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AYE! IN HOUSE MEETING: BLACK MASCULINITY WITHIN MUSICAL MEDIA

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by

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A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

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TITLE: AYE! IN HOUSE MEETING: BLACK MASCULINITY WITHIN MUSICAL MEDIA

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Prof. Jan Thompson

Music videos have a way of leaving memories in people, especially music lovers. Music videos are creative marketing tools for artists, bands, or groups to promote new music to their respective markets. However, how artists represent themselves, especially when it comes to marginalized populations, can be more critical than others when those who are marginalized are judged against hegemonic standards. When the intersections of Black, male, and gay collide in a music video study, how do Black males view Black male artists when their sexual orientations are not the same? This qualitative study explored how fifteen (15) participants defined Black masculinity within the music videos they saw. Using music videos from Black gay male artists Todrick Hall and Lil Nas X and Black straight male artists Aminé and Pink Sweat$, this study found that most participants did not view anything in any of the videos as unmasculine. Because participant responses recognized the craft and music of the music videos, this study concluded that, despite heteronormativity socialized to be the norm, overall Black gay men can be positive role models of Black masculinity.

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DEDICATION

In loving memory of the director of the Professional Media & Media Management program Dr. Scott McClurg. Dr. McClurg suffered a long battle with brain cancer and sadly passed away before graduation. We remember him by his wit and for giving us the best he got even when the road got rough. Thank you for the time being Scott, we will never forget you, rest in power.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Multi-dimensional representations of masculinity can be very beneficial to young men, including those in the LGBTQ+ community (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer), and can help in the process of healing traumas associated with discrimination regarding gender and sexuality. When men see themselves with multiple facets, they can aspire towards a progressive and hopeful realization of their diverse selves. Doubt, criticism, and skepticism of the masculinity of gay men is often grounded in personal prejudices or religious beliefs. Media depictions can educate audiences and humanize marginalized communities (Ellis & Zafar, 2022). By extension, media depictions of gay Black men influence how we view Black masculinity within our own realm of media and can help deprogram misconceptions of queer masculinity.

Through watching videos of several Black men on YouTube, I became more interested in the topic of masculinity. Content creators, U.S. senators, and artists on YouTube have frequently discussed a perceived attack on masculinity and manhood. Republican Senator Josh Hawley (R-Mo.) spoke at the National Conservatism Conference, arguing about how the Left was changing the definition of traditional masculinity and how the Left was also defining it as "toxic" (Treisman, 2021). He also asserted that liberals believe masculinity to be inherently problematic (Treisman, 2021). This is just one of the various examples of heterosexual men who have stated that masculinity is "under attack." In counterpoint to Hawley's claim of a maligned traditional masculinity, more recent strains of positive masculinity seek to salvage masculinity from more reactionary forms by removing its more "toxic" behaviors, ideals, and characteristics. Also, what has been noticed online but has been a controversial topic of the gay agenda. The idea of gayness or representation of queerness being a part of a gay agenda, recruiting people by force

into a gay "lifestyle" (Blow, 2021). Black male artists speak out against an agenda where it targets boys to fear they will then be "turned" gay. These old vestiges of masculinity such as homophobia, misogyny, or other patriarchal traditionalisms relate to a more rigid gender binary when, from a more diverse standpoint, masculinity can have multiple forms.

Gender is defined as a "key avenue through which social practice is ordered" (Connell, 1995,p.71). Scholars of gender and sexuality often differentiate *gender* and *sex*. Sex is usually defined as "the unchanging biological traits of being male or female," while gender refers to the "expectations attributed to the roles of both men and women in given society" (Phillips, 2005,p.1). In order to be respected within traditional gender binary cultures, men and women have to follow what society has told them they have to be instead of embodying their own sense of gender. Depending on where one lives, people who do not follow the traditional gender binary may be discriminated against. When men and women are not upholding the structures of what their roles are socially determined to be, they can be seen as deviant, absurd, or misbehaving. Additionally, due to patriarchal structures, gay men are not considered in the gender roles of society because patriarchy has insinuated that they lack masculinity (Connell, 1995, p.143).

Masculinity, manhood, and male studies are established academic discourse. However, this uprising in media of men claiming there is an attack on boys, men, manhood, and masculinity has recently gained traction in online spaces. Masculinities are multiple, fluid, and dynamic (Jewkes et al., 2015, p.113). However, even though there are different forms of masculinity, the majority of society upholds hegemonic masculinity as the standard. Hegemonic masculinity is defined as "the domination of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 1995, p.77). Furthermore:

"The concept of masculinity has been criticized for being framed within a heteronormative

> conception of gender that essentializes male-female difference and ignores difference and exclusion within the gender categories. The concept of masculinity is said to rest logically on a dichotomization of sex versus gender and thus marginalizes or naturalizes the body" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.836).

Hegemonic masculinity is often associated with conventional forms of heterosexuality, and therefore, hegemonic masculinity is constructed as "a set of gender expressions that are perceived to oppose the gender expressions stereotypically associated with women and gay men" (Jewkes et al., 2015, p.113). Hegemonic masculinity is perceived as a noble way for a man to be a man, and when a man does not reinforce those hegemonic standards of masculinity, but does not directly challenge them, he is then showing "complicit masculinity" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005,p.832). In other words, when a man rejects hegemonic ideals and refuses to benefit from the patriarchy, he is not seen as manly or as conventionally masculine as a man who upholds hegemonic standards. Additionally, the patriarchal order associates gayness and other queer masculinities with femininity, and therefore, gay men are viewed as subordinate to conventionally masculine heterosexual men within the patriarchal gender order. (Connell, 1995, p. 78).

To focalize the analysis of masculinity within entertainment industry studies, I here analyze how Black young men view masculinity from a sector of the entertainment industry, namely the music industry. I developed my research to focus on how we see Black men in music videos and how a group of Black men and non-binary persons respond when seeing a Black man who does not conform to the standards of heteronormative society. My research asks: how do Black gay men's masculinities differ when the potentials of music videos are leveraged to explore different forms of masculinity?

Songs are a creative way for artists to express their identities; for male-identified artists, this includes masculinity. Further, music videos often express what an artist is feeling and help further engage with the public when that artist releases a song or record. From an industry standpoint, music videos also help an artist's streams, exposure revenue, and even brands. (Bakula, 2014). How does this relate to Black masculinity or masculinity itself? Not everyone expresses their masculinity or femininity in the same way. My study investigates how masculinity is defined by four Black heterosexual and homosexual male artists, through the art and music videos of Lil Nas X, Pink Sweat$, Todrick Hall, and Aminé. I identify the contrasting depictions of masculinity in the work of male artists who have two different sexual orientations. Todrick Hall and Lil Nas X identify as gay, whereas Aminé and Pink Sweat$ identify as straight.

Using these artists, all of whom currently identify as Black and were assigned male at birth, I conducted a qualitative method approach exploring how Black masculinity was seen across a span of four music videos from the perspectives of four men in music. Additionally, focus groups that consisted of fifteen (15) participants were assembled to gather how each member understood masculinity in relation to men who identify as heterosexual and homosexual. I set up my focus group questions according to my research questions to find out what the different perceptions of masculinity were when looking at men who all were Black but differed with respect to their sexual orientations.

My argument is that forms of masculinity expressed by Black gay men should be accepted and thus understandings of masculinity should not be limited to those often perceived with regard to straight Black men. Black male artists who identify as gay ought to be recognized as just as masculine as heterosexual Black artists within Black male spaces. Gay Black men should also be able to be seen as positive examples of Black manhood. Because hegemonic

masculinity has traditionally been seen as the only masculinity to aspire to, and since it evolved around heteronormativity, it never included gay men. Historically, stereotypes of Black masculinity have included depictions of hypermasculinity, hypersexuality, aggression, and stoicism. The current evidence, however, shows that, in a Midwestern public institution, such as where this study was conducted, views toward Black gay masculinity tend to be more progressive, with some reservations toward more feminine and queer presentations. Through the focus groups, it was found that gay male artists who have made these progressive choices were not viewed to be less masculine than their straight counterparts and that there is potential for Black gay men to be seen widely as positive examples of Black masculinity.

