Thus, participants' who appear to desire sexual pleasure may threaten gender norms that females enact in their interpersonal relationships (Simon & Gagnon, 1987). Accommodating private (intrapsychic) and public (interpersonal) scripts becomes difficult when conflict exists between them; being an object of desire and at the same time desiring another presented participants with feelings that were incongruous with their interactions (Simon & Gagnon, 1987).

Females in this study further reinforced cultural ideas about appropriate gender behaviors when they suggested and accepted the belief that males would have sex with any woman who was willing. Males' desire for sex was perceived as being innate and central to the relationships with females. This greater level of acceptability of males' permissive sexual behaviors was exhibited in both females and males' responses. Furthermore, the possibility of males engaging in sexual relations with females who followed even the most vilified sexual scripts was not viewed as problematic. The blame lay with the woman who allowed the male to have sex with her. This finding was not surprising. Within the African American community, females are socialized to be "good" and non- sexually aggressive while promiscuity in males is accepted, if not encouraged through parental messages (Adimora, 2001; Fullilove, Fullilove, Hayes, & Gross, 1993).

These double standards regarding male-female sexuality do not provide women with the skills and attitudes required to negotiate sexual practices effectively (Gomez & Marin, 1996). When adolescent females are depicted solely as objects of males' desire rather than sexual actors in their own right, this perpetuates cultural scripts of women as sexual victims denying that women also experience desire (Fine, 1988). However, there is also the argument against sexually aggressive sexual scripts, which state they just recreate male desires. Are the women projected as the subversive manipulators or the ones being manipulated? Are they exploitative in their own

right, or complicit in their own exploitation (Marriott, 2000)? This is an important concern for forthcoming research to consider, especially given that males in this study were the only ones to note that some females may “just want to have sex.” Clearly, In the future, researchers examining sexual behaviors, as exemplified in sexual scripts, clearly need to be conscious of and integrate understandings of how gender expectations and desires for both males and females can inform behavioral outcomes.

### Interpersonal relationships.

Sexual scripts not only provide individuals frameworks for their own behavior, but also inform them about others behaviors and how to respond to them. African American cultural critic, bell hooks, has pointed out that the messages of the Hip Hop culture do not promote healthy intimate interactions; “As much as I enjoy hip-hop, I feel there is not enough rap out there embracing and affirming love that is about communication and accountability” (Jones 1995, p. 190). The implications of this assertion are clear: African American youth culture frameworks do not give high value to issues of trust, honesty, or monogamy. Instead, there is a focus on utilizing interpersonal relationships for achieving material gain and social success (Villarosa, 1994).

The limited research on values given to personal and material factors in adolescent dating has resulted in mixed results (i.e., Buss, 1984; Goodwin, 1990; Smith, 1952). However, it appears that the degree to which adolescents focus on personality traits verses status markers is affected by the stage of the relationship. When considering long term relationships, personality traits are rated higher in importance for both males and females (e.g., Bolig, Stein, & McKenry, 1984; Hansen & Hicks, 1980; Smith, 1996). However, this does not hold true during initial and early stages of dating. For example, Herold (1974) found that although African American college students ranked personality characteristics highly in dating relationships, prestige factors (e.g.,

charm and good looks) had more influence at the initial dating stage. Also, in Hansen's (1977) study, black high school students ranked materialistic factors more highly than personality factors, whereas Euro-American students ranked personality traits more highly. In the present study, males tended to focus on factors clearly associated with the sexual scripts, physical appearance and allusions to sexuality, when identifying which factors would initially attract them to a female they want to "be with." As this was a study of female sexual scripts within a heterosexual context, females' assessments of how these scripts would affect their dating choices were not addressed.

It is important to consider these initial dating-stage values when examining early adolescents dating values. Both males and females in this study made comments that they were not ready to be in a stable, long-term relationship. Rather, they understood that who they "liked" today might not be the same person they were attracted to the next month. This sense of fluidity in relationships is common at this age, where adolescents are beginning to seek and out non-platonic relationships with the opposite sex (Miller, Notaro, & Zimmerman, 2002).

