

## Typologies of Black Male Sensitivity in R&B and Hip Hop

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### Abstract

A qualitative content analysis was conducted on the lyrics of 79 R&B and Hip Hop songs from 1956-2013 to identify the ways that these Black male artists expressed sensitivity. The songs were determined by Billboard Chart Research Services, and Phenomenology provided the theoretical foundation on which the themes were identified. Qualitative analysis of the lyrics revealed Black male sensitivity in R&B and Hip Hop to be based on the following four typologies: (a) Private Sensitivity; (b) Partnered Sensitivity; (c) Perceptive Sensitivity; and (d) Public Sensitivity. Private Sensitivity occurred when the Black male is alone; feels lonely; disguises or hides his tears from his romantic partner or others; and expresses a determination to not cry and/or continue crying. Partnered Sensitivity occurred when the Black male encourages and/or connects with his romantic partner, other men, and/or members of the Black community through crying. Perceptive Sensitivity was demonstrated when Black men acknowledge the tears shed by others, and shed tears themselves while being conscious of society's expectation that men suppress emotion and/or refrain from crying. Public Sensitivity was exemplified when the Black male cries publicly and verbally expresses that he does not care what others think of him. Qualitative examples are provided to support each of the aforementioned themes.

R&B and Hip Hop are two music genres that have gained global appeal in recent years. This appeal may be a reflection of a wider audience's ability to identify and relate to the lyrics used by R&B and Hip Hop artists.<sup>1</sup> Early R&B was used as a way for artists to express their feelings about the world, life, as well as experiences associated with the

<sup>1</sup> Aloï, Daniel. 2001. "Hip-hop's global culture 'affects everyone,' pioneers say." Retrieved from: <http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/April11/HipHopCover.html>; Cheney, Charlise L. (2005). *Brothers Gonna Work It Out: Sexual Politics in the Golden Age of Rap Nationalism*. New York: New York University Press; George, Nelson. 1998. *Hip Hop America*. New York: Viking Penguin; Hoffmann, Frank W. 2006. *Rhythm & Blues, Rap, and Hip Hop*. Infobase Publishing, New York; Kopano, Baruti N. 2002. "Rap Music as an Extension of the Black Rhetorical Tradition: 'Keepin' it Real'." *Western Journal of Black Studies* 26, no. 4: 204; Mitchell, Tony. 2001. *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press; Pough, Gwendolyn D. *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 170-171; Price, Jr., Robert J. 2005. "Hegemony, Hope, and the Harlem Renaissance: Taking Hip Hop Culture Seriously." *Convergence* 38, no. 2: 55-64; Ralph, Michael. 2009. "Hip-Hop." *Social Text* 27, no. 3: 141-146; Osumare, H. Beat streets in the global hood: Connective marginalities of the Hip Hop Globe. 2001. *Journal of American Comparative Cultures* 2: 171-181; Ramsey, Guthrie P. 2003. *Race Music: Black Cultures from Be-Bop to Hip Hop*. California: University of California Press; Stewart, James B. 1979. "Relationships between Black Males and Females in Rhythm and Blues Music of the 1960s and 1970s." *Western Journal of Black Studies* 3, no. 3, 86-96; Carl and Virgil Taylor. 2007. "Hip hop is Now: An Evolving Youth Culture." *Reclaiming Children and Youth* 15, no. 4, 210-213; Watkins, S. Craig. 2005. *Hip Hop Matters: Politics, Pop Culture, and the Struggle for the Soul of a Movement*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

civil rights movement.<sup>2</sup> While the lyrical content associated with R&B has changed, artists still draw from personal experiences for many of their lyrics.<sup>3</sup>

Hip Hop also evolved as a means of expression for many social ills taking place within the Black community using rhyming and rapping lyrics in contrast to R&B lyrics which traditionally are sung.<sup>4</sup> While R&B is a softer music genre that lends itself to the free expression of feelings, Hip Hop is a genre more recently known for its misogynistic views toward Black women as sexual objects.<sup>5</sup> Even though Hip Hop is associated with negative displays of Black women, research has found that men in Hip Hop desire love as long as it fits into the parameters of male dominance and heterosexuality.<sup>6</sup> Research that has examined how love is expressed in Hip Hop and R&B songs have found the traditional discourse of hegemony to be particularly evident in R&B love songs.<sup>7</sup>

Given the global appeal of R&B and Hip-Hop,<sup>8</sup> few studies to date have examined how Black male sensitivity is expressed in these genres. Thus, the following question was foundational in the development of this study: *What do the discourses revealed in R&B and Hip Hop suggest about Black male sensitivity?* Before we answer this question, we began by providing a general overview of scholarship related to Black masculinity as well as how Black masculinity is expressed in different realms of society.

In particular, this scholarly overview will focus on conceptualizations of Black male sensitivity, both within and outside of R&B and Hip Hop. Next, we provide the theoretical framework on which the current study is based. Then, we discuss the methodology that was used in this study. After this, we discuss the significance of the current study before presenting what these songs revealed. Finally, we will end by discussing what the four typologies of masculinity revealed in R&B and Hip Hop songs suggest about Black male sensitivity, the expression of Black male sensitivity, as well as implications of Black male sensitivity for Black male-female interpersonal relationships and the Black community more broadly.

## Review of Literature

Research in the area of masculinity and Black men has suggested that Black men define manhood through self, family, human community, and spirituality and

<sup>2</sup> Stewart, James B. 2005. "Message in the Music: Political Commentary in Black Popular Music from Rhythm and Blues to Early Hip Hop." *Journal of African American History* 90, no. 3: 196-225.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ralph, Ibid; Stewart, 2005, Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ralph, Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Jeffries, Michael. "Can a Thug (get some) Love?: Sex, Romance, and the Definition of a Hip-Hop Thug." *Women and Language* 32, no. 2 (2009): 35-42.