For the rest of this study, I will examine how masculinity is seen through a black-queer lens of how society has confined Black men under heteronormative expectations that have not included masculine identities of gay Black men. The literature review will give theoretical, historical, and current, background into how and why masculinity has disassociated itself with queerness. Then, the literature review will take a deeper look into the different studies of Black masculinity.

The next section, entitled “Black and Queer Studies,” splits into two section. The first section describes Dr. Kelly Douglas’s experience as a theology professor and the homophobia she witnesses in her classroom teaching at Howard University. Additionally, the first section goes into detail about how religion has perceived queerness and how it is used to see queerness as negative. The second section talks about the statistical data of the outcomes of homophobic and queerphobic legislation and societal treatment of the LGBTQ+ community. Lastly, I discuss genres such as hip-hop and R&B, these are two genres that Black artists mostly dominate and the effects of hip-hop’s stereotypes about Black men, as it is the genre with the most prevalent

depictions of stereotypes out of all genres. This section also notes that all the top executives at the top nine music groups are all white and male, and with the exception of one white female. Furthermore, the methodology chapter defines the process of how I conducted the qualitative method test to identify the interpretations of Black masculinity. Chapter Four shows the results of the focus groups. After the results, I then further discuss the implications of the study that was conducted.

The significance of my project will bring a different perspective of how young Black men can see themselves within music videos. Though this project is covering one type of specific media, focusing on one has brought new discoveries about the disparities of Black masculinity. As I've gotten older, the ongoing online conversation of what makes a man a man or the "gay agenda" that . Growing up was not having so much representation, until I got into my mid-teens and saw Todrick Hall or Alex Newell. The ongoing conversation of manhood and what it takes to be a man in my opinion, leaves out gay men and what they too can bring to the conversations of masculinity and manhood. Not knowing how to be confident within yourself as a gay man can be harmful, especially when you already don't identify with the societal norms of being straight. I want young men to understand that no matter how you identify with your sexual orientation that doesn't make you less of a man. Hopefully, all Black young men can relate to my research and understand that masculinity is a spectrum and that it is up to the individual how little or how much they want to be and no one else.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

ECONOMICS AND EDUCATION

Hegemonic masculinity is defined as “the domination of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, 1995, p.77). Hegemony is what society interprets as “normal” and formulates how we see the binary of men and women. Gender then shapes men’s social positions— they are “breadwinner”, “protector”, “husbands”—and their ideas about how these positions ought to be embodied (Hill, 2022, p.501). However, those heteronormative social roles though hard to live up to, we see in current data that gay men are living up to those standards. A study (2022) found that 6% of gay men in the United States have a JD, MD, or PhD, making them roughly 50% more likely to have an advanced professional degree than straight men”(Mittleman, 2022, p.314). It was also found that gay men have an advantage in completing a bachelor's degree that extends across the four largest racial groups, “Among White men, Black men, Hispanic men, and Asian men, gay men consistently surpass straight men by double-digit margins”(Mittleman, 2022, p.316). Unfortunately, though gay men are making progress there in the collegiate level we also see the downfall in the secondary education. According to a Brookings report, a study of five states’ high school graduation rates in 2021 showed Black men ’s graduation rate was 76%, compared to 78% for Hispanic men, 87% for White men, and Asian men, who achieved the highest out of the four groups, at 93%. Additionally, between these five states, Michigan had the lowest rate, with only 61% of Black men graduating in 2021 (Reeves & Kalkat, 2023).

Moreover, with finances gay men have surpassed as well. The U.S. Census found that the median income for same-sex male married couples was $123,600 compared to $96,390 for opposite-sex couples. (Glassman, 2020). Additionally, poverty rates among were the lowest for

same-sex male couples: opposite-sex couples were at 4.2%, while same-sex male couples achieved the lowest of the three at 2.7% (Glassman, 2020). We are seeing the uprising of gay men achieving the status that is brought upon men at early ages of being a provider and a leader. Though gay men are not in relationships with women, they have achieved the socio-economic standards of hegemonic masculinity, even though some may not consider them masculine due to their sexual orientation.

BLACK MASCULINITY

Current research is not only based on the intersection of being Black or queer, or the intersections of both, but also on how young Black males struggle with their identity along with their masculinity or the perceived notion of masculinity. Much of the research focuses on Black young men's college experience, dating, sexuality, societal views, religion, and the overall attributes of manhood. Two foundational authors, Hunter and Davis, wrote articles about Black men, one in 1992 and the other in 1994. In 1992 they researched gender construction by looking at how Black men viewed manhood. For their study, they conducted in-depth interviews of 32 Afro-American men across various age groups and found that the men defined “manhood” as (1) self-determinism and accountability; (2) family; (3) pride; and (4) spirituality and humanism (Hunter & Davis, 1992). In their 1994 study, they interview another 32 Black men to ask them what manhood meant to them. The three main categories were: (1) identity and the development of self; (2) connections to family; and (3) spirituality and humanism (Hunter & Davis, 1994). Some phrases from all three categories were: having a vision; being direct; goal oriented; being accountable in one’s actions; expressing oneself without social constraints; taking care of finances; keeping the family together; being a role model for children and spouse; not the macho-type; not dominated by a woman; equity in heterosexual relationships; connection with

God; concerned for others; not superior to women; showing emotions; not superior to other men; and unselfish (Hunter & Davis, 1994,pp. 32-34). Another study (2014), used a mixture of focus groups and in-depth interviews for 46 undergraduate Black men. They asked these men what were the differences and the meanings of being a man and a Black man. Some answers were being a provider; strength (being strong); family oriented; sacrifice; mentor, prove something to yourself and others; and overcoming stereotypes about Black men (Mincey et al., 2014,p.393). Their findings about the perceptions of manhood gave these scholars the insight into what Black men describe as masculine. However, the findings given in the articles above do not match what is found in other literature. A study (2011) that consisted of 22 Black men in in-depth interviews and focus groups, went over the contextualized meanings of Black masculinity. The study found that the behavioral outcomes surrounding the idea of masculinity were leadership; homophobia; fear of femininity; and engaging in sexist relationships with women, to the extent that such relationships are encouraged (Harris et al., 2011, p.54) Participants discussed the importance of being academically successful, having on-and-off campus presence; however, when it came to discussing their gay counterparts, the participants' responses consisted of homophobic comments and not wanting to associate with gay men who are flamboyant or open about their sexual orientation (Harris et al., 2011, p.54-55). Harris et al also found that "The relationships with women that were described by the participants were constrained, highly conflicted, and narrowly focused on sex and sexism" (p.56). This view is a common stereotype of Black men in the literature. Stereotypes of characteristics of hypermasculinity described Black men as hypersexual, materialistic, risk-taking, misogynistic, aggressiveness, toughness, and restrictive emotionality (Avery et al., 2017; Harris et al., 2011). The surrounding attributes of what it meant to be a man or act like a man were aspects that Hunter and Davis didn't consider: ethnic

background, religious conceptions, socioeconomic status, societal characteristics, previous generations, and views of self about how men were raised can all contribute to ideas of what the correct and publicly noble way being masculine is. In their abstract Hunter and Davis stated, "The meaning of manhood has been treated as largely unidimensional and universal-man as economic provider and as head of the family. Further, what Black men are and what they should be is measured against the status and privilege of White males"(Hunter & Davis, 1994, p.20). Black men were not able to be measured individually by their own success and morals, but by the approval of White men. Specifically, when Black men are measuring their own success, it goes against a status quo at least in the U.S., because Black manhood have been measured by how equal, how much, or how much more Black men had compared to their White male counterparts.

Bakari Kitwana, wrote a book entitled *The Hip Hop Generation*, Kitwana focused on the years of 1965-1984 to describe what is called the hip hop generation. The book highlights the history of how the generation of hip hoppers experienced adversity and strife in America. He notes in his book that, even post-segregation, the hip hop generation still faced adversity: young Blacks were twice more likely to be unemployed, face countless roadblocks, discriminate against their own race, face housing discrimination, and even if they were experienced and educated like their White counterparts, still be paid less for the same job (Kitwana, 2002, p.13). Black men couldn't get ahead because of the laws and restrictions that were already place on us as a people, no matter what education or families we were born into. It often seems like Black masculinity, post-Civil Rights Movement, was measured upon what Black men had; they were always measured on what they had in comparison to White men but never truly defined through their own customs, culture, spirituality, independence, and existence.

