

Abstract

Studies that have contributed towards the formation of black masculine identity in the past, and which still may have significance in today's world. The continuing notion that misogyny, sexism and homophobia are major elements of black masculinity is evident. Cultural phenomena where both capitalism and marketing strategies have led to a narrowing down of representations in media productions, has helped to define black masculinity to both black males and society in general. It is argued that these two trends have resulted in a crisis concerning the identity and formation of black masculinity, in which a range of diverse identities are no longer possible, as black masculinity has been narrowed down to specific attributes of a machismo identity, thus creating an unaccepted 'other'. It is these issues which will be analysed during the course of this study.

Introduction

us of my discourse as the subjects I cover are expressed through music which as stated by Cashmere (1997.3), *“is not only a reflection of the values of black culture, but to some extent, the basis upon which it is built”*. It is this building of identity through popular culture that has become problematic and has led to the identity crisis black masculinity.

I will first discuss a range of media representations that reflect black masculinity from their emergence to create a foundation for my analysis. Secondly I will discuss the contemporary terms of cool and swagger, their meanings and implications on black masculinity. Thirdly a discussion will be based around the dominant musical expression within black culture. I focus my study on Rap music and analyse its effects on black masculinity. Lastly I will cover the relationship between black masculinity and homosexuality whilst also discussing women’s role in black masculinity. These are the main factors that I deem as part of the black masculinity identity crisis.

As stated by Boyd (1997.15) *“The true measure of all cultural producers is the contribution, residual impact and substantive change they leave with the culture they exist in”*. This writing seeks to investigate the measure of black expression in the areas mentioned from a perspective in which it can be argued that black masculinity is heading deeper into an identity crisis.

Chapter 1: Media Representations

To gain an understanding of the current black masculinity crisis, it is first necessary to focus on the history of black identity through forms of culture in order to have a clearer view of the current crisis and to decide whether history has been influential and relevant to today's youth culture. In this chapter I shall discuss the meaning of black stereotypes and analyse historically some of the first and main representations of blackness that are problematic in modern media. By looking further back than modern media before the emergence of film, the issues may be too disconnected from the current identity crisis however I argue that media representations have had a role in defining black culture and masculinity. Secondly I shall discuss how stereotypes that are mainly attached to blackness, can be noted on broader levels but instead are reduced to only one sector of society. I conclude by discussing how stereotypes and representations become normalised through media coverage, creating a cycle of ideology at a current point in history, in which the argued identity crisis within black masculinity is created because a range of identities are no longer possible within black masculinity.

Early images of black masculinity

The first visual representations through film of black stereotypes arose in films such as *Birth of a Nation* released in 1915 (2009.f). As observed by Hunt (2008), this film was one of the earliest portrayals of a narrow form of black masculinity. It spread paranoia developing stereotypes of predatory black men, that are, as stated by Hunt (2008) *“lazy, untrustworthy, oversexed and dangerous, particularly to white women and gave rise to the KKK”* (Ku Klux Klan). Since this film is regarded as an American classic, it will continue to receive a wide audience due to its status.

Present day dominant images of the black man can be traced back to a short era after slavery in which the dominant stereotype of the black men was of lazy and happy go lucky individuals (Cobb 2008.1). With this image black men were seen to need the institution of slavery. However this image of the black man altered because America needed a way of justifying violence geared towards black people to stop them exercising their personal rights. Violence against happy go lucky and lazy people

changed into the angry, dangerous and out of control (08.1) *“that stereotype was placed on black men, almost like a template, like this is what black men will be now.”* As a result the media portrayals of black people followed suit. An example is seen in the movie King Kong (2009.I). Dines (1998) notes that *“When the King Kong film was realest in Germany they called it King Kong and the White Women, so they made it very clear the politics of the movie”*. The plot can be seen as a racial metaphor reflecting black people’s move into America and perpetuating negative aspects and racist stereotypes of black people to the consumer. For instance, King Kong is an ape and a racist view of black people often point to them as being less than human ape like creatures. King Kong is taken without permission from the jungle to America where he is then put into the world of the freak show. This positioning is reflective of slavery when black people were taken from Africa and forcibly made to work with no rights. In the film King Kong breaks away from captivity, causes havoc in New York and is particularly seen as being dangerous to the white woman, from the point of view of the New York community in the film, although in reality, King Kong loves and protects the one white woman who is kind to him (Rosen 2009.j).