<sup>7</sup> Eddie S. Meadows 2010. *Blues, Funk, Rhythm and Blues, Soul, Hip Hop, and Rap: A Research and Information Guide* Taylor & Francis.

<sup>8</sup> Aloï, Cheney, George, Mitchell, Nichols, Osumare, Pough, Price, Ramsey, Stewart, Taylor and Taylor, and Watkins.

humanism.<sup>9</sup> These ideas of manhood differ considerably from those inherent within White masculinity whereby dominance over women and avoiding displays of emotions, vulnerability, or weakness are highly regarded.<sup>10</sup> Since the 1970s, research has suggested that male stereotypes of stoicism and the inability of men to express emotion make it especially hard for them to show weakness or vulnerability when in the company of other men or their wives.<sup>11</sup>

According to Lewis,<sup>12</sup> a large part of men's stoicism is based on the few examples of male emotional intimacy provided them as well as the promotion of traditional male role expectations of avoiding personal vulnerability and openness, which make achieving emotional intimacy difficult for men. In more recent work on male perceptions of intimacy, Patrick and Beckenbach<sup>13</sup> found that male stereotypes of not expressing vulnerable emotions makes achieving intimacy with women difficult. This study also found that some elements of intimacy for men involved them having the ability to share (emotions, thoughts, words, and physical expressions) and present the worst part of themselves.<sup>14</sup> While societal constraints oftentimes prevent Black men from expressing masculinity in the same way as White males,<sup>15</sup> this does not mean that Black men do not develop alternate ways of expressing masculinity.

<sup>9</sup> Chaney, Cassandra. 2009a. "Boys to Men: How Perceptions of Manhood Influence the Romantic Partnerships of Black Men." *Western Journal of Black Studies* 33, no. 2: 110-122; Hammond, Wisdom Powell and Jacqueline S. Mattis. 2005. "Being a Man About It: Manhood Meaning Among African American Men." *Psychology of Men & Masculinities*, 6(2), 114-126; Hunter, Andrea G. and James Earl Davis. 1992. "An Exploration of Afro-American Men's Conceptualization of Manhood." *Gender & Society* 6, no. 3: 464-479.

<sup>10</sup> Connell, Robert W. 1995. *Masculinities*. Los Angeles: University of California Press; Connell, Robert W. 2002. *Gender*. Malden, MA: Polity Press; Doyle, James A. and Michele Antoinette Paludi. 1991. *Sex and Gender: The Human Experience*. Dubuque, IA; Brown, Timothy J. "I Am Who I Am": Black Masculinity and the Interpretation of Individualism in the Film *Barbershop*. *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication* Vol. 9, Iss. 1, 2008, pp. 46-61; McClure, Stephanie M. 2006. "Improvising Masculinity: African American Fraternity Membership in the Construction of a Black Masculinity." *Journal of African American Studies* 10, no. 1: 57-73; Wallace, Danielle M. 2007. "It's a M-A-N thing:" Black Male Gender Role Socialization and the Performance of Masculinity in Love Relationships." *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 1, no. 7: 11-22; White, Joseph L. and James H. Cones. 1999. *Black Men Emerging: Facing the Past and Seizing a Future in America*. New York: W.H. Freeman and Company.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis, Robert A. 1978. "Emotional Intimacy among Men." *Journal of Social Issues* 34, no. 1: 108-121.

<sup>12</sup> Lewis, Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Patrick, Shawn and John Beckenbach. 2009. "Male Perceptions of Intimacy: A Qualitative Study." *Journal of Men's Studies* 17, no. 1: 47-56.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Hughey, Matthew W. 2012. "Black Guys and White Guise: The Discursive Construction of White Masculinity." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 41, no. 1: 95-124; Jamison, DeReef F. 2006. "The Relationship between African Self-Consciousness, Cultural Misorientation, Hypermasculinity, and Rap Music Preference." *Journal of African American Studies* 9, no. 4: 45-60.

**Black Masculinity.** Almost twenty years ago, Franklin<sup>16</sup> suggested that Black men develop masculinity through the interaction of three main groups, namely their primary group, their peer group, and mainstream society. Essentially, this scholar asserted that direct or indirect influence from either of these groups could alter the type of masculinity that Black men display. Interestingly, Franklin's assertion has been supported by more recent work in which Black fraternities foster the public masculinities of Black men by helping them develop an individual, group, and collective identity.<sup>17</sup>

Some studies have found a relationship between Black masculinity and sexuality. In a qualitative study by Bowleg et al. (2011)<sup>18</sup> regarding the ideologies of masculinity and HIV risk in Black men 19-51, participants expressed a belief that Black men should have sex with multiple women. These findings were similar to those by Harris, Palmer, and Struve (2011)<sup>19</sup> in which the expression of Black masculinity on a college campus were associated with "engaging in sexist and constrained relationships with women," or the ability to pursue sexual relationships with many different women.<sup>20</sup> In addition, this study also found that Black college men demonstrated masculinity by being unemotional and handling difficult situations in a calm manner.<sup>21</sup> Essentially, these findings suggested that Black masculinity was associated with sexuality and controlled emotionality under trial.

**The Media and Black Masculinity.** To date, most research on masculinity and Black men has centered on masculinity construction and particularly on how masculinity is defined and displayed in different areas such as pop culture. In *Appropriating Blackness*, Johnson stated in the '60s real blackness was associated with wearing African clothing while western clothing was associated with Whiteness and upward mobility.<sup>22</sup> In Henry's<sup>23</sup> review of *Shaft*, he suggested movies in the media continue to depict a narrow view of Black masculinity wherein Black men are tough

<sup>16</sup> Franklin, Clyde W. 1994. "Men's studies, the men's movement, and the study of Black masculinities: Further demystification of masculinities in America." In Richard G. Majors and Jacob U. Gordon (Eds.), *The American Black Male: His Present Status and His Future* (3-19). Chicago: Nelson-Hall, Inc.