I define Black masculinity as an individual decision based on the individual male's conception of how he wants to move, navigate, express, or love, no matter the socioeconomic status, traditional values, or societal pressure put on him, and without needing to prove to anyone how masculine or how Black he is.

BLACK 'N QUEER STUDIES

In *Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective*, Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas starts Chapter Four with familiar sayings used when negotiating the topic of gay and lesbian lives. Some of these are:

"I can love the sinner, but not the sin" (p.87)

Homosexuality is an abomination" (p.87).

"To be gay goes against nature" (p.87).

"Homosexuality is detrimental to the Black family" (p.87)

These are the talking points used to tell a person why being gay or being a part of the LGBTQ+ community is wrong. Many statements disagreeing with a person's gender identity or sexual orientation are usually influenced by biblical teachings. Douglas recognizes that, while at the School of Divinity at Howard University, when her class got on the topic of homophobia, the same age-old homophobic rhetoric was used. Her students' remarks included terms like "sinners," "abominations," "perverts," "diseased," and suggestions that they don't deserve love or respect, despite the fact, paradoxically, as Christians the students claim to love everybody (Douglas, 1999, p.87). The anti-LGBTQ+ Christians, conservatives, or anyone else for that matter, often use the Bible as a venomous weapon to justify their hatred for queer, non-binary, and trans people's lives. When it comes to biblical texts referring to homosexuality, the language can be often misconstrued or distorted. "Bible scholars have painstakingly shown that Leviticus

Holiness Codes (Lev. 18:22; 20:13), the story of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen.19:1-9) and Paul's Epistle to the Romans (1:26-27) do not present a compelling case against homoeroticism" (Douglas, 1999, p.90). Douglas claims that neither the words nor the actions of Jesus refer to any antigay or lesbian stance according to biblical scholars (Douglas, 1999, p.90). Therefore, it is not surprising to see someone using the Bible to approve of their homophobia and then use it as a weapon or a tool of oppression when people or other communities use it to justify their oppression of others (Douglas, 1999, pp. 90-91). This is the same tactic used when Black people were enslaved by White people in America. Slave masters used the Bible and only selected and presented verses in a way that suggested that slavery was ordained by God and blackness was a curse (Douglas, 1999, p.91). It was not until slaves read the Bible for themselves that they realized the slave masters' interpolations privileged the slave master and their desire for power (Douglas, 1999, p.91). With such sensitive and biblical claims from Douglas, it would be hard to deny the ongoing conversations when it comes to queerness, where the Bible is used to harm, scare, and perpetuate danger rather than good. Based on Douglas's findings, it is not too much to say that biblical teachings are at the root of homophobia in the modern-day America. Biblical teachings discourage and put LGBTQ+ young people in fear of ever coming out and being their true authentic selves. Through the use of such critical words in Dr. Douglas's classroom and outside of the classroom itself, we also see how harsh comments regarding LGBTQ+ life can be deeply harmful. Moreover, because of these harmful teachings using the Bible, LGBTQ+ individuals who are subjected to this discrimination and their supporters are leaving religious organizations. A survey (2022) asked 1,050 participants to answer why they left their religious organization. The top reason why was LGBTQ discrimination. At 24.76% LGBTQ discrimination had the highest percentage out of the whole study. Respondents were not happy

that they couldn't support their queer friends and family (Flanery, 2022). Though some of the respondents were queer, the majority of respondents were straight and cisgender (Flanery, 2022). Eventually, after not being able to rectify their love of LGBTQ people with the church, they chose LGBTQ acceptance over their religious organization (Flanery, 2022).

Anti-LGBTQ+ upbringings can affect how young men see their masculinity and their identity. The Trevor Project is a non-profit aiming at suicide prevention for young LGBTQ people. The organization conducted a national survey of over 28,000 young people from ages 13-24. The Trevor Project reported that nearly 1 in 3 young people's mental health was poor due to anti-LGBTQ+ policies, 41% of respondents seriously thought about attempting suicide, with 11% responding as White, 22% responding as Indigenous, and 16% responding as being Black. Sadly, 56% of the respondents who wanted mental health services could not get them. With these numbers, we see how anti-LGBTQ+ policies can affect young men when it comes to their confidence as persons in the community.

One other study was released in 1995 about how other Black heterosexuals view gay men and lesbian women. This study was tested by participants of 391 Black heterosexual people. 74.1% of participants stated that sex between two men was just plain wrong while sex between two women was 72.4% (Herek & Capitanio, 1995). Overall, 57% of respondents believe that relations for both gay men and lesbian women are disgusting (Herek & Capitanio, 1995). Though this was taken in 1995, it instills the negative opinions of how heterosexuals view people who don't ascribed to heterosexual activity and normativity. Majority of participants viewing homosexual as disgusting does fill the homophobic view that we still see today as stated earlier. The article also stated that more of the male respondents were more negative about homosexuality than the female respondents (Herek & Capitanio, 1995). We also see similarities

between this article and the Harris et al. study, when the majority of those respondents were stating homophobic rhetoric of not wanting to be associated with or around someone who is gay and open about their sexual orientation (2011).

We see how anti-LGBTQ+ sentiments affect physical and sexual health as well. A study by Driver and Kalichman looked at the use of PrEP, (preexposure prophylaxis) a prescription drug used to prevent HIV. Researchers found that Black sexual minority men (BSMM) are most likely not to take PrEP due to the precarious manhood beliefs (PMBs) and not wanting to be perceived as less masculine (Driver & Kalichman, 2022). The term "precarious manhood beliefs" is defined as "the expectations of a man to constantly defend his manhood because of the idea what can be given can also be lost or taken away at a point in time when his gender status is questioned; a man then has to broadcast masculine competence to others" (Vandello et al., 2022, p.2). This is a similar point Douglas makes in her book when she recalled Magic Johnson announcing to the press that he was HIV positive and the deeply-rooted stigma of HIV/AIDS. The rumors of Johnson's sexuality spewed all over the place, players disassociated with him, and he had to reassure the public that he got infected by a woman due to a promiscuous heterosexual lifestyle (Douglas, 1999, p.103). As these authors have shown, there is a strongly rooted social expectation that men protect and defend a certain type of masculinity, hegemonic masculinity. The specific protections from never being deemed gay means a man is subordinate and complicit. The whole wanting to "fit in" and not stand out mindset is very prevalent at this point and not wanting to be viewed as less than a man may discourage some men from ever coming out.

R&B, HIP-HOP, & BLACKNESS

Music is a form of media; it not only is used in the Black community to cleanse the soul

but also to carry messages of action, political issues, social issues, and connecting the world. However, there is music that promotes toxic masculine traits for men, violence, and a certain level of roughness. People from all different age groups can listen to a song and be inspired to do the wrong thing or the right thing. However, it's not just the music that causes these actions; it's also the public persona of an artist that comes into conversation when someone is not only an artist but a celebrity. A rapper that no one knows of, Pastor Troy, went on a homophobic rampage when he saw Lil Nas X's photos at the 62nd Grammys. The rapper took to his Twitter account and wrote," Welp, Guess I won't be winning a GRAMMY…If this what I gotta wear." "They love to push this sh– on our kids!!" he added (Daw, 2020). Lil Nas X was dressed in an all-pink outfit with a matching hat that year. Pastor Troy went further and stated how his son saw an Applebee's commercial of two men eating mozzarella sticks and said that his son said, "'F*** Applebee's,"' which brought joy to his heart, so he stated (Daw, 2020).The irony about these kind of statements is, when certain Black men talk about how queer agenda(s) are trying to take over children and turn them queer or trans, the same artists who then complain about this are the ones who write and produce musical stereotypes about Black men and the community at large.