Such portrayals can be seen as being part of hegemony to portray black people in a negative way as being lawless, uncivilised and dangerous to 'civilised society'. Metaphorically speaking, the beast is a black person and the beauty is the white woman or white people in general. This type of plot is usually used in films with a jungle theme and as noted by Rosen (2009.j), *“the main female character is usually a focus of tension between the white males and the “natives,” furnishing an opportunity for some of the former to display their virile heroism against the savages.”* One must see this in perspective of the era it is was produced at the time black people did not have their own image in film to the extent that now occurs today. Black actors and had limited roles and very few mainstream films were made by black people, so for many viewers, the only image of the black person was that of a 'savage' lawless character, a representation which I accompanied by other factors to create the stereotype. Dines (2009.8) who insists that, *“Stereotypes are not often true, their power comes from the ability to police the behaviour of those that identify with the stereotype,”* also goes on to note that it is a tool by which the *“elitist”* class can judge the *“oppressed”* class. The following example of this phenomenon is provided by

been under scrutiny from mainstream news media
s, with many news media only showing the negative
side of Rap music and defining Rap music in this narrow view, unlike other forms of
media that possess the same content by which Rap is scrutinised. An example of this
is film production. A Rap song will get scrutinised for possessing content about death
and perpetuating violent masculinity based on events, however this same level of
scrutiny does not get attached to films, which add image to sound, for instance,
-Rambo and -Dirty Harry which were produced by the white America film industry.
Therefore serious cultural contradictions are created since Ronald Reagan used the
images of Rambo and Dirty Harry to support military aggressiveness. It has to be
noted the same structure that made stars such as Clint Eastwood, Arnold
Schwarzenegger and John Wayne into heroes is the same that inhabits and created the
foundation in which stars of Gangster Rap could stand and be successful in the
entertainment industry, for example Rappers such as Dr Dre and Ice Cube. Both sets
of stars can be regarded as perpetuating a violent aggressive masculine identity; the
latter in the eyes of the media are destroying society, whereas the former are regarded
as heroes (Boyd.1997). Although stereotypes are not just passively consumed by all
society, I would argue that they become part of the consciousness of the consumer,
and when these stereotypes are played out through media as reflections of reality such
as the news and black popular culture, the stereotype then becomes much stronger in
the eyes of the viewing public.

Violent masculinity in the media and society is not something born out of black
culture or its image represented in the media. It is in fact, American and is in the heart
of its identity. The image of a man protecting his family with a gun perpetuated with
the heroic all American figures of Jesse James and western films becomes a metaphor
for manhood in America. Dominant white violent masculinity is therefore more
acceptable than its black counterpart and expressed differently though media channels
(Dyson.2008).

This chapter has highlighted that early media representations have defined black
culture in a narrow prescriptive way. Blackness to anybody outside the culture is held
by these representations in the media therefore creating a circle of ideology, in which
young people create their identity in relation to what is normalised. In this case the



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attached to black manhood have become
which has created a reduction in positive black identity

as a whole.

Two: From Cool to Swagger

In this chapter I will demonstrate that, as an indication of the identity crisis in black male culture, the concept of cool has been replaced by the concept of swagger. Cool is less of a commodity and borrowing styles are seen as unproblematic. On the other hand, artists are much more jealous of their swagger, and this has led to accusations of the stealing of style, hence driving a wedge through the black community. I begin by defining what these terms cool and swagger might refer to, and how their meanings may have altered over time. I conclude the chapter providing historical background on the emergence of cool in Jazz, since Jazz was the first music of black origin that was widely accepted by society at the time of production, placing it in the realm of popular culture. Out of Jazz came a version of black masculinity that was portrayed to society, which shall be discussed critically and evaluated within this chapter.

Swagger is a term that has become very prevalent in contemporary black music mostly in relation to Rap music which itself is a form of Hip Hop that refers to a broader concept which includes break dancing, art, DJing and graffiti (Shuker.2001). Swagger can be seen as an updated version of 'cool'. So why is it so important for black men and women to be cool and possess swagger?

As observed by Hunt's (1998) documentary entitled *I am a man; Call it cool chapter*, when we talk about what is cool in relation to black culture we are generally referring to the look, the style of clothing and accessories, and the language which are symbols as stated by Connor (1998), who makes the following comment *'being cool and possessing swagger is a defining mechanism, a force that black boys have created to bring them to manhood.'* This cool represents material value and street creditability within a person's neighbourhood. Hunt (1998) observed after talking to students and members of a black community in America, that there are two worlds which a black man inhabits, the first being the home in which respect is always given to elders, for example, taking hats off in their presence and being careful with the language that is used around older people. Secondly, there is the world outside of the home in the streets. In this world gaining respect is necessary otherwise any peers in the community will show you disrespect. A member of this community commented that

disrespected, made to do this and forced to do that,
his respectö (1998) This statement has a resonance
that harks back to the history of black people in America and representations of black
men referred to in Chapter one.