Even beyond the realm of potential intimate partners, beliefs of their male family members influenced the ways in which the females in this study perceived the sexual scripts, and their own attitudes toward sexuality. Several females stated that their fathers' disapproval of certain sexual behaviors, dress, or physical traits (particularly hair styles) was extremely influential. This fits with prior research findings in the area of African American father's influence on adolescent sexual risk taking. Although, fathers are less likely than mothers to initiate, engage, and accept adolescents' opinions in discussions about sexuality, when they explicitly state their disapproval of sexual intercourse it is more highly associated with lowering sexual activity among adolescents than is mothers' disapproval (Jaccard & Dittus, 1997; Noller

& Callan, 1990; Nolin & Petersen, 1992). Jemmott and Jemmott (1992) found African American adolescents who perceived their fathers as strict reported using condoms more consistently. It is clear that females' relationships with their fathers significantly influences their sexual behaviors and decision making processes even when there are limited direct sexual information discussions. Recognizing the significance females gave to their father's opinions about these sexual scripts, there is a need for future research to move beyond focusing on the mother-child dyad; fathers need to be more directly targeted in sexual scripting research before findings regarding the importance of parental relationships with their adolescence can be definitively stated (Miller, Forehand, & Kotchick, 2000).

Although females did not comment on how these scripts would affect their dating choices, the influence of their male peers' and familial members' attitudes cannot be ignored. As was previously discussed, of the values males give to females' sexuality, appearance directly impacts the quality and stability of male-female relationships (Landolt, Lalumiere, & Quinsey, 1995; Lundy, Tan, & Cunningham 1998; Schooler & Wieling 2000). This would mean that the males' interpretations and acceptances of sexual scripts illustrate their beliefs about the females with whom they will enter intimate relationships. For females transitioning into adolescence and learning to negotiate what it means to be a sexual being, the influence of self-approval versus male desires and expectations could potentially be important for determining the sexual script they choose to follow or reject (Washington 1995). Recognizing this, it is imperative that researchers identify ways in which African American females are able to ensure that they are empowered in their relationships, debunking the myth of self-fulfillment through relationships with men. Future researchers can build on the findings here to focus on positive adolescent dating processes in the African American community, moving from the current deficit approach

that focuses on partner violence and abuse (e.g., Gorman-Smith, Tolan, Sheidow, & Henry, 2001; Weisz & Black, 2001; West & Rose, 2000).

It was also noted that these sexual scripts do not promote or illustrate healthy female-female relationships, either platonic or sexual. The females did associate their own friends or other females they valued with these sexual scripts. In fact, when the females discussed how these sexual scripts would affect their interactions with other women, it was always within a context of disapproval. For example, the females rejected the Dyke script as being sexually deviant. They did not comment on the alternative female relationship that this script presented: a strong female bond or emotionally stable friendship (Lorde, 1984). Similarly, they disapproved of peers who would enact the Freak script due to fears of damaging their reputations by being associated with a Freak, and they feared the possibility of losing a male's attention. In both cases, the potential of friendship was measured against the sexuality risks associated with these scripts.

Interestingly, males commented on how these scripts would influence females' relationships with one another. They noted that females could potentially be jealous of those females who enact sexual scripts viewed as attractive to males. Similarly, females' statements illustrated their potential resentment toward females who would use the sexual scripts to gain attention from males. There is a need to explore how sexual scripts affect females' relationships with one another. Future research will need to identify how sexual scripts can help or hinder females from building strong, healthy relationships with one another.

#### Parental Monitoring of Sexual Scripts.

When initially asked how the information transmitted through the eight sexual scripts can improve conceptualization of African American female sexuality, both the females and males

thought that changing the presentation of women in music videos was important. However, participants cited parents as important “gatekeepers” of information about appropriate sexual behaviors and attitudes. Parents were viewed as being the most responsible for monitoring their children’s consumption and usage of these sexual scripts.