<sup>17</sup> Raymon Demar Jenkins. *Black Fraternal Organizations: Understanding the Development of Hegemonic Masculinity and Sexuality*, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Bowleg, Lisa, Michelle Teti, Jenne S. Massie, Aditi Patel, David J. Malebranche, and Jeanne M. Tschann. 2011. "What does it take to be a man? What is a real man?": Ideologies of masculinity and HIV sexual risk among Black heterosexual men." *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 13, no. 5: 545-559.

<sup>19</sup> Harris III, Frank, Robert T. Palmer, and Laura E. Struve. 2011. "'Cool Posing' "on Campus: A Qualitative Study of Masculinities and Gender Expression among Black Men at a Private Research Institution." *Journal of Negro Education* 80, no. 1: 47-62.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 54.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity*. 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Henry, Matthew, *He Is a "Bad Mother\*\$%@!#": "Shaft" and Contemporary Black Masculinity*. *African American Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Spring, 2004), pp. 119-126.



and thugs. This assessment is similar to Brown<sup>24</sup> who stated popular culture has consistently provided negative images of Black masculinity and the continual display of these images has perpetuated a negative Black masculinity in which Black male sensitivity is non-existent. In a recent study, Ford<sup>25</sup> found that societal views of Black men as a “thug,” which were based on frequent portrayals in music videos, caused some Black men to display masculine characteristics that were consistent with society’s depictions of them.

Other scholars have found a relationship between the media’s representation of Black masculinity and the form of Black masculinity actually demonstrated by Black men. Jamison (2006)<sup>26</sup> found that the type of rap music Black males listened to was found to represent their identification with White culture. Additionally, he concluded that one’s cultural orientation (identifying with Black or White culture) and their rap music preference also influence how Black males perceive masculinity. In general, scholars that have examined the interpretation of music lyrics, Black men, and Black masculinity have primarily focused on the influence of Rap and Hip Hop Rap on different segments of the population as well as its portrayal of women and violence.<sup>27</sup>

Herd<sup>28</sup> argued that while an increase in violent rap lyrics in the late ‘80s to early ‘90s may have been a reflection of the level of violence in society at the time; the continuation of violent rap lyrics in the late ‘90s may have been driven by the music industry’s desire to increase record sales. The idea that rap lyrics may be produced as a way to sell records is of great importance when one considers the influence that rap has on youth who may be easily influenced by the images of Black masculinity portrayed in this music genre.<sup>29</sup> In her examination of the portrayal of women in music videos, Emerson<sup>30</sup> found great complexity in how Black women were portrayed in these videos. In particular, while some videos portrayed Black women as over sexualized and the object of male desire, other videos, mainly those by female artists, portrayed Black

<sup>24</sup> Timothy J. Brown, “I Am Who I Am”: Black Masculinity and the Interpretation of Individualism in the Film *Barbershop*. *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication*, Vol. 9, Iss. 1, 2008, pp. 46-61.

<sup>25</sup> Ford, Kristie A. 2011. “Doing Fake Masculinity, Being Real Men: Present and Future Constructions of Self among Black College Men.” *Symbolic Interaction* 34, no. 1: 38-62.

<sup>26</sup> Jamison, DeReef F. 2006. “The Relationship between African Self-Consciousness, Cultural Misorientation, Hypermasculinity, and Rap Music Preference.” *Journal of African American Studies* 9, no. 4: 45-60.

<sup>27</sup> Emerson, Rana, A. 2002. “Where my Girls at?” Negotiating Black Womanhood in Music Videos.” *Gender & Society* 16, no.1: 115-135; Herd, Denise. 2009. “Changing Images of Violence in Rap Music Lyrics: 1979–1997.” *Journal of Public Health Policy* 30, no. 4: 395-406; Oware, Matthew. 2011a. “Brotherly Love: Homosociality and Black Masculinity in Gangsta Rap Music.” *Journal of African American Studies* 15, no. 1: 22-39; Oware, Matthew. 2011b. “Decent Daddy, Imperfect Daddy: Black Male Rap Artists’ Views of Fatherhood and the Family.” *Journal of African American Studies* 15, no. 3: 327-351; Taylor, Carl and Virgil Taylor. 2007. “Hip hop is Now: An Evolving Youth Culture.” *Reclaiming Children and Youth* 15, no. 4, 210-213.

<sup>28</sup> Herd, Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Taylor, 2007, Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Emerson, Ibid.

women as simultaneously independent and establishing a sense of sisterhood between themselves and other Black women.<sup>31</sup>

While the aforementioned studies speak to the need for Black men to demonstrate forms of masculinity that are consistent with the dominant white culture, Black men are capable of publicly expressing emotional vulnerability. Tyree<sup>32</sup> showed another side of emotional vulnerability in Black rappers by examining how mothers and baby mamas were portrayed in rap lyrics. Through her examination of Rap lyrics, Tyree found that Black rappers can simultaneously openly express love and adoration for their mothers while verbally disrespecting and degrading their baby mamas. This difference in findings could mean that if a Black male has positive feelings toward his baby mama he may be more inclined to express emotional sensitivity toward her. In her qualitative study regarding the commitment and intimacy demonstrated by the protagonists in R. Kelly's melodrama "Trapped in the Closet," Chaney<sup>33</sup> found that even when infidelity had occurred, the male protagonists publicly and privately expressed sensitive love expressions through tears. Thus, the findings from this study suggest that some Black men may find it easier to cry publicly if the situation in which they find themselves (e.g., infidelity, death) make it virtually impossible for them to mask their true emotions.