A study by Avery et al (2017) did a content analysis of 527 songs from the years 1990 to 2010. The majority, 58%, of the songs in the study were in the genre R&B/soul; the second majority was hip-hop, which comprised 30% of the songs. Male artists accounted for 62% of the musicians, and female artists accounted for 32%. The study found that men rapped and sang of the hypermasculine dimension of masculinity more than any other dimension of masculinity. In terms of the thirteen hegemonic masculinity attributes researchers coded for, the most prevalent references were men emphasizing materialism and consumption,

competitiveness, being driven by sexual desires, taking risks, and misogyny (Avery et al., 2017). Another part of the study found that significantly more references to men as competitive, risk-taking, violent, anti-feminine, sex-focused, aggressive, and focused on material goods as a symbol of status occurred in rap/hip-hop songs more than any other genre (Avery et al., 2017). So, to the men who say and feel the same sentiments as Pastor Troy, do you want your son to uphold the same attributes in terms of making them more masculine? Black men showcase through this study displayed how rough and tough they can be. However, the moment queerness is represented in awards ceremonies, performances, or it seems any other situation, Black men are ready to publicly shame their own LGBTQ+ Black persons; even though this hypermasculine music is released to the public, it showcases toxic stereotypes of our community.

Additionally, when it comes to executives in the music industry, there are not a lot of those of color. In 2022, USC Annenberg found that 50.6% of all artists were from some sort of a minority population; however, a study released two years prior, from the same university, also found that all CEOs or Presidents of the top 9 major music companies were White, and only one of the executives was female (Smith et al., 2023; Stacy et al., 2021). Furthermore, they also found that minorities dominate the genres of hip-hop and R&B/Soul: 90.1% for R&B compared to 88.1% for hip-hop/rap (Smith et al., 2023). In a sense, White executives are giving Black male artists full permission to push this explicit hypermasculine rhetoric to our community, and if they're making money off of it, why stop it? We praise rappers and singers who put out (hetero) sexual depictions to our community, being a thug, and so on, but we never say or use the term "pushing an agenda." Additionally, it puts a further gender divide between Black men and Black women. The constant references to Black women as bitches,

hoes, chicken heads, and pigeons is also promoting women being used as stage props in music videos (Kitwana, 2002,p.87). The constant gender tension between Black men and women is also a repetitive theme within hip-hop culture (Kitwana, 2002, p.87). Hip-hop music is not totally to blame for gender division or Black masculinity arguments; however, just to reiterate, this project is discussing one sector of Black masculinity. Because of the constant hostile messaging, this also formulates how other gay Black men interact with each other even within LGBTQ+ affirming spaces.

Author Jeffery McCune Jr. writes about his times at a hip-hop gay club called The Gate. His article overall is his experience with men on the down-low at this club. Down-low (DL) can be defined as " a man having discreet sex with other men or engages in low-key queer activity (McCune, 2008,pp.298-299) One particular evening he notices a young man that he knows; the young man named Shawn grabs McCune's hand and places it on his groin (McCune, 2008,p .306). The person who greeted McCue so warmly was on the down low, and he was afraid to come out, especially to his fraternity brothers, family and friends because he did not know how they would react (McCune, 2008, p.306). However, he was able to come to a gay club and be himself. The messages about what it means to be a woman or man are socially constructed; individuals learn from parental and guardian influences, peer-to-peer interactions, and media messaging about expected behaviors of them as gendered beings (McGuire et al., 2014, p.260). The arguments surrounding homosexuality see it as a constant threat to the Black family, a perversion of manhood, equated with effeminate behavior, a splotch on American society, a violation of masculinity, and deviant, which can make Black men feel conscientious about losing their masculinity card (Douglas, 1999; McCune, 2008; Newton, 1972). This also means, if they are out, they are covert, meaning that during work or

maybe with family, they are perceived as straight, but when they are around their other friends and accepting members of the LGBTQ+ community, they are acting as their normal queer self (Newton, 1972, p.21). Basically, this is another form of "code-switching." Meaning to act different or to be consider a certain way in order to fit in, whether it be in a professional or recreational setting.

MUSIC VIDEOS

Music videos in themselves have been used to as a consumer product in its commodity form, used as a promotional tool and advertising for the music industry, television, radio, and record labels (K. M. Harris, 1999, p.76). Music videos are primarily used "as a televisual form adhering to temporal constraints of television content-matter constraints, and strategically used in slots for a target audiences" (K. M. Harris, 1999, p. 76). Music videos have a way for connecting the audience to the new "era" of music for the artists. They can display a visual aspect of the message of the song the artists or group is trying to convey. No matter how artist go about it music videos is required to present the lyrics of the song, dramatized, narrativized or performed in a concert (K. M. Harris, 1999,p.77).

Studies that were found centering Black men as it relates to music videos tells us how the artists coincide with the hypermasculinity. For example, author Keith Harris did an analysis on the artists D'Angelo's song "Untitled." In the music video D'Angelo is seen with a black back drop with different camera angles fully naked. Females' spectators were the target audience in terms of the video but it also sees glimpses at the Black male body as eroticism and hypermasculine in the nature of the song (K. M. Harris, 1999). As stated above, Black men being stereotyped as hypersexual is something that is held against Black men. One could argue that the music video was marketed to not only attract spectators to purchase his

record at the time, but also to assemble him as a sex symbol in front of millions of spectators which portrays the ongoing stereotype of Black men being subjugated as hypersexual.

This is just one example of studies who encountered studying Black men in music videos. Another study conducted was done studying the self-construction of rap music videos. Bakali (2009) did an analysis on three music videos if they were to have found forms of masculinity. The videos that were highlighted their analysis were 50 Cent's "Straight to the Bank," UGK and Outkast's "International Players' Anthem," and Lupe Fiasco's "Daydreamin." They found that 50 Cent's video displayed stereotypical forms of masculinity such as materialism money, women, while the other two music videos challenged masculinity. Group member of Outkast Andre 3000 in his video wore a kilt while Lupe in his video deconstructs images of Black masculinity by mocking and critiquing them (Balaji, 2009). In hip-hop culture not matching the other Black men in your genre and not approaching your music and your image can question your masculinity. An artist wearing a kilt would probably not be seen as masculine in Black spaces, more feminine than not. Being able to boldly and publicly display yourself as "other" was considered risky and "uncool," basically not following the crowd as a man makes other men question your authority in manhood.

While researching, there were also components of music videos that capture how women were utilized in them. Women in rap music videos specifically can be used as more of a prop than an integral part of the storyline. One study found multiple discoveries within a content analysis over multiple videos of how women were objectified. Over the course of five music videos, the researcher found that 95% of the women were completely nude (Broadnax, 2019 p.27). It was also found that 75% of the videos showcase money or factors of wealth such as cars, houses, and jewelry (Broadnax, 2019, pp. 34–35). Finally, the videos also

indicated 100% time the usage of alcohol bottles being surrounded or used for consumption (Broadnax, 2019, pp. 35–36). Another study (2011) found women to be overtly sexualized more than males by sultry looks, suggestive dancing, and sexual self-touch (Wallis, 2011, p. 168). Although two studies were more over the gender differences that displayed women over men, it gives us great insight of the videos that used women as a toy for the male gaze. The findings should not be surprising since a study from earlier informed us that the majority of the songs found within the rap/hip-hop genre displayed being risk-taking, violent, being sex-focused, and aggressive (Avery et al., 2017). Matching what is found from the lyrical coding to the content analysis for music videos proves that there is a correlation of hypermasculinity and stereotypes that are found when in comes to at least in rap. This displays both the complexities of then and now through what music videos have contributed for Black men as artists and their artistry in the music industry. Black artist have re-worked long stereotypes of Black men as hypersexual, insensitive, detached, and cold-blooded (Gray, 1995, p. 403). These images do not affect only the dominant culture, but also the definitions and images of Blackness (Gray, 1995, p. 403).

As this literature demonstrates, Black masculinity has formulated the way people may think about the LGBTQ+ community and the different ways they consider themselves to be masculine. Gay men have made many economic and educational strides, and despite social pressures, there are different types of masculinity and diverse definitions of Black masculinity. LGBTQ+ people have taken a stand in religious conversations. The effects of heteronormativity in homosexual spaces have significantly affected individuals and shaped music. All existing literature was used in the framework of this research report. I will now in the following sections of the research report showcase how I conducted the methodology,

analyze the data, and discuss further how Black masculinity is portrayed within musical media.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

To analyze Black masculinity within musical media, I dissect the main visual form of musical media, music videos. Music videos are a form of visual culture strategically funded, planned, and filmed to get further promotion of a single, EP, or album. Music videos convey the story and meaning of song through visualization. Music videos leave an impression on viewers and listeners that can result in long-lasting memories of a song or its visualization. For the purpose of this project, I chose four artists who were all Black and male. Two of them are rappers, two are singers; two are straight, and two are gay. The differences in the identities of the four artists allows the ability to explore the differences in artistry between music videos and male artists who have different sexual orientations. How do the physical performances differ between someone who was straight and someone who was gay? How would participants react from one video to the next? The four artists I chose were: Aminé, Pink Sweat$, Todrick Hall, & Lil Nas X. For this research, I decided to use a qualitative method in the form of focus groups. With this specific method, it allows an investigation on how other Black males view Black men who are straight versus gay. Through this method, I aimed to get a diversity of reactions and responses within a group setting to how we see different displays of masculinity with these four Black male artists.