Parents should watch what little kids are watching and make sure they aren’t seeing a lot of sex and women dressed like that.

Female

Prior research supports these participants’ beliefs that parents are important influences on early adolescents’ negotiations of these sexual scripts. First, research on general communication between parents and adolescents shows that conversations are essential in transmitting values, attitudes, and knowledge (Feldman & Rosenthal, 2000; Miller et al., 1998; Nolin & Petersen, 1992). Second, through parental transmission of values and beliefs, early adolescents learn how to make informed decisions and to negotiate sexual behavioral outcomes (Feldman & Rosenthal, 2000; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1999; Rosenthal, Lewis & Cohen, 1996). For example, Paradise (2001) found that African American adolescent females view their sexual behavior as based on personal values garnered from their parents--regardless of whether they have had sexual intercourse or not. Research has also shown that parents are the primary and most influential sources of sexuality information for adolescents (Feldman & Rosenthal, 2000; Khan, 1994; Levy, 1995; Miller, Kotchick, Dorsey, Forehand & Han, 1998). The expectations of African American parents, as expressed through their own beliefs, values, and behavioral patterns, can function as adaptive mechanisms, and the effectiveness is multiplied when they reflect the

population's unique racial experiences (Boykin & Ellison, 1995; Luster & McAdoo, 1994; McAdoo, 1991).

In this study, both males and females specified two ways in which parental influence can help early adolescents negotiate sexual scripts: (a) actual parental enactment/ modeling of the sexual scripts, and (b) direct monitoring of sexual script consumption or usage. According to Boykin and Ellison (1995), youth attach emotional significance to their parents' expectations of their behavior, indicating that behavioral expectations are not followed or rejected simply because of the message's content, but are influenced by the behaviors of the messenger. More specifically, a direct mechanism of socialization on early sexual behavior is through parental modeling. This argument holds that adolescents observe the sexual behaviors of those they value in their lives as a means of defining their own (Gagnon & Simon, 1973). For example, some research suggests when single mothers or fathers engage in nonmarital sexual intercourse, children may conclude that nonmarital sexual intercourse--including sexual activity during adolescence--is acceptable (Inazu & Fox, 1980; Thornton & Camburn, 1987).

It was interesting to note that both males and females in this study made specific references to mothers as both models of appropriate sexual behaviors and as the person responsible for monitoring sexual script consumption. This finding supports arguments that an adolescent's attachment to, and identification with, the mother affects how adolescents view themselves in a variety of behavioral domains, including gender and sexuality (McCord, McCord, & Thurber, 1962). Proponents of this view assert that a mother's sexual behavior (both past and present) shapes the adolescent's understanding of gender and sexual roles. For females, the modeling effects of mothers may be stronger because their sexual identity as a female is most similar to their mothers (MacLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992; Wu &

Thomson, 2001). It can also be argued that the sexual behavior of mothers may be more salient for adolescent sexuality because of a sexual double standard: sexual activity is often perceived with more disapproval for mothers than for fathers. Motherhood is traditionally associated with morality, sex for reproduction, and as being an asexual role (Collins, 2000). However, research on familial sexuality education processes may provide the greatest insights. It has been found within African American families, direct discussions about sexuality are generally held between mothers and their adolescents (Jaccard & Dittus, 1993; Khan, 1994; Miller, 1998; Pick & Palos, 1995; Feldman & Rosenthal, 2000). Taken together, these three factors reinforce the need for future research to explore the specific ways in which mothers can help adolescents negotiate sexual script usage.

In addition to parental monitoring, parents' direct comments about these sexual scripts were viewed as important by these participants for buffering their acceptance of negative sexual script messages. Research examining the role of parental messages on negative stereotypes and sexual risk-taking is useful in supporting this assertion. Through positive ethnic socialization and positive parenting processes, African American parents provide their children with the skills to reject negative stereotypes. Specifically, those whose parents transmit messages about the African American culture, history, and heritage have a more positive sense of the self, more knowledge about their ethnic group, and develop more favorable in-group attitudes that challenge negative images (e.g., Marshall, 1995; Smith & Brookins, 1997; Stevenson, 1995; Taylor, 1976). This would suggest that sexual scripts, as frameworks projecting gender stereotypic models of sexual behavior, can also be influenced by parental messages.