To further support the notion that Black men are capable of publicly expressing emotional vulnerability, Oware<sup>34</sup> examined rap lyrics that specifically discussed friendship between men. Although it is generally assumed that rappers are emotionally distant, tough, and unable to express emotion, this scholar highlighted Black rappers' ability to demonstrate emotional vulnerability and expressiveness. For example, Oware<sup>35</sup> noted that although the Hip Hop artist Kanye West stated: "You can still love your man and be manly dog" in his song "Family Business," this does not necessarily mean that men who show affection for other men are homosexual, or are not true men. In light of these findings, other scholars have examined the masculinities demonstrated by some particular Black musical artists.

Although the openly gay, Black rapper Caushun embraces competing masculinities, specifically "thug" masculinity and "queen" femininity, Means and Cobb<sup>36</sup> argued that the music and music videos of this artist do not provide a clear understanding into the ways that these dual masculinities are expressed. Essentially, by situating himself within a society and Hip-Hop culture that is primarily hyper-

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Tyree, Tia C. M. "Lovin' Momma and Hatin' on Baby Mama: A Comparison of Misogynistic and Stereotypical Representations in Songs about Rappers' Mothers and Baby Mamas." *Women & Language* 32, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 50-58.

<sup>33</sup> Chaney, Cassandra. 2009b. "Trapped in the Closet: Understanding Contemporary Relationships in the African-American Hip Hop Community." *Women and Language* 32, no. 2: 59-67.

<sup>34</sup> Oware, 2011a. Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid p. 28.

<sup>36</sup> Means, Robin R., and Jasmine Cobb. 2007. "No Way of Seeing: Mainstreaming and Selling the Gaze of Homo-Thug Hip Hop." *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture* 5, no. 2, 89-108.

masculine, violent, and homophobic, Caushun further privatized how he authentically expresses masculinity and femininity.<sup>37</sup> The potentially problematic nature of presenting various forms of Black masculinity has been identified by other scholars as well. For example, Warwick's<sup>38</sup> recent work revealed how the Public Sensitivity presented by the late pop-icon Michael Jackson during childhood was generally seen as less appealing and problematic during his adult life. Therefore, in light of recent scholarship that has explored the attitudes of members of the Black community toward gay men,<sup>39</sup> it is important that scholars focus on the empowering and encouraging messages that are provided by Black males in rap music.

Although the aforementioned studies focused on the public or private masculinities expressed by Black men, we did locate one study that presented the intersectional masculinities that motivated two Black men to establish two separate pro-feminist men's organizations. Essentially, by "becoming aware" of an injustice to a woman that generated negative emotions, and "becoming active" in the pro-feminist men's movement, these men were able to transfer negative emotions into positive ones and create a form of Black masculinity that made it possible for them to be sensitive to the pain of others and pro-active catalysts to eradicate this pain. Essentially, this study highlighted how the stigmatization of Black men's emotions (that men suppress emotions) exacerbate differences in emotion norms between themselves and women and obscured the ways that men experience and demonstrate sensitivity in their lives.<sup>40</sup> Since masculinity is a social construction,<sup>41</sup> for the purpose of this study Black male sensitivity will be defined as the words that Black males use to express emotional sensitivity and/or emotional connectedness to others.

### Theoretical Framework

*Phenomenology.* This theoretical framework recognizes that reality is based on people's *perception* of reality. Phenomenologists, or "interpretivists"<sup>42</sup> study human behavior in terms of how people define their world based on what they say and do, and are strongly committed to understanding how individuals perceive their world, from the "actor's" point of view. In their book *Deconstructing Tyrone: A New Look at Black*

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Warwick, Jacqueline. 2012. " 'You Can't Win, Child, but You Can't Get Out of the Game': Michael Jackson's Transition from Child Star to Superstar." *Popular Music & Society* 35, no. 2: 241-259.

<sup>39</sup> Lemelle, Anthony J., and Juan Battle. 2004. "Black Masculinity Matters in Attitudes toward Gay Males." 2004. *Journal of Homosexuality* 47, no. 1: 39-51.

<sup>40</sup> White, Aaronette M., and Tal Peretz. 2010. "Emotions and Redefining Black Masculinity." *Men & Masculinities* 12, no. 4: 403-424.

<sup>41</sup> Jackson, R. L., & Dangerfield, C. (2004). "Defining Black Masculinity as Culturalproperty: Toward an Identity Negotiation Paradigm." In R. L. Jackson (Ed.), *African American communication and identities: Essential readings* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.

<sup>42</sup> Denzin, Norman K., & Lincoln, Yvonne S. (1998). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

*Masculinity in the Hip-Hop Generation*, Natalie Hopkinson and Natalie Y. Moore<sup>43</sup> skillfully used such an approach. In order to elicit the views of the producers and consumers of Hip Hop, these scholars used narratives to validate the experiences of multiple “actors”: Black male rappers, Black women who worked in strip clubs (and are recruited to star in music videos), Black women who worked as video models, Black gay men, Black female rappers, and young impressible Black women who view Hip Hop videos. A phenomenological approach recognizes that what constitutes “reality” for one “actor” may not hold the same salience for another “actor.”

Phenomenology’s use of everyday knowledge,<sup>44</sup> “practical reasoning,<sup>45</sup>” language and subjectivity will be particularly useful in this study. Since the experiences of individuals differ in meaning and importance, the principle of subjectivity recognize that two individuals may not share the same views or experiences regarding sensitivity, or may cry for different reasons.<sup>46</sup> In particular, this study will focus on the thematic content of song lyrics as well as how Black men discuss and conceptualize masculinity, sexuality, and sensitivity vis-à-vis lyrical talk. Essentially, this approach acknowledges that Black men in R&B and Hip Hop cry for different reasons, the societal events that make crying more (or less) acceptable, the changes that have occurred in Black masculinity, sexuality, and sensitivity over time, as well as the implications of Black men’s sensitive discourses for Black women and the Black community, more broadly.