As part of his research focussing on black masculinity, Hunt (1998) asked a young
college student whether he felt it was important for white males to be cool, to which
the student replied by saying that it was not, *“it is OK for a white person to be nerdy
and corny but when it comes to brothers (black men) it is always a bigger issue.”*
People outside the black community can be said to have more choice when it come to
clothing styles, whereas the black community is trapped in its own creations. Connor
(1998) points out that there is deep meaning in the styles of the black community, and
when people outside the black community wear identical outfits these are without any
ascribed meaning. However, it could also be argued that the real meaning itself is not
lost but it is different to the original meaning within black culture brought about
through unawareness. As stated by Connor (1995:12) *“The white perception of cool is
incredibly distorted, very narrow and therefore damaging.* This statement further
suggests that there is no meaning in the white community’s adoption of styles that
come from the black community, which could be problematic. At the same time,
Connor’s (1995) comments begin to touch upon the damaging effects this could have
on the black community in a broader sense, in terms of the commodification of
blackness and certain aspects of blackness by defining blackness narrowly through its
popular culture.

So what is Cool and Swagger and what effect does it have socially for the black male?
As stated by Connor (1995:1) *“the word cool has been adopted into the mainstream
as a term that describes anybody who marches to the beat of a different drummer, who
blazes trails, who follows no trends, who is sexy, a loner, mysterious, hip, self assured,
different, quiet, confident and rebellious”* I have chosen to use this extensive
definition because I feel it is vital to this research, and provides a useful starting point
from which to consider the notion of cool in relation to black masculinity.

Connor’s definition above describes the more contemporary concept of swagger more
so than cool, since cool carries conventions and trends. Items of clothing that are

any others and this is not much of a problem to the
than likely pleased about their influence on pop
culture. Run DMC (2009.a) have spoken upon their pride of being the creators of
trends, such as people wearing unlaced shell top Addidas trainers in the 1980s
(2009.b), a look which was copied by many, whereas Run DMC themselves embraced
their own stamp on popular culture.

Where swagger differs from cool is when a person feels that another is copying their
style of wear, the language being used and how their swagger is presented, which
upsets this person and the other party is then referred to as a "Swagger Jacker". It
might be cool for masses of the hip hop community to wear oversized white t-shirts or
basketball jerseys but if just one person copies for example, a Louis Vuitton scarf
(2009.c) then it is a problem as the artist feels his identity is being stolen. An example
of this phenomenon relates to Jim Jones, the rapper who claimed to have started many
trends in hip hop (2009.4). Swagger is taken very seriously in this context, especially
to up and coming artists. An example of this is an interview with two artists Young
Dro & Yung La (2009.b). Here the discussion centred on how other artists had been
stealing their swagger and they wanted their swagger back. This issue is of
importance since they almost refer to it as a tangible object thus showing its
importance to identity in this context.

What has to be considered is that these are musicians placing a heavy importance on
swagger itself more than on just the music, it could be argued. Many hit songs around
this time period have a lyrical content, which focuses on the possession of swagger.
One of the biggest hits of 2009 is the song "Swagger like us" which was performed at
the Grammy Awards (2009.6). Through these examples it is evident that this
phenomenon is being presented on the biggest stages in popular culture giving it more
room for cultural impact, due to the level of consumption.

As observed by Connor (1995) part of the black experience of cool/swagger is its use
of the English language, which the author describes as 'Black English', an updated
version of English that contains many slang words used to make clearer definitions of
a certain phenomenon, as noted by Connor (1995.14) "Since black life can be more
extreme in certain instances, perhaps there needs to be a stronger word to describe

...exactly what has happened and continues to happen
...o acts as another symbol of cool and swagger and
words that arise from black culture are adapted quickly with changing attitudes and
changes within society. The word cool is almost obsolete in black culture now in
terms of its use in popular culture which indicates such a change, that I feel is a
negative one and detrimental to black culture since it is a big part of the identity crisis
within black culture and masculinity.

Origins of cool and changing attitudes in music

The word cool can be said to have originated during the era of Jazz, which came out
of black America (Connor 1995). The music of jazz represented the rebellious and
restless nature of the musicians with fast paced angular music, in contrast the
musicians would calm down the music in sections within arrangements where it
would be described as 'Playing it cool'. It was from this the word cool was described
as a man who could control his pent up anger and emotions. Jazz was one of the first
phenomena to emerge out of black culture that was wholly respected by white
America due to its sheer artistry and which also created an acceptable image of black
manhood. One of the biggest personalities of Jazz was the late Miles Davis (2009.d)
whose image and personality had aspects of both sides of the coin. Davis had a look
and language about him that white America found acceptable but at the same time it
also took on an arrogance that was uniquely black. This raised a pride in black
Americans for the styles they had created. Davis however increasingly became
detached from audiences and concentrated on his musicians whereby rejecting a sense
that he could be tap dancing to a paying white America. Miles Davis therefore played
by his own rules.