Building on this, it is also useful to consider research that specifically examines the buffering effect of parental communication and monitoring on sexual risk taking. Participants in

this study thought that parental monitoring would be instrumental in decreasing other adolescents' acceptance and usage of sexual scripts. This supports prior behavioral research indicating that increased sexual intercourse is associated with decreased parental monitoring of adolescent sexual activity (Barnes & Farrell, 1992; Jaccard et al., 1996; Jemmott & Jemmott, 1992; Rodgers, 1999; Whitaker et al., 1999). African American parental conversations about sexuality also seem to buffer adolescents from sexual risk-taking (Pistella & Bonati, 1998; Rodgers, 1999; Whitaker, et al., 1999). More importantly, these conversations have been found to mediate sexual health information adolescents received outside the home (Fisher, 1993; Pick & Palos, 1995; Yowell, 1997). These findings, although not directly linked to sexual script negotiation, provide evidence of the importance of parental messages in the construction of adolescents' conceptualizations of sexuality.

It is important to note, however, that although not directly asked, the early adolescents in this study did not mention a need for their parents to provide them with tools to navigate the sexual scripts, nor did they mention that their parents had spoken to them about sexuality. This may be related to their age. It has been found that parents often wait until they believe their child is engaging in sexual activities or has reached obvious pubertal markers (i.e., menstruation, interest in the opposite sex) before they begin having discussions about sexuality. For example, in her study of African American mother's sexual communication processes, O'Sullivan (2001) found that mothers initiated discussions when they realized that their daughters were interested in males and going through pubertal developmental changes. These mothers focused the discussions on preventing pregnancy and disease, rarely acknowledging the positive aspects of sexuality outside the context of harm (2001). Discussions on personal issues (i.e., masturbation or nocturnal emission), practical issues (i.e., contraceptive usage), or psychological aspects of

sexuality (i.e., sexual decision-making or orgasms) infrequently take place (Baumeister, Flores, & Marin, 1995; Nolin & Petersen, 1992; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1999).

Given this study's revelation of the strong influence of sexual scripts on early adolescent African Americans' views of sexuality, it is important that further research on parental influence on these sexual scripts be conducted. Specifically, the ways in which parental monitoring of sexual script consumption affects sexual script negotiation and associated behaviors must be explored.

### Conclusion

Findings from this study undoubtedly add to existing body of literature on African American sexuality, while providing new evidence of the importance of sexual scripting in the understanding of these participants' behavioral outcomes. Furthermore, they provide valuable insights into areas of African American adolescent sexuality that have not been fully explored in previous research. For example, the participants from which these data were collected was unique in terms of life experiences and age. Studies of high-risk behaviors among African American adolescents have primarily used samples from large urban areas where participants are participating in AIDS education or substance abuse programs (Gibbs, 1998). Data collected from African American adolescent populations not deemed high-risk, such as these participants, is less common (e.g., Brody, Ge, Conger, Gibbons, Murry, Gerrard & Simons, 2001; Murry & Brody, 1999, 2000; Xiaojia, Conger, Simons, Brody, & Murry, 2002).

In addition, the use of qualitative research ensures that the unique experiences of minority populations are not lost due to the use of the dominant culture as the standard for comparison or presuming that effects of race are really by-products of statistical controls for race or ethnicity, approaches commonly used in quantitative research (Jones, 1991; McLoyd, 1996; Murry, 1995).

Using qualitative methodologies, it is possible to examine the processes by which individuals and groups construct meaning and provide a description of those meanings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Rich detailed descriptions about African American female sexuality were captured in this study through the perspectives of those being studied.