FOCUS GROUPS

The focus groups were fundamental to the research because I wanted to get opinions from other Black males on what they consider positive examples of Black masculinity and how they can be represented in the music videos of the artists I showed them. To do this, I had to go through SIU's Institutional Review Board (IRB), a requirement for anyone wanting to

do human testing. IRB training was required for me able to do this part of the study. After the training was completed, I was then required to fill out an application along with any other necessary materials needed to fulfill my research. Once I was approved, I then recruited participants for my study via social media posts and word-of- mouth. The goal was to recruit college-age young men and to get their opinions on what they think about the current state of Black masculinity. I recruited Black males and non-binary students ages 18-24. Each participant was sent instructions via email about what was required of them to be a part of this study. The emails contained the email script, consent form, and Google Form all approved by the IRB. All group participants had to fill out the Google Form and the consent form to participate in the study. After collecting these documents, I broke up the groups in alphabetical order: B, N, Q, R. Each participant was then contacted via email as to when and where their focus groups were going to take place. Each participant was coded in a form only accessible to myself and my advisor. None of the participants in this study were given their group letter nor their code name. The process used for the focus groups was to have them watch the four music videos of the four artists and then answer the questions related to the project. When I had to collect responses from my participants, I used a voice recorder app to track their responses. I made sure to include in the consent form that no one's identity or sexual orientation would be mentioned nor shared in any part of the research. If participants did, however, mention their sexual orientations, I explained there was a plan to code each participant to protect confidentiality.

One limitation of the study was I could not repeat a focus group if one participant didn't make it as they say in show business, "the show must go on." I also could not change any artist's' music videos as part of the study once the videos and artists were approved by the

IRB. When it came to my participants, because we were conducting focus groups, I could not give them total anonymity because I could not shield them from others knowing they were in a focus group because the participants were in focus groups together. I did give participants instructions for the research and the consent form to make sure they kept everyone's identities private. During the instructions of the focus groups, I introduced myself and told them the order of the focus group and how it was going to be conducted. Before I started, I doubled-checked to make sure everybody signed the consent form and everyone consented to being audio recorded. Moreover, participants were informed that at no point during the research, were they going to be penalized for quitting the study; luckily no one did. I asked all my participants to be respectful and mindful that all participants come from different walks of life and to use appropriate language for this study. Each focus group was conducted as ethically and respectfully as possible.

Here are my research questions:

I. What do Black young men consider as a positive example of Black masculinity and manhood when watching these music videos?

II. Will Black men feel that their masculinity is being challenged more by queer Black male artists than heterosexual Black male artists?

III. What will the participants in the study view as masculine and unmasculine?

DESCRIPTION OF THE MUSIC VIDEOS

As background, I want to give a brief description of each music video together to give insight on what the participants watched during this study. The music videos for this study are Todrick Hall's "Low," Lil Nas X's "Industry Baby," Aminé's " Reel It In," and Pink Sweat$' "At My Worst." Todrick Hall's "Low" takes place in what appears to be a garage. The artist is seen in

drag with a half-pink and half-black dress. Within the video he is retelling the story of "The Wizard of Oz," showing characters from the story while portraying the good and evil witches. Also featured in this music video is RuPaul. Hall is in various wigs, apparel, and makeup through the duration of the video. Lil Nas X's video "Industry Baby" takes place at a maximum-security prison. Lil Nas X is seen out in the courtyard lifting weights, behind bars, dancing nude in the shower, committing a prison break, and at the end having a big dance number in the courtyard with his dancers. Throughout the duration of the video the Lil Nas X, featured rapper Jack Harlow, and dancers are in pink prison inmate uniforms. Next, Aminé's video "Reel It In" takes place at a car wash. The video shows Aminé with his crew of friends in gray and white auto jumpsuit uniforms, while the female dancers are seen in two-piece swimsuits or bikinis. The majority of the video showcases Aminé rapping with the female dancers shaking their backsides while washing the cars with big bubbles, water, hoses, and sponges. Finally, Pink Sweat$' video "At My Worst" takes place between two settings. Throughout the video he is seen with a female love interest traveling on the road on their way back to their place of business, a dry cleaners. Throughout the video, it shows the artist's love for his partner and the pair being a loving couple. They are surrounded by the bright pastel colors of yellow, pink, and are overall happy to be with one another. The following chapter will now discuss the results collected for this project.

CHAPTER 4

DATA RESULTS

The qualitative method was used to explore how other Black males describe Black masculinity through the music videos that were presented to them for the study. The focus group found that, even though there were more progressive perceptions of Black masculinity, there were still reservations with some of the participants regarding men who present as more feminine or queer.

FOCUS GROUPS

All focus groups were conducted on the campus of Southern Illinois University Carbondale starting from October 25th and ending on November 12th of 2023. Four focus groups were conducted, three were conducted in the College of Arts and Media Journalism office and one was held in the Morris Library study rooms. The total number of my participants was 15, all of my participants were assigned male at birth; two of them identify as non-binary; and the rest identify as men. The process of the focus groups was to watch four videos from four artists and then answer the following questions. One question was asked before watching all the music videos. Each participant was coded for confidentiality. My questions for my focus group are below:

1) How do you define Black masculinity?
2) After watching all four music videos, what artist represented Black masculinity in the best way for you and why?
3) What did you view as unmasculine in these music videos?
4) Both Todrick Hall and Lil Nas X identify as gay, but also as men. Did watching their music videos challenge you at all?
5) Can two things be true at the same time? Can two Black men who are queer be positive examples of Black masculinity or Black manhood or does your sexual orientation matter

along with how you portray your masculinity in the public eye and in the media as well?

6) How do you define Black masculinity now after completing this study?

While the test was being conducted, I recorded their responses and interactions with one another. The study was testing the different interpretations of masculinity between two heterosexual artists and to homosexual artists through musical visuals.

The results are below:

1) How do you define Black masculinity?

The first question asked of participants was how they define Black masculinity. In all my sessions, there was an immediate pause to answer the question. It was hard for my participants to answer how to define or describe Black masculinity. Eventually they did answer, but to be fair I don't believe men in general know how to define masculinity "off the rip." Some words that stood out during these sessions were "responsible", "leader", and "pillar."

B1: "Just being tough as a Black man. Not necessarily physically tough, but mentally tough."

B4: "Going on being responsible, if you go about your day irresponsibly, there's consequences to that opposed to your White counterparts."

N4: "Being seen as a pillar of Black men, to hold yourself to a certain standard so you know that when people look at you, they look at what either want to be or could be."

The descriptions for this question definitely did vary; however, they all were centered on how Black men should identify their masculinity. None of the answers were hypermasculine or talked about Black male stereotypes. It was all centered on how the Black males should carry themselves in a society and what it meant personally to the participants. All the descriptions had something to do with Black men being able to lead and prosper in a

positive manner in a society.

R4: “A strong pillar of your community or just a good person overall.”

The word “pillar” was used at least twice, but “community” and how a man is representing in the community were used very much in various responses. Sentiments about racism, respectability, honor, and strength were the main focus. One of my other participants also talked about the Black male persona and how it was viewed in society, not just from Black culture but other cultures as well.

2) After watching all four music videos, what artist represented Black masculinity in the best way for you and why?

Pink Sweat$ was the most named out of all the artists used in the study. 60% of participants deemed him as the artist that represented masculinity the best way. A lot of the participants, were impressed by how Pink Sweat$ represented his masculinity in his music video, “At My Worst.” His capability to be a heterosexual artist, wear pink, and be surrounded by other bright pastel colors can take a man back in terms of societal views of how their masculinity would be seen by others. However, within my focus groups it seems like it didn’t matter to them just in the same way it didn’t matter to Pink Sweat$.