### Significance of the Current Study

There are three reasons why this study is important. First and foremost, this study gives a voice to Black men that represent the genres of R&B and Hip Hop. In *The Minds of Marginalized Black Men: Making Sense of Mobility, Opportunity, and Future Life Chances*, Alford A. Young<sup>47</sup> wrote: “Thus, it is important to what people articulate as their own understanding of how social processes work and how they as individuals might navigate the complex social terrain, rather than simply looking at their actions.” Thus, by focusing on the lyrical talk of Black men in Hip Hop and R&B, this paper will highlight how Black men demonstrate masculinity as well as how they express sensitivity.

Second, this study contributes to the growing scholarship related to Black masculinity<sup>48</sup> and reveals the nuanced ways in which Black males express sensitivity.

<sup>43</sup> Natalie Hopkinson and Natalie Y. Moore. *Deconstructing Tyrone: A New Look at Black Masculinity in the Hip-Hop Generation*, 2006.

<sup>44</sup> Garfinkel, Harold. 1967. *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

<sup>45</sup> Pollner, Melvin. 1987. *Mundane Reason: Reality in Everyday and Sociological Discourse*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>46</sup> Shamir, Milette. 2002. *Boys Don’t Cry?: Rethinking Narratives of Masculinity and Emotion in the U.S.* New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>47</sup> Young, Alford A. 2004. *The Minds of Marginalized Black Men: Making Sense of Mobility, Opportunity, and Future Life Chances*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, p. 10.

<sup>48</sup> Squires, Catherine R., Laura P. Kohn-Wood, Tabbye Chavous, and Prudence L. Carter. 2006. “Evaluating Agency and Responsibility in Gendered Violence: African American Youth Talk about



Last, this study's focus on the expression of Black male vulnerability in the form of emotional expression (e.g., tears) in Hip Hop and R&B uncovers an aspect of Black male sensitivity that has generally been minimized or ignored by most people in society. Ultimately, by focusing on tears, our purpose is not to advance the view that Black male sensitivity is feminine, or for that matter anti-feminine, but rather to highlight the nuanced ways in which Black male sensitivity is expressed in various contexts. Thus, this study reveals the conditions that facilitate and impede Black men expressing sensitivity in the form of tears.

## Method

This study used a qualitative approach that examined contextual themes present in song lyrics. In order to determine the songs that were chosen, several steps were taken. First, all songs had to be sung by Black men and had to have the word "cry," "crying," "tears," or "teardrops" in the song title and/or lyrics. Sole singers and groups were included in the analysis if the song's title and/or lyrics met the aforementioned criteria. In addition, songs in which the male singer had a featured female singer were included as her lyrics supplemented those of the Black male. This involved analyzing the song titles of over 4,000 songs between the years 1956-2013 from Billboard Chart Research Services. Second, the complete lyrics of all songs were then analyzed, which were obtained from the following websites: <http://www.aalyrics.com/>, <http://www.lyrics-now.com/>, [http://www.metrolyrics.com](http://www.metrolyrics.com/), <http://www.sing365.com/index.html> and <http://www.songs-lyrics.net/>. [The song title, singer or singers, year released, the individual or individuals that composed the song and the genre are provided in Appendix A].

Second, after the songs were identified by the first author, the next part of the study involved: (1) identifying whether the song was provided by a solo artist or a group; (2) determining the year that the song was released; (3) providing the individual or individuals that composed the song; (4) identifying the music genre; (5) providing direct quotes from the songs that directly supported Black male sensitivity; (6) providing a rationale regarding why the quotes selected directly supported Black sensitivity; and (7) running statistical analyses on the aforementioned.

The data were entered into a Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and frequencies revealed 57 songs (72%) were provided by a sole-artist, 18 songs (23%) were provided by an all-male singing group, and 4 songs (5%) were provided by the artist and a featured singer. In addition, 19 songs (24%) were written by the artist, 17 songs (22%) were written by the artist and another individual or individuals, and 43 songs (54%) were written by an individual or individuals other than the artist. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of songs (68) were provided by R&B artists

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Violence and Hip Hop." *Sex Roles* 55, 725-737; White, Cameron and Susan McCormack. 2006." The Message in the Music: Popular culture and Teaching in Social Studies." *Social Studies* 97, no. 3, 122-127.

(86%), ten songs (12%) were provided by Hip Hop artists, and one song (2%) was provided by an artist that represented both genres. This systematic approach allowed us to respond to the questions of interest and established the validity and reliability of the research.<sup>49</sup>

Third, all songs were content analyzed using an open-coding process.<sup>50</sup> Although the research questions were determined at the beginning of the study, in keeping with normal open-coding techniques, no a priori categories were imposed on the narrative data. Instead, themes were identified from the lyrics. In order to concentrate on the primary themes that would serve as the focus of the current study, words and phrases were the units of analysis. This involved a *word by word* and *line by line* examination of the complete lyrics of all songs, keeping track of any emerging themes that were present, and using those themes to answer the question of scholarly interest.

Essentially, this method allowed the first author to determine the patterns within and between songs as well as identify the sensitivity typologies that were described in the songs. In general, 4-8 phrases comprised each theme. For example, the phrases "I cry the tears of a clown when no one's around," "Lonely teardrops," "Sometimes I cry when I'm all alone," and "Don't want you to see me cry," were all regarded as concrete descriptors of Private Sensitivity, or the Black male's need to disguise or hide his tears from others. Through this process, the first author determined the four major categories related to Black male sensitivity, and confirmed the validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of the findings by providing the lyrics of all songs to the second author and having her go through the aforementioned process.

To further increase the validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of these categories and subcategories, the first author created a Word file that included the song title, author, and complete lyrics of the 79 songs that were included in the study. The second author was instructed to become familiar with the masculine typologies identified by the first author, to thoroughly read the lyrics of all songs, and indicate in a separate column the typology or typologies of sensitivity identified in all songs. After a 92% coding reliability rate was established between the first and second author, it was determined that a working coding system had been established, and thus minimized the likelihood that personal biases from the authors informed the outcomes presented herein.