Finally, as was found here, qualitative methods are particularly effective for gathering accurate and comprehensive information from both minority populations and adolescent populations (Brooks- Gunn & Paikoff, 1996; Few, Stephens, & Rouse- Arnette, 2003). Specifically, qualitative research provides the most inclusive method for validating and centering experiences of African American females and males who are discussing sensitive, yet critically important, phenomena in their lives.

Future research could benefit from applying the results from this study to a different population. Clearly, issues of age and geographic norms and beliefs (particularly as it relates to music consumption, race, sexuality and gender) are important to consider. It would be useful to replicate this research with other groups of African American adolescents; the process of contending with messages about sexuality may differ for African American adolescents with other backgrounds and in situations (e.g., age, not highly educated, lower/ higher socio-economic status, lesbians, urban/rural locales). Future research should address how African Americans from different ethnic backgrounds (i.e., Caribbean, African, Hispanic) define sexuality and negotiate sexual activity within and outside their cultural frameworks.

Expanding the focus of this study is particularly important given the sexual experience represents the personal and socially constructed meanings surrounding a sexual event or sequence of events. Sexuality is larger than just behavioral outcomes and represents the personal, cultural, and interpersonal interpretations of sexuality, that are often outlined through the use of

sexual scripts. Operating on multiple levels, the socialization sources for African American women provide them with information about their sexuality within a unique racial and gender context. The media, particularly through the expression of Hip Hop culture, has provided bold evidence of the identified sexual scripts.

Sexual scripts as types of schema are instrumental in helping individuals to organize ideas of appropriate sexual experiences and to create norms regarding sexual behavior that are expressed and maintained through their usage (Simon & Gagnon, 1984, 1987). Understanding the link between sexual script and sexual risk taking behaviors is clearly important for researchers seeking to understand the unique experiences of African American women. This study has identified key themes to explore through the examination of sexual scripts as forums for understanding the messages and meanings obtained by African American adolescent females. These themes also have relevance for sexual risk taking behaviors. Furthermore, framed within a context that combines effects of culture, cohort, and social relevance, these sexual scripts illustrate the ways in which sexuality is bound by racial and gender beliefs on multiple levels.

The importance of Hip Hop to African American youth culture reinforces the influence of peer beliefs, attitudes and behaviors around sexuality, racial identity, and gender expectations for African American women. Unfortunately, despite the traditional pivotal role of family units in shaping the socialization process, the disconnection between parents, peers, and their children regarding these sexual scripts increases the incongruity in messages about appropriate sexual development. Instead, like others, African American early adolescent women must draw upon the variety of information they have received, compare it to available scripts, and determine its applicability to themselves.

The usage of sexual scripts for understanding sexual risk behaviors informs the field of the significance of understanding the simultaneous influence of gender and race with sexual meanings. This, in turn, informs ideas about sexual scripts and how they influence African American adolescent sexual behavior. The research on African American adolescent sexual scripts will be expanded through the utilization of grounded theory, opening the door for a more comprehensive analysis of this population's sexual health and experiences. With this kind of information, researchers will be better equipped to develop questions, research designs, and critical analysis of their findings so that accurate and extensive information will be made available for other researchers, practitioners, and educators in across fields.

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APPENDIX A

Parent/ Guardian Information Letter



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The University of Georgia

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Department of Child and Family Development

Although there are greater numbers of young African American females in mass media than ever before, the substance of their images has changed little over the past century. This is particularly evident within Hip Hop culture. This is easily seen by anyone who spends a minute watching videos on BET, listening to certain lyrics, or observing teens select clothing at the mall. Unfortunately, we know very little about how this is affecting teens today,

This issue has been gaining nationwide attention. For example, in this month's *Essence* magazine there is a special report titled *The War on our Girls*, which discusses the negative images of young African American women in Hip Hop culture, and it's impact on African American teens today.