B3: “I really like the Pink Sweat$ video a lot representing Black masculinity because all he was really just trying to say is I just want somebody to love and sometimes that can get lost in all this other media that we see, but he was trying to say that in a cute way and I like it.”

B4: “I think for me personally the Pink Sweat$ video show masculinity the best to me cause it’s not all about being hard and stuff. Sometimes people want the simpler things and life and just want to be happy.”

N3: “Pink Sweat$ was my favorite one because it wasn’t too fantastic, it was realistic. He’s

driving around with his girl and it worked."

Showcasing intimacy without all the extra graphics that an artist could put in a video made my participants appreciate the simpler things when it came to Pink Sweat$' music video. On the other side, for some of my participants in was harder for them to pick just one because they believe in some instances each artist represented masculinity in their own way the best.

Q1: If I'm being honest, I think they all represented Black masculinity pretty well because every single one of them dudes was confident in what they were doing."

Q3: "All of them do show different aspects of masculinity when it comes to society-based rules. If it had to be down to one, I feel like it can't just be based on one person alone. I feel like if you have different perspectives, they all will have different points of views of different masculinities."

Other participants also showed difference of opinions and felt that other showcases of masculinity don't halt other experiences of livelihood to just their own. Acknowledging that other masculinities can be just valid as their own can show progressive but also positive outlooks in terms of this study.

3) What did you view as unmasculine in these music videos?

Responses for this question were majority the same. Most of the participants in this study didn't really see anything too unmasculine. However, there were some that believed that there were some things that stood out in the music videos as unmasculine, such as colors and apparel. This was very transparent in group R.

R2: "They all just have different forms as what masculinity look like, so I just feel like for me nothing was really was not masculine to me because at the end of the day you are identifying

as a man and this is what masculinity looks like."

R4: "If I was hanging out with a friend and we were going to a punk show or a sports bar, if they showed up in heels, I probably would feel like this would draw a lot of attention. So, the least masculine to me is Todrick. If my male friend would dress like that and we are going into a predominantly male space like how would I feel? I wouldn't care what they were wearing of course, if I can just be honest would I get second hand embarrassment? If we were going to a basketball game and they hear the heels clack on the hardwood floor, I would think oh God we're drawing a lot of attention if I can be honest."

R1: "So it's all about the perception of others on you?"

R4: "Not exactly, I'll wear what I want and I had a ton of piercings in the past…I had a septum piercing so when I went into professional setting, I would flip it up. I take my piercings out when I'm in a white-collar setting."

This led to a conversation about clothing, apparel, piercings which further led into the perceptions of others on how that can make a person feel when they are with or in some way associated with a person. Within group R I saw the dynamics of how feminine-presenting men or queer men can make others feel who maybe aren't. If someone is presenting as masculine all the time in public, seeing someone who is a feminine man or at least a queer man can cause someone to feel reluctant and embarrassed when they associate with that man.

R1: "I mention earlier the whole idea of masculinity is expressing your pride. You have to be confident in who you are as a person in any and every setting. Let's say you are the guy in that's walking in with heels or whatever and your friends are walking in like this and it's a regular event, you're going to come into that event, if you're respectable person, you're coming in that event to respect everyone spaces, while being who you are, while being

yourself. When they sit down in the chair and communicate everyone at that table how are they communicating and interacting with everybody else? I feel like that says a lot more than you coming in there click-clack, click-clack."

R4: "I of course cannot care less what anybody wears, I had a ton of piercing that's going to be taboo to somebody else, but I feel like if we're facing reality, the Black community has a serious homophobia problem, do I care no, but I feel like it would be dishonest to pretend that the Black community isn't super homophobic."

This also led into talks about how older generations dealt with and talk about LGBTQ+ people and issues. As the focus group continued there were conversations about how the generations before us instilled this homophobia and queerphobia among the adults of today.

R3: "I don't really blame the generation before us, I blame the grandparents because the grandparents raised most of these adults. Back where they came from that shit wasn't cool unless you were a hippy or did some psychedelics."

What I saw with group R was the dynamics of what and how masculinity through the lens of heterosexuality has shaped on how we see ourselves. Group R showcased how Black men may not feel comfortable when associating with someone who is gay or a feminine-presenting male. That causes pushback to interact with someone because it can make a person feel self-conscious about who is watching. Moreover, the discussion also talked about being in a white-collar setting and trying to impress employers with how one presents oneself, wearing clothes or pieces of jewelry shouldn't probably worn to one participant's opinion, but also mentioning when a man does wear these items and they are in a majority or all masculine setting can make someone feel secondhand embarrassment for associating with that person.

This conversation was different within group Q. They were more open to the diverse display of masculinity within the music videos.

Q3: “I wouldn’t say this in as in a sexist way, but I guess the women. If we are talking about Black man masculinity, the women that’s in there aren’t really masculine. If we look at the ‘Reel It In” video showing more feminine because they were twerking and stuff.”

Q1: “I can see how the (Pink Sweat$ video) I say like the color scheme of the video it was more pastel colors and lighter colors. I can see how that’s less masculine because society (tells) boys can’t really wear pink or those type of colors because it’s more feminine.”

Group Q had viewed it more as a literal and also societal point of view. Where the participants viewed the women in the videos, and since women are associated with femineity and men are associated with masculinity, due to what society views. Also, the importance on how men wearing certain colors or having colors that are deemed non-masculine such as pink, can also make a man feel discouraged to wear that color because it can make someone feel self-conscious of what others think about him. Furthermore, the participants in this group gave broader responses of what they saw as unmasculine. This is due to what society implicated on men let alone Black men and not of their own accord.

4) Both Todrick Hall and Lil Nas X identify as gay, but also as men. Did watching their music videos challenge you at all?

B4: “It didn’t make me feel any type of way. What they choose to do with their own lives, how they identify.”

N4: “No, it didn’t challenge me at all because I feel like in music videos people don’t really act how they would act in real life. It’s just theatrics and stuff they would do for a music video.”

N1: I was not challenged. I know drag is a performance, some do it for work, some do it for fun, but they're still men. There's a difference between sex and gender, so they identify as men and they were born as men so it didn't challenge me at all."

When watching the videos my participants didn't feel uncomfortable or challenged by watching gay men perform within their music videos. Throughout all four focus groups, none of the participants spoke about anything that seemed odd or unusual about the videos between Todrick Hall and Lil Nas X, except for the shower scene in the "Industry Baby" video, the twerking, and the color scheme within the "At My Worst "video. However, other than that they didn't see much of a challenge watching what was on the screen being displayed to them. This question was asked to find out if having gay artists displaying their sexuality would be more of a challenge to those who may not see it as masculine. The participants didn't feel challenged nor struggled with how both Todrick Hall and Lil Nas X displayed their sexuality over the others. One participant noted on how it all seemed normal and this is how all music videos of today really are. In the end, nothing seemed too out of the ordinary when it came to what was displayed on the screen, and they did not feel challenged watching the two artists.

5) Can two things be true at the same time? Can two Black men who are queer be positive examples of Black masculinity or Black manhood or does your sexual orientation matter along with how you portray your masculinity in the public eye and in the media as well?

Q1: "Personally, I think your sexual orientation shouldn't determine masculinity in a person. I feel like there's more things to masculinity then what you be doing sexually. I feel like there's a lot more things to masculinity that who you're attracted to."

B1: "I think it goes both ways, I think it depends on the person that we're talking about that can be an influence on Black masculinity and manhood. We're always going to have those old

school cats that live by the old school rule ways, it's a boy and a girl and that's it, but as far as trying to be a positive impact the community, there could be some Black queer men that could have positive impacts on Black masculinity."

N3: "I think two things can definitely be true at the same time. The way they acted in those videos were still perfect examples of being Black and masculine. Everything they did, they still showed a lot of strength, even showing up in a dress, but every moment that they made was made, they exuded that confidence. In the media we think a lot of time oh they put a Black man in a dress, but the way I see it, they're going to be scared or judgmental of you either way, so you might as well do what you want to do, cause at the end of the day it doesn't really matter if you can take care of yourself."