The notion of cool represented through music, and Jazz in particular, can run deeper
than just representations of personality and image. Hooks (2004) observed that the
concept of cool in the era of jazz music represented a broader ethic. Black men used
cool as a shelter that protected their spirit in light of the hardships and the pain dealt
to them in society. This early incarnation of cool centred on creativity and self
definition and through art forms, black men were able to portray a wide range of
emotions which were not defined narrowly as it can be argued of today whereby the

of a mask to portray certain sides of masculinity
ability. Furthermore Jazz portrayed a wide spectrum
of black masculinity, as did the blues, thus giving it a transformative power to black
masculinity and the ability to make social and political change relevant to the lives of
black men. Hook (2004:154) observed that *“Creating beauty through art has been one
of the most powerful ways individual black males have chosen to recover themselves,
to declare their essential humanity”*. The use of the term beauty here is not used to
point to any stylistic sound or image art may portray, but is to refer to the variety of
emotions and facets that brings black men into an equal level of humanity with the
rest of society. Hooks (2004) further notes that all the positive strands that came from
the Jazz version of cool were taken away and became irrelevant in light of the Rap
generation. The notion of cool changed drastically as black masculinities new tool
came into prominence within popular culture. The image of manhood through Hip
Hop became that of a machismo identity.

This chapter has highlighted the meaning of the contemporary terms of cool and
swagger whilst analysing their role in the formation and portrayal of black
masculinity and the implications they have on society. It began by examining the
notion of cool in relation to black and white society and popular culture in general
followed by a discussion of Jazz music representation of black masculinity through
“cool” and how this has developed.

The key points that emerged are as follows; cool is a relative term that has changed
drastically since its incarnation during the Jazz era, which was a time in which black
masculinity had a image in its own terms and the notion of cool was used as a
protective tool. As society developed through the 1980s and 1990s, a new generation
of black youth culture centred on Rap music came into prominence and changed the
dominant image of black manhood through its distinctly individual use of cool which
has now developed into swagger. The next chapter will discuss in more detail Raps
effect on black masculinity and its identity crisis.

Dominant Musical Expressions

In this chapter I shall discuss Rap music in more detail; I begin by defining Rap music and its relationship to society, from its conception to the present day. I will firstly discuss how the relationships with major record labels and corporations since this development has affected the genre of Rap music and perpetuated dominant ideologies contrary to the diverse range of expression prior to Rap music's relationship to corporate business. Secondly I will discuss how these corporate relationships have affected the artists themselves in the way they choose to portray their masculinity as well as its effect on the consumer. I conclude the chapter by discussing how political shifts have affected the genre of Rap music and the way narrow cultural representations may be detrimental in the creation of diverse forms of identity within black masculinity, thereby forming an identity crisis.

Busta Rhymes

*I am doing this, I am that, you know you aint doing nothing, but in the end of the day
you can make somebody believe that you are, and be profitable* (Hunt: 2008 n/p)

The phenomenon of Rap music started in the South Bronx, a borough of New York in America in the late 1970s and early 80s. This music was firmly rooted in the poverty and the living conditions of the time. The lack of instrumentation is a key feature and so re-recordings known as samples were used from 60s funk and soul records. Often artists such as James Brown and Funkadelic would be sampled with new rhythms created using drum machines (Shuker.2001). A master of ceremonies otherwise known as an MC would then talk or rap over the music. The music would reflect the poverty of youth and their struggle within their residing neighbourhoods. As noted by Connor (1995:118) *money and space just to create music was not available any more, music was created out of what already existed*, thus suggesting a DIY ethic out of which the music was created. This DIY ethic would later change, as Rap became part of mainstream popular music in the 90s. Rap music became the top selling form of music in 1998 vastly moving the form away from its humble beginnings as it became part of a capitalist system with major labels and sponsorship deals. The competitive nature of Rap rose due to the new money making aspect, which would further have implications on culture and identity as the art form was no longer in

Gangster Rap

Gangster Rap is a section of Rap music, which came into prominence in the early nineties. It would be very easy to place too much of an emphasis on the role of Gangster Raps in the black masculinity identity crisis. It is at the forefront of Hip Hop and has become the most successful commercially, thus making the dominant image of Rap music Gangster Rap. This raises problematic issues that come out of the music such as misogyny and gun violence, which creates a focus on a machismo identity and much has been written identifying **this**. Writers such as Hooks (2004) and Cashmere (1997) both comment on the detrimental effects that these kinds of dominant messages has on black society and identity through ideology, especially as positive ? images of blackness on screen are few and far between.