Unfortunately, we haven't taken the time to listen to what those who are part of Hip Hop culture have to say. We want to hear African American teens' views and interpretations of these images. We want to know what they think of the lyrics, videos and clothing associated with women in Hip Hop. We want to know if they feel these images have any relevance to their friends' or other peers' behaviors.



From \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ at the Boys and Girls Club of Athens, teens will have an opportunity to share their ideas and concerns about images of African American women in music videos and across Hip Hop culture. To gather their opinions', we will have male groups and female focus groups with 5-7 participants in each. They will be encouraged to make suggestions for improving positive self-concept efforts for African American teens.

A summary of our findings will be sent out to you once our study is complete. Ultimately, the teens' feedback will be used to help design empowerment programs for African American youth. By better understanding the issues and challenges faced by African American teens we can develop more effective social services for this population, decrease the number of negative health experiences, and work to build healthier families and communities.

We hope that you will permit and encourage your teen to participate in the discussion. Enclosed are two sets of consent forms for you and your teen to sign. These forms outline what will take place during the interviews, your rights as a parent, your teen's rights as a participant, and further contact information. **Please keep one set for yourself and have your teen return the other set.** If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you,  
Dionne Stephens, Co-Researcher/ Doctoral Student.

APPENDIX B

Parent/ Guardian Information Letter

**Images of African American Women Focus Group  
Participant Assent Form**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I want to take part in the focus groups titled “Sexual Scripts and its impact on African American Adolescent Women’s Self Concept”. Dionne Stephens (Department of Child and Family Development at the University of Georgia, 706- 425-3109) and Dr. Layli Phillips (Women’s Studies Department at Georgia State University, (404-651-2524) are the researchers leading this project. The supervising faculty member is Dr. Lynda Walters (706-542-4844).

I understand it is my choice to take part in this study. I can refuse to answer any question at any time. I can also decide not to take part before, during or after the group interview takes place. If I do decide not to take part, there will be no penalty. And anything that is identifiable as mine will be returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

- This study will examine the images of teenaged African American women as presented in the media. Ms. Stephens will lead a group discussion asking questions about what kinds of images the media shows of teenaged African American women. The group will be asked questions about how we feel about these images and what these images say about African American teenage women’s behaviors. Questions about how these images impact our views of their sexual behaviors and how we feel about women we know look like these women. The interview will be approximately one and half-hours in length and will be conducted at the Boys and Girls Club of Athens.
- There are no risks to me for taking part. Although the interview will be tape-recorded and transcribed, and my real identity will not be known. In the final results, I will be identified by a fake name made up by Ms. Stephens. These tapes will be destroyed within one year of the interview taking place. Written records of this study will be maintained for future educational research, however, only the fake names will be used. Results will not be released in any way that makes known my true identity, without me saying that it is okay in advance, unless required by law. The final results of the study will also be shared with the group when the study is completed.
- Ms. Stephens will answer any further questions about the research at any time I ask. If I have more questions, I can contact Dr. Phillips or Dr. Walters at the phone numbers listed above.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



Research at the University of Georgia that involves human participants is carried under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D.; Institutional Review Board; Office of the VP for Research; The University of Georgia, 604A Graduate Studies Research Center; Athens, Georgia 30602- 7411; Telephone (706) 542- 6514

APPENDIX C

Parent/ Guardian Consent Form

**Images of African American Women Focus Group  
Parent/ Guardian Assent Form**

I agree to allow my teen \_\_\_\_\_ to take part in a study titled, “Sexual Scripts and it's impact on African American Adolescent Women’s Self Concept”, which is being conducted by Ms. Dionne Stephens, from the Department of Child and Family Development at UGA (425-3109) and Dr. Layli Phillips from the Women’s’ Studies Department at Georgia State University (404-651-2524). I do not have to allow my teen to be in this study if I do not want to. My teen can stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have the information related to my teen returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