## Results

### Typologies of Sensitivity

An analysis of 79 R&B and Hip Hop lyrics revealed Black men express sensitivity in one of four ways. Although these themes are not mutually exclusive, in general,

<sup>49</sup> King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

<sup>50</sup> Strauss, Anselm and Juliet M. Corbin 1990. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory, Procedures, and Techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Black men demonstrate sensitivity based on the following topologies: (a) Private Sensitivity; (b) Partnered Sensitivity; (c) Perceptive Sensitivity; and (d) Public Sensitivity. *Private Sensitivity* occurred when the Black male was alone; felt lonely; disguised or hid his tears from his romantic partner or others; and expressed a determination to not cry and/or continue crying. *Partnered Sensitivity* occurred when the Black male encouraged and/or connected with his romantic partner, other men, and/or members of the Black community through crying. *Perceptive Sensitivity* was demonstrated when Black men acknowledged the tears shed by others, and shed tears themselves while being conscious of society's expectation that men suppress emotion and/or refrain from crying. *Public Sensitivity* was exemplified when the Black male cried publicly and verbally expressed that he does not care what others think of him.

Interestingly, the artist Mario's song "The Hardest Moment" (2009) is the first where a Black man proudly states that he is "not afraid to cry." Of the four typologies provided, Private Sensitivity was demonstrated in 44 songs (56%), Partnered Sensitivity was demonstrated in 11 songs (14%), Perceptive Sensitivity was demonstrated in 12 songs (15%), Public Sensitivity was demonstrated in 11 songs (14%); and one song (1%) represented the partnered, perceptive, and Public Sensitivity theme. [Typology of Sensitivity, Description of Sensitivity, Songs and Singers that Demonstrate the Typology of Sensitivity are presented in Appendix B].

## Discussion

This study of 79 R&B and Hip Hop songs revealed four Black male sensitivity typologies related to how Black men demonstrate and express sensitive emotions through tears. Since the experiences of Black men within and between these genres are not the same, Phenomenology was used to examine the lyrical realities expressed by Black men in Hip Hop and R&B.<sup>51</sup> While a discussion of the implications of the four Black male sensitivity typologies will soon follow, the limitations of the current study must be noted.

For one, our focus on Black male artists in R&B and Hip Hop suggests the findings in this study cannot be generalized to Black male artists who represent other music genres (i.e., Country, Pop, Blues, or Alternative), or to men of various races in other music genres, more broadly. Furthermore, that the overwhelming majority of the songs were representative of the R&B genre further limits the generalizability of our findings. An additional limitation of the study was its focus on the lyrical content and emotional expression that was embodied in one song by a single artist. In other words,

<sup>51</sup> Collins, Patricia Hill. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Routledge; Essed, Philomena and David Theo Goldberg. 2002. *Race Critical Theories*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing; Paradigm Smalls, Shanté. " 'The Rain Comes Down' ": Jean Grae and Hip Hop Heteronormativity." *American Behavioral Scientist* 55, no. 1 (January 2011): 86-95.

our analysis of these 79 R&B and Hip Hop songs did not examine how Black male sensitivity in the form of tears may have changed or remained static for a particular Black artist over time. To make this point more clear, an artists' sensitivity, or his willingness and/or ability to cry, may have increased, remained the same, or diminished over time.

In spite of these limitations, however, this study highlights the voices (realities) of Black men in general,<sup>52</sup> contributes to the growing scholarship related to Black male sensitivity<sup>53</sup> and unearth the conditions that facilitate and impede Black men in society from expressing sensitivity in the form of tears.<sup>54</sup> We will now turn attention to the four sensitivity typologies revealed in the lyrics of the 79 R&B and Hip Hop songs featured in this study.

### **Theme 1: Private Sensitivity**

In support of Stewart's<sup>55</sup> earlier findings, the Private Sensitivity theme validates the current and emerging ways that Black men in society express their emotional vulnerability. Essentially, this theme recognizes that most Black men find it hard to cry, and may actually prefer to do so alone.<sup>56</sup> The idea of being unable to cry is evident in songs like "Lonely Tear Drops" by Jackie Wilson (1958) in which the artist shares that his pillow "never dries" because of his tears, "Song Cry" by Jay-Z (2002) in which he is forced to make the "song cry" because he finds it impossible to cry, and "Sometimes I Cry" by Eric Benet (2010) where the singer clearly states "Sometimes I cry babe when I'm all alone." Essentially, the Private Sensitivity theme suggests three things.

For one, the proliferation of songs related to the loss experienced by a man whose partner ended the romantic relationship suggests that although Black men who are not artists may outwardly appear unaffected by this loss, the end of a romantic relationship affects him in deep, personal, and profound ways. This idea was seen in Chaney's<sup>57</sup> review of R. Kelly's melodrama, "Trapped in the Closet" where the male protagonist became very emotional after learning of his wife's infidelity. Also, solitary moments are valuable opportunities for Black men in general to get in touch with their sensitive emotions and express these through tears. Additionally, this theme suggests that solitary moments are the only or one of the few times that some Black men in society can express their true feelings. Thus, women who are in romantic relationships with Black men need to realize that there are times when Black men need to grieve in

<sup>52</sup> Young, 2004, Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Squires, Catherine R., Laura P. Kohn-Wood, Tabbye Chavous, and Prudence L. Carter. 2006. "Evaluating Agency and Responsibility in Gendered Violence: African American Youth Talk about Violence and Hip Hop." *Sex Roles* 55, 725-737; White, Cameron and Susan McCormack. 2006. "The Message in the Music: Popular culture and Teaching in Social Studies." *Social Studies* 97, no. 3, 122-127.

<sup>54</sup> Chaney, 2009b, Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Stewart, 1979.