At this point emphasis shall be placed upon the reduction of choice and variety in Rap Music, a choice which is out of the consumers' hands that also creates certain traps for up and coming artists and perpetuates the stereotypical image of the black man to white audiences in the main. As observed by Hunt in his *Beyond Beats and Rhymes* (2008) documentary, 70% percent of Hip Hop music is consumed by White America. In this documentary white consumers of Rap Music were interviewed about what makes this genre appealing. One of the answers given was that the music taught them about other cultures that they would not see in their everyday lives coming from the suburbs of American cities. Interviewees also agreed that Rap music reinforces black stereotypes, which is highly problematic because for these people this is their only view of black culture, especially as very low numbers of black people live in their areas. So what we get is a one sided view of black expression. As stated by Hooks (2004:152) *“Much Hip Hop Culture is mainstream because it is just a black minstrel show”* instead of white America acting out black stereotypes for white entertainment, black America through Gangster Rap has taken over that role. With this firmly rooted in capitalism it is a trap difficult **to see out of**. One of the most commercially successful rappers of 2008 and 2009, Lil Wayne notes through one of his songs *“Developed at a young age, go after what pays”* (2009.o) with Gangster Rap's commercial success, it pays to portray this version of black masculinity with a gangster mentality. Considerably more marketing money and focus is placed on



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...es bigger profit margins for artists who are placing this narrow door into the music industry artists are more likely to portray the black masculinity that pays, that of an increasing machismo identity.

Rap music started with a diverse range of black expression through the form. Rap with negative aspects such as gun violence, misogyny and machismo identity was always around but it shared the same space as hip hop with a more lyrically conscious message that promoted positivity in the early days of the form (Hunt 2008). This diverse time occurred between 1987 and 1992 which many Rap music fans consider to be the golden era of the genre. Consumers had a wider choice and saw a wider view of black expression as all the different strands of Rap were as successful as each other when it was an up and coming art-form. The question that needs to be asked is when and why did Rap change direction and focus on Gangster Rap whilst more conscious forms of Rap music covering alternative subject matter became more underground and 'un-cool' in terms of its visibility to the everyday consumer.

As observed by Watson (2008) who is the former president of Def Jam Records one of the longest running and largest Rap record labels in the industry (2009.e) Rap music moved towards a Gangster Rap focus when the major labels bought up all the smaller independent labels. The large corporate major labels had a greater capacity to distribute and market records, which in turn provided Rap with larger sections in record shops. As a result, the music became less conscious thus starting the resurgence of narrow stereotypes placed upon the consumer through media channels. Television, Radio and more recently the Internet, are the main media channels through which Rap is narrowly expressed.

It is important to point out that these corporations that own the media channels are just that, corporations and businesses that aim is to stimulate profit, regardless of cultural impacts. As stated by Chuck D from Public Enemy (2009.h) states *õB.E.T is the cancer of black manhood in the world because they have one-dimentionalised us and have commodified us to being a one trick imageö*. B.E.T stands for Black Entertainment Television and is the biggest source of black entertainment in America (2009.g). The programming is mainly focused on Gangster Rap with very little diversity shown on the station, which as with most cases is owned by a white man. As

It can be argued that black music is being exploited and in the music industry, the black experience portrayed in Rap music becomes a commodity which is pressured to crossover into other markets, for example black performers being pressured to create music that will be deemed more acceptable to white audiences. This phenomenon that Negus (1996) describes is problematic and has changed throughout the last decade and he describes many black acts in the 90s creating this form of crossover music to sell more records thus creating 'un-black' performers. With the stereotypes of black masculinity firmly in place and are profitable, it can be argued that today's performers are 'over-black' as they play the roles that are commercially viable (Gangster Rap). It can also be argued from this that the white consumer here does not accept the belief that the performer is crossing into their realm, it is because they are actually feeding into the 'black experience' that the performers portray.

As noted previously it is not just consumers that are affected by the lack of diverse black expression, it also affects up and coming artists. Hill (2008.) observed that with the worldwide success of Rap, young rappers see rapping as a career option, a way of getting out of their situations so the most important thing for them is to gain a record deal, however in this cultural climate it seems that only certain examples of blackness are going to be allowed and offered big contracts. Hill insists that *if you do not fit into certain conventions then your video will not get played* (2008) which is definitely true in the most part because stations like B.E.T (2009.g) are overwhelmingly one sided.

So what are some of the perspectives that young rappers hold themselves about this issue? Hunt (2008) spoke to some up and coming rappers at B.E.T's Annual Spring Bling Weekend about the way that manhood is portrayed in contemporary Hip Hop culture. On his visit Hunt saw a lot of rappers all rapping about the same kind of topics, killing, gun violence, misogyny, invulnerability, and the 'feminising' of other men. When asked about their lyrical content some surprisingly honest answers were given, one rapper proceeded to rap about more positive topics and then said that nobody wants to hear rap like that these days. These rappers noted a song by a Rapper called KRS1 called 'Self destruction' (2009.7) a lyrically conscious positive song about stopping violence within the black community. The rappers interviewed said

neighbourhood loved this song but now in this current
a record label with a song like self-destruction
because as stated by one of the rappers *õ you will self destructö*(2008). With
companies filtering out a lot of Rap the culture is being narrowly defined, so much so
that that people within the culture are trapped in a box to create a certain type of
music and present themselves a certain way, a way which is controlled by white
power structures and people who have nothing to do with Rap music and is just
present on a business level, as opposed to true black expression.