- This study will examine the images of young African American women as presented in the media. My teen will be discussing how these images impact how they see themselves, how they see other African American women their age, how it makes them feel as an African American and if it has any impact on their views about appropriate sexual behaviors. Results of the study will also be made available to me at my request.
- Teens who take part will be able to express their opinions about teenaged African American women’s media images in a safe and productive environment. Ms. Stephens also hopes to learn something that may help research on African American female self-concept and sexual risk taking behaviors in the future.
- If I allow my teen to take part, my teen will be asked to discuss their feelings with Ms. Stephens about images of African American teen women shown in the media and among their friends. Ms. Stephens will ask my teen to participate in one group session that should last about 1 and a half-hours. This activity will take place at the Boys and Girls Club of Athens during my teen’s regular time there, and a meal will be provided. If I do not want my teen to take part then she/he will be allowed to participate in the Boys and Girls Club’s regular programming as usual.
- The research is not expected to cause any harm or discomfort. My teen can quit at any time- before, during or after the interviews take place. My teen’s participation in the Boys and Girls Club will NOT be affected if my teen decides to stop taking part.
- Any information collected about my teen will be held confidential unless otherwise required by law. My teen’s identity will be kept confidential, and data will be kept in secured location.
- Ms. Stephens and Dr. Phillips will answer any questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at the phone numbers above You may also contact the professor supervising the research, Dr. Lynda Walters, Department of Child and Family Development, at 542-4855.

I understand the study procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to allow my teen to take part in this study. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.



\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher      Date

Research at the University of Georgia that involves human participants is carried under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D.; Institutional Review Board; Office of the VP for Research; The University of Georgia. 604A Graduate Studies Research Center: Athens, Georgia 30602- 7411; Telephone (706) 542- 6514

## APPENDIX D

### Questioning Route

**Questioning Route**  
**African American Adolescent Women's Images Study**

Thank you all for coming to this focus group, which looks at young African American women's sexual sense of self from a gender and racial perspective. The purpose of this study is to evaluate images of African American women presented in African American youth culture, and explore their impact on sexual self-concept, sense of sexual self-empowerment and sexual health experiences. Again, your participation in this study is strictly confidential and voluntary; you will not be identified by name in any written transcriptions or reports of the interviews. Please feel free to talk openly and honestly about your experiences, feelings and opinions.

1. Let's begin by introducing ourselves. Just tell us a little about who you are and maybe why you decided to participate.

2. I realize that one of the things that ties us together as a group is the fact that we are African American.

Prompts:

- a) What does that mean to each of you- being African American?
- b) Is it something that is part of your daily awareness?
- c) Does it shape the way to see yourself?

3. What kinds of messages have you received about African American woman's sexuality?

Prompts:

- a) Within sex education at school, parents, society?
- b) Attitudes and beliefs about your sexuality?
- c) Choices that you have?

4. There are a lot of images we see about women in the media, particularly videos, and in music.

Prompts:

- a) What kinds of messages are being shown about African American woman?
- b) Are African American females portrayed the same way as other ethnic/racial groups when it comes to sex?
- c) Why or why is this true? Why is this what is happening?

5. Researchers would argue that these images impact your view of African American women and yourself.

Prompts:

- a) Does it impact how you project yourself and create your own image?
- b) Does it impact how you interact with other African American women and African American men?
- c) Does it impact how you see yourself as a sexual being?

6. What kinds of things need to be addressed when looking at African American women's images, sexual self-esteem, feelings of empowerment and sexual health experiences?

Is there anything else anyone wants to add that may have been missed?

Thank you for your participation.

## APPENDIX E

### Sexual Script Handouts

# DIVA

YOU



GIRLS

BOYS

# GOLD DIGGER

YOU



GIRLS

BOYS

# FREAK

YOU

GIRLS

BOYS



# DYKE

YOU

GIRLS

BOYS



# GANGSTER BITCH

YOU

GIRLS

BOYS



# SISTER SAVIOR

YOU

GIRLS

BOYS



# EARTH MOTHER

YOU



GIRLS

BOYS

# BABY MAMA

YOU



GIRLS

BOYS