<sup>56</sup> McClure, Stephanie M. 2006. "Improvising Masculinity: African American Fraternity Membership in the Construction of a Black Masculinity." *Journal of African American Studies* 10, no. 1: 57-73; Wallace, Danielle M. 2007. "It's a M-A-N thing: Black Male Gender Role Socialization and the Performance of Masculinity in Love Relationships." *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 1, no. 7: 11-22.

<sup>57</sup> Chaney, 2009b, Ibid.



private. While a part of Black men's need for solitude may be linked to their personality, family background, or past romantic experiences, other men may have been socialized to believe that "real men" do not show emotional vulnerability to anyone as doing so would suggest they are weak and/or incapable of controlling their emotions.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, it is important that Black women not pressure or threaten the men in their lives to share emotions that they find difficult to share or are not ready or willing to share at that moment. While we are careful to not extend what has been presented in the lyrical data to the experience of Black men in general, the lyrics in these songs speak to the need for individuals who are part of the lives of Black men to respect their private space. In addition, these lyrics also hint that Black male artists may create private spaces which would allow them to grieve, when necessary. Although societal norms dictate that men should be emotionally stoic, individuals in the community can create "safe spaces" for Black men to personally and collectively express their grief, and thus grow emotionally closer to those around him in deeper and more profound ways.

### *Theme 2: Partnered Sensitivity*

Consistent with the findings in earlier studies,<sup>59</sup> our study showed that with Partnered Sensitivity, Black men within society connect with their partner, other men, and/or members of the Black community through crying, yet may still feel uncomfortable expressing emotion.<sup>60</sup> Essentially, while Black men may feel that it is permissible to show emotional vulnerability in certain situations, they may still shun the idea of a Black man crying around people he knows on a regular basis.<sup>61</sup>

The feeling that crying is warranted in certain situations but may still be uncomfortable is seen in two songs dealing with crying that include a female artist "I Cry" by the artist Ja Rule (featuring Lil Mo) (2001) whose lyrics say "I'm a man and we cry. We can cry, we can cry, we can cry together" and "Cry" by LL Cool J (featuring Lil Mo) (2008). In the song "I Cry" by Ja Rule, he expresses confidence in his masculinity ("I'm a man") while encouraging him and his partner to deal with past hurt and pain by crying together. In a similar vein, in the song "Cry" by LL Cool J, this artist views his wedding as the emotionally appropriate site to connect with his partner through crying as he and his bride start life together as a married couple.

Women who are in relationships with Black men should realize that while these men may not cry daily, there may be times when these men feel crying is appropriate and emotional vulnerability is warranted. As was evidenced in the songs "Ain't That Peculiar" by Marvin Gaye, "Standing In The Shadows of Love" by The Four Tops, "Starting All Over Again" by Johnnie Taylor, "Cry Together" by The O'Jays, "Don't Say Goodbye" by Tevin Campbell, "Me & My Bitch" by The Notorious B.I.G., "Cry" by Michael Jackson, "Down the Aisle" by LL Cool J (featuring 112), and "World Cry" by Lloyd (featuring R. Kelly, Keri Hilson, & K'naan), Black men in society may develop greater intimacy, understanding, trust, and commitment to his romantic partner and

<sup>58</sup> Harris et al, 2011.

<sup>59</sup> Chaney 2009b, White and Perez 2010.

<sup>60</sup> White and Perez 2010.

<sup>61</sup> Chaney 2009b,

members of the community through crying. Therefore, Black men that feel uncomfortable crying in front of those with whom he frequently interacts may actually be more inclined to cry in the company of his female partner.

Communally, those in the company of Black men must understand that while these men may be skilled at publicly mastering the “cool pose,”<sup>62</sup> this does not mean that these men are incapable or unwilling to express emotion. To support this, “Cry” by the artist Michael Jackson and “World Cry” by Lloyd specifically speak to the desire of Black men to connect with those who are suffering in the world by crying with them. Additionally, by being a “shoulder” to cry on, those in the lives of Black men can validate their sensitivity, and thus cause these men to feel more comfortable with expressing emotional vulnerability in the form of tears to their romantic partners.

### *Theme 3: Perceptive Sensitivity*

Interestingly, similar to Partnered Sensitivity, Perceptive Sensitivity was found in approximately the same number of songs. In regard to Black male sensitivity, the findings in this study support Collins’s<sup>63</sup> work in that Black male artists in Hip Hop and R&B have the ability to be aware of and acknowledge the emotional hurt and pain of others. For example, in the song “What’s Going On,” (1971) the artist Marvin Gaye demonstrates his sensitivity to the pain felt by mothers who lost their sons in the Vietnam War when he sings, “there’s too many of you crying.” Similarly, in the song “Don’t Want You To See Me Cry,” (2005) Hip Hop artist Lil Wayne not only feels empathy for fellow New Orleans residents who lost all of their material possessions in the wake of Hurricane Katrina but gives way to tears himself. Although Lil Wayne cries, he still expresses the need to not have anyone “see him cry.” Thus, this artist’s words may reflect the idea that although Black men in society may cry, they are still uncomfortable with publicly expressing emotion because they feel that strong men should suppress their feelings.<sup>64</sup>

Essentially, Black men may want to express their emotional vulnerability but may be held captive to society’s ideal that men should not express sensitive emotions through crying.<sup>65</sup> This idea is seen in “Tears” by the group Force MD’s (1984) and “Cry No More” by Chris Brown (2009) where Brown sings “Who says a man is supposed to cry. Wish I could crawl under a rock somewhere and just die.”

Again, while we cannot extend what has been presented in the lyrical data, women that are romantically involved with Black men need to understand that the man in their lives may have a strong need to express emotions but may be unsure about the reaction of his partner and others around him, a need that is especially salient in a

<sup>62</sup> Majors, Richard and Janet Mancini Billson. 1993. *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

<sup>63</sup> Collins, Patricia Hill. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. New York: Routledge; Collins, Patricia Hill. 2006. “Examining Racial Identity and Masculinity as Correlates of Self-Esteem and Psychological Distress in Black Men.” *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development* 34, no. 2: 94-104.