Hip hop influenced by political shifts in the climate of America

One has to examine not just the type of Rap consumed at certain periods but the
periods themselves in a broader sense and the implications they have on each other. It
is very crucial to analyse black culture in context to when it was produced
(Boyd.1997).

I will place focus on youth audiences particularly. With what I have described as the
'golden era' of rap between 1987 and 1992 where choice was more apparent, the youth
at the source of black expression at the time grew up very differently to the youth and
artists thereafter when a focus on gangster mentality was dominant. These two periods
can be broken down into two categories of rappers firstly 'Affirmative action' artists
and secondly the 'Reagonomic' artist (Boyd.1997). Affirmative action artists grew up
during a period close to the civil rights movement, as Boyd (1997.6) asserts *õyoung
men nurtured under the guise of upward social mobilityö* whereas the Reagonomic
artist grew up under the Reagan/Bush administration and suffered due to the
government's social and economic and social policies. It was also the time of the
crack epidemic exploding in the United States.

Jay Z a rapper who would be described as a Reagonomic artist whose rap career is
still continuing, quotes in a song called Blue Magic (2009.9) from an album entitled
*American Gangster õBlame Reagan for turning me into a monster/blame Oliver North
and Iran-Contra, I ran contraband that they sponsored/, Before this rhyming stuff we
was in concert"*. Jay Z was a self-proclaimed drug dealer at a young age and here he
is making reference to the cocaine trafficking scandal that arose during the Reagan
era. These two generations are closely linked but one is reactionary to the other. The

on rappers were defined in relation to the black whereas the Reagonomic rappers can be seen as a result of disenchantment with these movements due to the economic and political climate around them at the time. Such rappers felt victimised in their urban neighbourhoods (Boyd 1997).

What happens when an outside source such as corporations and political discourse begins to define a culture is that eventually a stage is reached in which the younger generation do not know any different, or at least did not live in a time when it was different, as opposed to an older generation who lived through the 'golden era' of Rap and between 1987 and 1992, before corporations took their stronghold over the culture. In addition, with the influence of Reagonomics this point in Rap music is now being reached. Children are growing up hearing a one sided view of black expression and particularly black manhood which has become extremely problematic especially for black children with a higher than average rate of fatherless homes. These children create their vision of manhood from television, magazines and other creative media through lack of a close male figure. These factors perpetuate the mind state that to be a 'real' black man it is necessary to be like the dominant image portrayed, an image of being hard, invulnerable or treating women as less than, and to be homophobic and also killing one another other in their neighbourhoods due to their narrow image of black masculinity.

The progression of Rap music's relationship with corporate business and the music industry has been highlighted in this chapter. I began by investigating how these relationships affect Rap music, the artists and the consumer in the context of identity portrayal and formation, followed by investigation into how political shifts may have had an affect on Rap music in order to broaden my analysis regarding the formation of identity portrayed through Rap music.

The key points that have emerged were as follows: the relationship of Rap music with corporate business has affected the genre drastically in many ways. It had affected the diversity of the art form through a marketing strategy that primarily focuses on Gangster Rap, which in turn creates a cycle and a dilemma for up and coming artists who see Gangster Rap as the only way to enter the music industry. Through this

masculinity becomes very narrow to the consumer projected a diverse range of black masculinity which becomes problematic for identity formation. Another key point is that artists of today who grew up in the 1980s were subjected to the Reagonomic era that also affected their consciousness, which clearly comes across in their music and could be a determinant for the creation of music in the Gangster Rap style. Young consumers are less aware of previous diversity in Rap music and do not know any different especially as Affirmative Action Rappers have had their commercially successful period come and go. I feel that this phenomenon in conjunction with the corporal control over Rap music sets up an ideological cycle in which there is not much room for cultural diversity, which then becomes part of the black masculinity identity crisis.

Racial issues cannot be critically analysed without the consideration of gender and sexuality politics within the culture. As stated by West (1994.120) *Everyone knows it is virtually impossible to talk candidly about race without talking about sex. Yet most social scientists who examine race relations do so with little or no reference to how sexual perceptions influence racial matters*. This is an issue that Hooks (1982) points out. Matters of race within the focus of black masculinity gender and sexuality go hand in hand. These issues will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter.

Role of Homophobia and Women in Black Masculinity

In this chapter I shall discuss homosexuality's relationship to blackness in regards to how it is treated and whether it is accepted as part of black culture. I do this by introducing a contemporary term used in Rap music and culture that of No Homo. I shall analyse this term in an attempt to clarify its implications in relation to black masculinity. Secondly I shall discuss mainstream black popular culture in the 1960s and 70s to identify the differences between this period and the present day in regards to diversity of black identity expression. Lastly I shall examine women's role in black masculinity, concentrating on how women are seen as less than, through the use of words associated with women as derogatory terms to other men and how this attitude may have emerged from the black power movement.