What I found during my focus groups was that my participants saw queer Black men as a positive influence within Black masculinity and manhood. They did not believe that masculinity only holds to one specific sexual orientation. One participant in my study actually encouraged the non-heterosexual behavior, claiming that there needs to be more examples of such in the media. The answers to these questions show, at least in this study, that young Black men have moved beyond one sexual orientation market towards what makes a good representation when it comes to Black manhood. Participants' answers welcomed the idea of having Black men who identify as queer be a good example of Black manhood. One participant did mention how it was clear for the public to make sure they have a clear understanding about who the person is:

R1: "I think two men who are queer can be a positive example of Black masculinity. Showcasing themselves and being confident in who they are. But I do think understanding your sexual orientation matters in a way you portray yourself in the public eye because the

public will always interpret the way they want to interpret things. So as long as you make it clear, there's no reason for you to prove anything to anybody, but just make sure nobody's calling out of your name or saying things that are not true. You do need to make sure they understand who you are or what you are."

Displaying who you are as a person, to one participant, was important because the public will always interpret it in a way to prove whatever opinion they have of you or said group. So, understanding who you are as a man when your sexual orientation is not of the majority was, for this participant, important because someone is always going to stereotype you as something as you're not. In all, the participants shared that positive role models of Black manhood were not limited to one man's sexual orientation and welcomed other examples.

6) How do you define Black masculinity now after completing this study?

Q2: "I don't think my opinion has changed, I would just like to clarify that on this Black masculinity is the way men in our society show how their confidence and their personality can be used give them a better aspect of themselves. So, that other people can see the positive in that person and how they have good leadership skills and good role model skills to be a better person in society as well."

Q1: I feel just the same. I feel like masculinity is an open thing, it shouldn't matter about your sexuality if you're masculine or not."

B1: "Honestly, it's the same way but it's a little bit different. You know how you said Chicago rappers talk about guns and smoking weed and that's their version of toughness, but like mentally how can you grow to show that you have Black masculinity as far as music videos. It's not about how hard you could look or how hard you can be, it's more so about what you

know and what you could to impact either your community or just the future in general. That's how I view it now after watching the videos."

All participants said that there was little to no change in the definition of Black masculinity. Some participants still have the same opinions and descriptions of how they identify Black masculinity at the beginning of the study. Though they may feel the same way, the study might have opened their minds to not forget about gay men when they are thinking about Black masculinity. In the end, participants' personal definitions had little-to-no change of how they define Black masculinity.

One interesting facts of the study was that majority of the participants were twenty (20) years of age. Another interesting fact was 60% of the participants identity as Black, while the other 40% identify as African-American. One reason why the majority of the participants identity as Black over African American is because of the racial history in America or feeling prouder of being Black than African American per se. Identifying as Black or African American can have implications of pride of Blackness than being American.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The study used a qualitative method to examine how Black masculinity was described by music audiences using four music videos from various male artists. The focus groups measured a select group of Black men's and non-binary persons' thoughts about Black masculinity within music videos. The focus groups found, from the small sample used in the study, that heteronormative representations were, for the most part, not a determining factor in their consideration of Black masculinity, and it also found that, overall, Black queer men can be a positive example of Black masculinity or manhood.

Participants were asked which artists represented a positive example of Black manhood, and 60% of them agreed to Pink Sweat$. The literature review discussed how Black men stereotypically have been seen as hypersexual and promoting playboy behavior. My participants vocalized that some men believe in the simple things in life. Some men do want to be in a monogamous relationship and just want to be with "their girl." The majority of the participants were more receptive to the bright and pastel colors in the video, did not make fun or poke at an artist for creating a song about just being with his partner, nor feed into stereotypical norms of Black men being hypersexual. They were receptive of how Pink Sweat$ produced a song about being with his one true love. Several other participants also indicated that it was hard for them to choose just one artist who represented Black masculinity because they believed all the artists did a really good job representing their masculinity in their own way. Though there was difference of opinion about what artist was the best at representing masculinity, participants for the most part were receptive to the progressiveness of Pink Sweat$ and the other artists considered in this study.

Whether Black gay artists were challenging to watch or not was the next question of the research question set. Participants did not find Black men who identify as gay challenging to watch. This question was asked to collect the differences of opinions when watching someone who is gay versus straight and how viewers compare and contrast the two sexual orientations displayed to them in one sitting. One participant stated that how artists perform in music videos is not how they act in real life. The study then tells us how male artists are different in three different sectors: performativity, theatricality, and sexuality. Displaying these differences within this small sample from an Illinois institution tells us that simply being gay, "performing gay," or "acting gay" is not a simple enough reason to discredit gay men out of the masculinity conversation. An individual male displaying more feminine characteristics does not make or break if he is or if he is not masculine. Noting that even with the naked shower scene in Lil Nas X's video, twerking from male dancers, and the color scheme from Pink Sweat$' video, all participants were not challenged by how Todrick Hall or Lil Nas X performed their masculinity. What we also discovered was an accepting view of queer masculinity; however, there were restrictions to it, such as twerking, dancing, and the shower scene of the "Industry Baby" music video. One participant from group Q took issue with the idea of going to an event or show surrounded by masculine (heterosexual) men and getting second-hand embarrassment from hanging out with or being associated with a man who is wearing high heels as they said in the focus group; or moreover wearing apparel that is more feminine than the average man. This was ironic because it supported the Harris et al., (2011) article, which other later literature discredited. Participants in Harris et al.'s article claim they did not want to be around Black men who were "suspect," meaning they did not want to associate with a man who was showcasing homoeroticism. They also stated in the article that participants did not want to be associated with

men who were “real, real, extra, extra feminine,” one participant stated, who a high-pitched voice, or wear tight-fitting clothes, or be around gay men who were open, nor men who were flamboyant (Harris et al., 2011, p. 55). Additionally in the Harris et al., article participants stated they did not want Black gay brothers to cross into Black fraternities and that they did not want to be associated with the whole fraternity or a single member who was gay (Harris et al., 2011, p. 55) What we see in my study versus the Harris et.al. study is the continuing fight of -not wanting to be associated with or recognized as gay. The thought of a man having secondhand embarrassment being around someone who identifies as gay tenses up their masculinity as we see in my study and the other. The constant homophobia toward gay men who are extra flamboyant and feminine cannot be seen by someone who is stereotypically masculine and straight. The constant ties between the correct way to enact manhood and masculinity always falls into play. Heteronormativity has defined masculinity, and when a person’s masculinity does not fall under that umbrella, queer men are considered deviant and unmasculine.

Though in the study not everyone agreed on what was or was not masculine, we still saw men push back against socially disseminated heteronormative opinions. Some participants remarked that voicing how someone is dressed should not be the determining factor for whether they are to be considered masculine, but how a man carries himself and interacts with others should be the overall determining factor. Participants also voiced how they really did not see anything that was “too unmasculine” or unmasculine in general. Others believed all the artists identified masculinity in their own way because they were all Black men who identify as Black men; they were just different when it came to their respective sexual orientations.

The results of this study imply that Black men have progressed beyond the stoic and hypermasculine stereotypes of Black men. The results for this study have expanded on how

Black males shared when come together in focus group setting and discussed with one another how Black men view gay men in music videos. The study has added more to the literature in the intersections of masculinity, sexuality, and Black studies focusing on gay men. The study was able to investigate the phenomenon of how Black male representation is looked at in the media, but especially in one sector: music videos. The difference in my study compared to others is that it explores sexuality by looking at modern-day Black male artists and utilizing music videos as a way to study Black masculinity from artists who are all different ages and at different points in their careers. It also takes prominence because it takes note of college-age students who are male and non-binary that focuses on a specific generation of Black men, that is not always found in literature.

The small sample population likely influenced the results of this study. All participants were students at the same university where this study was conducted. If I had recruited men who were off campus, thirty miles north or south I might have gotten different answers because I would have accessed more rural communities or communities less influenced by a university. Even though the participants come from different walks of life, going to communities less influenced by university may have an impact due to the social environment, economics, diversity, and inclusivity for LGBTQ+ life. Additionally, I could have broadened the age range of 18 to 24, the range of a high percentage of college-age students. If I had focused on a different men's age bracket of men, perhaps 30 to 40 or 20 to 40, the results might have been more mixed or significantly discordant with what was found in this study. This hypothesis would be due the different generational upbringings, cultural standards, and I believe men in a broader age bracket would be less accepting of gay men. .

This research challenges the hegemonic status quo and gives Black masculine studies,

queer studies, and music studies a progressive outlook on the future for how Black men from different sexual orientations are viewed by their Black male peers. The indications of Black men who identify along the queer spectrum reinforce the idea that they can be positive role models of Black masculinity. This result shows importance because it contradicts previous literature that suggests the only men who have been considered worthy of masculine status are heterosexual men. Also, men not feeling challenge watching homoerotic scenes in music videos and not viewing men as unmasculine just because they are gay is a critical finding because it demonstrates that understandings of masculinity are evolving. The majority of the studies that I have discussed here previously just discounted gay men out of masculinity conversations because they were gay; but my study proves that an artist's sexuality does not make them appear less manly or masculine to a certain group of modern-day audiences. What also stands out from my study is that it only uses one test, where other methods studying Black masculinity use more than one qualitative method. It gives a clearer thought of what other people think than coding on what is seen on the screen. I think having other opinions of people of how representation is shown can overall be more insightful especially in a group setting.

Limitations that occur during the study were participants having a clear understanding of what masculinity versus Black masculinity was, asking my participants more about their family backgrounds, asking them their understanding of sexuality, the difference between masculinity and manhood and how those two phrases correlate with one another. As I stated in the results section under the first question many of the participants did have complications with explaining the full nuance of the difference between masculinity and Black masculinity. What I would do different is in the materials give my participants a brief descriptions between both masculinity and Black masculinity either in the email script, consent from, or Google form. Then, once they

got to their scheduled focus group they would have an understanding of the scholarly descriptions so then they could feel more certain with their own description. With family background I would want to know who raised them and how were they raised. Did they come from a single-parent home, mother or father, or did someone else other than their biological parents raise them? How a person is raised can determine their reality, by knowing who raised them and how they were raised could give intriguing evidence of why such participants answer this way versus another way. Another limitations that I would have wanted to know from my participants is how they define *sexuality*. I think of this now because I would want to know what is there understanding of sexuality in general. Is something a person choose? Because the word 'choose' was brought up often when it came to how man performs his masculinity as it relates to sexuality. Did my participants believe a man chooses to be gay or straight? What do they know about sexuality? Has anyone studied gender and sexuality studies? These were questions and concerns that often popped up for me reviewing the results. One flaw that my paper has is not determining the difference between masculinity and manhood. There is a difference between the two; however, I would've liked to ask my participants how do they compare and contrast the two words. How does masculinity impact manhood and how does manhood impact masculinity, how does how were you raised impact your manhood? I believe would've been great questions to ask for my study.

Concerning further research possibilities, I recommend that future studies analyze the lyrics of songs that represent Black masculinity between gay and straight artists because I believe it would be interesting to see the different dynamics of the masculinities and messaging artists from a large array of Black masculinity add to musical masculinity academia. Another study that would be intriguing is putting together focus groups that would consider how other

Black men view Black artists, except the artists would all be gay men. I think that could add more to the literature and probably give a more specific realm into gay men who are Black then compare and contrast straight men with gay men I did in this study. Further research should also include a larger-range age group for males and men who are Black to collect cross-generation opinions of how Black masculinity is viewed within musical media. Importantly, other studies which would use focus groups should expand to include content analysis on TV, film, and news reports. Such studies could provide an interesting and informative look at the Black community within the United States and how views of masculinity continue to evolve in different ways and through different media.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The current study sets out to define how Black masculinity was defined in musical media. Using four artists with different sexual orientations it discovered that gay artists are not view as less masculine as straight men and that gay men can be positive example overall of Black masculinity and Black manhood. Moreover, the study found through focus groups that Black masculinity has made some important progress but understandings of the continuum of masculinity still have a long way to go. The findings set out to challenge the literature by involving queer masculinity and queer men in masculinity conversations, when before they were excluded. The study bridges queerness, blackness, and masculinity into a conversation about the societal pressures surrounding masculinity. It also brings different intersections of masculinity, Black male studies, LGBTQ+ studies, and musical studies. The aim of this research is to bring forth change and further develop the conversation about how Black masculinity includes men in the LGBTQ+ community. The insight of how we as a generation can define our own odds and our own manhood without trying to be better than or more rough and tough than the man standing next to us. The inclusion of all Black men regardless of sexual orientation can transform how we look at ourselves in terms of manhood. The masculinity conversation affects all of us as men and by working together we can transform media images and depictions throughout all media platforms and make sure than no one, despite their sexuality is left unheard and excluded. I hope this research can help a gay Black boy believe that he is man enough and masculine enough, and hopefully this will encourage future studies of what true Black masculinity and manhood ought to be, diverse and plenty.

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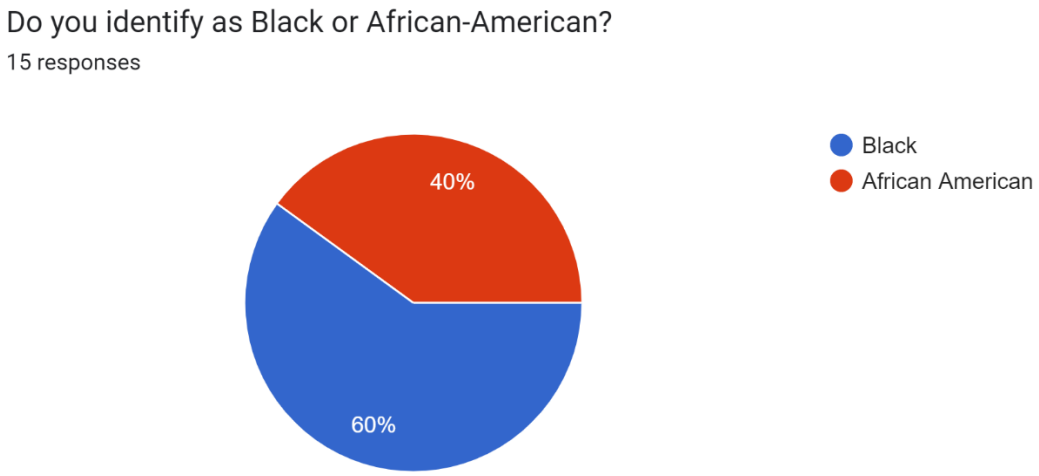
APPENDICES

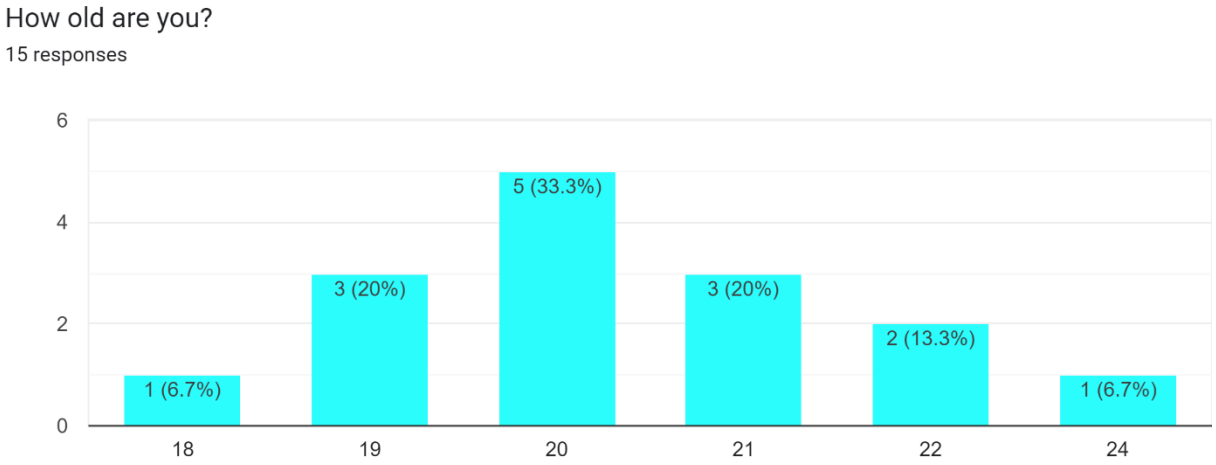
APPENDIX A

African American or Black?



APPENDIX B

Age Ranges of Participants



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AYE! In House Meeting: Black Masculinity Within Musical Media

Major Professor: Professor Jan Thompson