Homophobic representations within black cultural expression have been well documented, especially Rap music, not so much as an overt attack on homophobia but a conscious effort to distance itself from homosexuality, as much as to deny its existence within what is deemed to be a 'real' black man or more specifically black masculinity. An example of this attitude comes from Kphra Ankh Amn who is part of a community development institute in America from Hunt's (1998) documentary in which he describes homosexuality's relationship to black masculinity. As stated by (Amn cited in Hunt 1998) *homosexuality is not our masculinity, our masculinity didn't create homosexuality* this is an attitude all too prevalent in black society. By stating 'our masculinity didn't create homosexuality' what is really being said here is that homosexuality is a white problem not 'ours' and should not be deemed as part of black culture, since it is foreign to the 'true' black man. This is problematic in many ways, as observed by Mercer (1994) since homosexual men and women have always been part of the communities of black people, and for a community development worker to have such views is **problematic**. This kind of view can only go towards segregating a community with homosexual members in it and the comment serves to illustrate just how dominant and normalised these kinds of views are.

As stated by Mercer (1994:141) *The sexual discourses of black popular music enable*

making sense of feelingsö which indicates the
of black people. Music is a tool that is used to create
and adjust self-images in relation to ösexual and gendered identitiesö inherent in
music. When considering Rap music as the dominant black expression of our time,
certain trends that arise from this world should be discussed closely.

A new term has developed out of Rap music and culture as with swagger, and this
term is No Homo, which is mainly used by artists in songs and interviews. If an artist
says a comment that could in any way be taken as a gay comment then he will
immediately follow the sentence with öno homoö as to clarify the fact that he didn't
mean it in a gay way. What is interesting about this phenomenon is how quickly it
became such a prevalent slang term, also how easily it is used. Many times rappers
will say a comment that at best is a large push to call it a gay comment but the rapper
will make sure he says it so much, that he will say it multiple times over in one
interview or song. Never before have artists shown such an overt insecurity and self-
consciousness about being seen as a homosexual. As observed by Mercer (1994) it
can be argued that Raps musicö treatment of issues outside of the box reveals a
vulnerable ego. In this case it is more about how it deals with issues outside itself. It
can be said that homosexuality is 'outside' Hip Hop culture and more broadly black
culture and masculinity, or the dominant representations of black culture that is
normalised.

Such a position was not always the case in popular black music; we do not have to go
too far to find a very different attitude to gender roles and stereotypes expressed in
black music. In the sixties and seventies and early 1980s in the types of music that
would eventually be the music that Hip Hop borrowed heavily from musically, for
example Funk, Soul and RnB music, images of male sexuality was far more fluid and
diverse in its expression. As observed by Mercer (1994) black male machismo
identity was dominant in media through film with genre of Blaxploitation that was at
the time the forefront of black cinema, but the dominant black expression in black
music in the early seventies created the diversity. Artists such as Luther Vandross and
Michael Jackson, who were at the height of their success through song and image,
represented the softer more emotional side of black masculinity, with songs about
love and relationships at the core. Coinciding with this trend bands such as Funkedelic

are really pushed the boundaries by playing with the
stated by Mercer (1994:141) *by destabilising signs
of race, gender and sexuality, such artists draw critical attention to the cultural
constructiveness, the artifice, of the sexual roles and identities we inhabit*. It has to
be noted that these bands were accepted by the heterosexual black society and were
very successful. In today's climate that situation would not be possible as such bands
would be deemed and set aside as being homosexual (the unaccepted other). The
irony here is that rap music was built from funk, heavily sampling the music of their
youth, Rap artists are the first to say how they love funk but it is a shame that nothing
more than samples were taken from this time, a time of liberation of black male
identity. As noted by Mercer (1994) it is important to realise these periods of time
when black expression were liberated from narrow images of itself show that **it** is
possible. However it seems unlikely that a resurgence of **this** could happen in regards
to the latest cultural developments.

Mercer (1994) also argues that the black fear of black homosexuality is on the same
level as the fear of homosexuality within white society, which could have been true at
the time of writing but today this attitude has fundamentally changed. Black male fear
of homosexuality has risen and is clearly shown in black cultural expression.
Although rappers and artists are the focus it is important to note that these are trends
merely started by rappers and artists themselves and then emulated within the
community of fans which permeates into everyday life and becomes normalised into
black culture which is then reflected back into art forms, thus creating a cycle of
ideology.

As observed by Boykin (1998 cited in Hunt 1998) there is a large fear from black men
that if they are seen to be supporting black gay men then them themselves will be
looked upon as being gay. Being seen as gay to a black man would be detrimental to
the current dominant image of black masculinity. Representations of black
masculinity ask for the subject to be invulnerable, hard, and emotionless and not to
show feelings, whereas the characteristics of homosexual stereotypes are the exact
opposite. It is this denial of anything connected to otherness, otherness being attitudes
and images outside of current dominant values that plays a large role in the current
identity crisis within black identity.

of sexism have become a disproportionate part of black masculinity expressed through black expression and realised in the popular culture. The feminising of black men to other black men as an insult to their character is part of the dominant image of blackness especially is musical expression. What therefore is women's role in forming black masculinity? The derogatory terms used by black men to feminise and put down other black men are those, which are usually aimed at women, examples of which are, *õbitch, pussy bitch-ass niggerõ. The worst insult to a black man in this context is being considered either homosexual or simply a woman.*

According to Hooks (1982) patriarchal values within black masculinity were supported and perpetuated by leaders of the black power/liberation movement and were accepted as part of the overall cause. Black women were assigned to subordinate roles and positions at the level of home life and politically to try to affirm to white society that they as women would no longer accept the refusal of masculine privileges in society, although some leaders such as Amiri Baraka would do this under the guise of creating a society in opposition to white society the same patriarchal values were found in white society.

At the time in which white males were expressing their fear of and concern at women entering the workforce, particularly spaces which were dominated by men, was the time in which black males publicly declared to white society that they had control over their women (Hooks, 1982). This act was to help black males claim masculinity and power over a deemed weakening of white masculinity in terms of their patriarchal status, thus creating a masculinity based on sexism their 'power' over its women which in turn meant power over white society. At the time any form of power was treated as a positive even at the stake of Black women, as stated by Hooks (1982:97) *õFrom their writings and speeches, it is clear that most black political activists of the 60's saw the black liberation movement as a move to gain recognition and support for an emerging black patriarchyõ. With such a positive movement such as black liberation having patriarchal at the core of its beliefs, these negative values are not seen as such, due to the other layers of the movement which creates a space in which normalisation of these values occur.*

ent that homosexuality within black culture is a
of the term No Homo shows that this phenomenon is
still on the rise through black expression channels such as Rap music. We only have
to go back to the 60s and 70s to see a very different picture in which a diverse range
of expression and identity was portrayed through mainstream popular culture. Since
then this has fallen decade by decade and has created an identity crisis in which a
range of identities is longer portrayed thus not possible. Anything outside the
stereotypical image that Gangster Rap portrays is regarded as homosexual so rappers
and consumers are very careful to cover up unintentional double-entendres. This
chapter has also revealed that women are seen as less than to black males through the
use of derogatory terms usually associated to women, to males. This phenomenon
accepts patriarchy as part of black masculinity, an attitude embraced by the black
power movement, which is problematic because of the power and influence that these
leaders had. However the black power movement is not the point of reference for
youth of today when practicing misogyny and patriarchy, it is the everlasting
influence from their elders, which in turn has normalised these attitudes in a cycle of
ideology. With these attitudes firmly in place with no sign of them lessening
dramatically, the crisis of black masculinity will only become worse.

Conclusion

l processes which are part of both the emergence and retention of the black masculinity identity crisis. Firstly I have identified the influence of historical processes relating to the representations of black masculinity and the normalisation of negative connotations of black masculinity through modern media channels, has been identified.

An analysis of the terms cool and swagger has revealed that cool developed into swagger in recent times and that the notion of cool was positive for black identity since it was used as a protective cultural tool. However, the positive elements of cool have been stripped away with its development into swagger.

The discussion focussing on dominant musical expressions indicated that Rap music is a major part of black masculinity formation, however Rap music has lost full control over the way it is now portrayed due to corporate relations that are steeped in capitalism within white power structures. For up and coming artists this is problematic as they see Gangster Rap as the only option for entry into the music business since it is at the forefront of Rap music which has lost its diverse expression thus causing a narrow version of black masculinity to be portrayed to youth culture. This has implications for identity formation as Rap artists can be dominant role models.

The discussion regarding trends of misogyny and homosexuality in black masculinity highlighted that the introduction of the contemporary term \neq No Homo \emptyset reflects the current attitude within such trends. It became evident that there is a major taboo regarding homosexuality within black masculinity since it is regarded as unacceptable due to certain stereotypical aspects such as vulnerability that are not part of the machismo black masculinity which has become the norm.

Stereotypes and representations have become normalised through media, creating a cycle of ideology at a current point in history, in which the identity crisis within black masculinity is created due to the fact that a range of identities are no longer possible within black masculinity. A cycle has been created between reality and representation, which in turn makes these fictions 'true' both in the popular imagination and within black masculinity itself. And if not inherently true, then it at least creates discourse and a struggle to define true black masculinity.

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