<sup>64</sup> Harris III, Frank, Robert T. Palmer, and Laura E. Struve. 2011. “‘Cool Posing’ on Campus: A Qualitative Study of Masculinities and Gender Expression among Black Men at a Private Research Institution.” *Journal of Negro Education* 80, no. 1: 47-62.

<sup>65</sup> Connell, 2002; White and Cones, 1999.

society that says men should not be emotional. Women can actively combat this idea by assuring the man in their lives that crying is not only healthy and acceptable but that they will not think that he is less than a man if he expresses his emotions. In a community setting, the lyrics in these songs suggest that people intimately involved with Black men make it permissible for these men to express their emotions. This can be done by letting these men know that the expression of emotional vulnerability is natural for men and does not make them less of a man.

#### ***Theme 4: Public Sensitivity***

In a slight departure from what was found in Stewart's<sup>66</sup> 1975 study, the findings in our study, which were unexpected, support the idea that a Black man can be emotionally secure enough to verbally express that he does not care how people perceive him if and when he cries in public. Based on the lyrics related to this theme, Black men cry publicly when a romantic relationship ends ("I'm Gonna Cry (Cry Baby)" by Wilson Pickett, 1964; "Ohh Baby Baby" by Smokey Robinson, 1965; "Stay In My Corner" by The Dells, 1968; "Sideshow" by Blue Magic, 1974; "Done Crying" by Lyfe Jennings, 2010) when he is in love ("I'm in Love" by Wilson Pickett, 1968), and when he grieves the premature death of his peers ("So Many Tears" by Tupac Shakur, 1995, and "When Thugs Cry" by Tupac Shakur, 2001). Thus, in each of these contexts, the Black male artists demonstrate that they are not paralyzed by society's view that men should not show emotion to be considered a man.<sup>67</sup>

Interestingly, the "thug" masculinity exemplified by the openly gay Black rapper Caushun in the scholarship of Means and Cobb<sup>68</sup> was later reiterated by the late heterosexual Hip Hop artist Tupac Shakur's acknowledgement that even "thugs" cry. Thus, in the song "When Thugs Cry," Shakur bravely announces to the Black community and the world that "thugs" or Black men who are seemingly dangerous, violent, and emotionless, publicly cry. Interestingly, Lyfe Jennings and Mario, who both represent the R&B genre, extend Shakur's pain by also publicly expressing emotion and not apologizing for doing so in front of others.

In *Cry*, Lyfe Jennings proudly states, "But over the years I've learned to understand that I don't really give a damn what nobody say, I'm a man and we cry." Likewise, in "The Hardest Moment," Mario (2009) unashamedly admits, "And I'm crying baby I don't care who's watching baby." Thus, women who are in relationships with Black men who exhibit this type of masculinity may find it easier to develop intimacy with these men as they do not have to frequently urge them to express their innermost feelings. Therefore, due to the amount of support that they receive, these men may become increasingly more comfortable expressing their emotions and may be less likely than other men to feel that they can only shed tears privately.

When Black men in society publicly express sensitivity in the form of tears, they can be catalysts of healing for the Black community. The song "Cry" by Lyfe Jennings illustrates this point. The artist speaks to the healing power of tears when he sings, "See

<sup>66</sup> Stewart, 1975.

<sup>67</sup> Connell, 1992, 2005.

<sup>68</sup> Means and Cobb, 2007.

crying is like taking your soul to the Laundromat." Another song spoke to the healing power of communal crying and Black men being instrumental in this process.

In "Cry Out," 'Lil Wayne (2008) says, "I hope you ain't too tired to cry, and I hope you know that you ain't never too live to die" and then "gets a lump in his throat" when he ponders the pain experienced by inner-city Blacks related to police brutality ("The five o killed naughty good boy dead / Man you woulda thought they killed corn bread / Shot 'em up face down on the lawn / Not to mention with his handcuffs on / Not to mention they had plain clothes on"), incarceration and death ("The jail house and the morgue is too fuckin' crowded") and the unwillingness of his biological father to be a part of his life and the closeness that he establishes with his mother ("And all I no 'bout my real pops is that he had money / No bank account, that brown paper bag money / Yea he might hit me off with a little brag money / But the nigga still wouldn't be a dad for me / But look how I turned out I hope he glad for me / But that's why when I see him I act mad funny / Cause he's a joke to me / Don't message, don't call, don't talk to me / It's just me and my mama how it's supposed to be"). If more Black men in society openly express their emotions, current and future generations of Black men may understand that emotions are natural, their experiences are similar, and crying publicly does not make them less of a man.

#### Directions for Future Research

There are six ways that future scholars can build upon the findings presented in this study. For one, the four sensitivity typologies revealed in this study beg future scholars to continue to delve into the multi-contextual realities that increase the likelihood that Black male sensitivity will be expressed in private, partnered, perceptive, and public ways. Simply put, through the use of an ecological perspective, future scholars can more easily pinpoint the individual, familial, neighborhood, and societal factors that facilitate and/or discourage sensitivity in Black men in the form of tears.

Second, future scholars can examine the similarities and differences between the sensitivity expressed by Black male and Black female artists in the R&B and Hip Hop genres. Although it is commonly assumed that Black men and women in Hip Hop are at odds, or that Black women must embody a masculinized identity to successfully compete in a genre dominated and controlled by men, such an exercise would reveal the similar and divergent ways that Black male and female artists express emotional vulnerability. In short, a study such as this one would reveal the shared ways that Black men and women in society express pain, disappointment, and hurt.

Third, increasing public attention surrounding Caushun, the openly gay Black male artist who bills himself as "The Black Gay Rapper" might urge scholars to examine what if any distinctions exist regarding how emotional sensitivity is expressed within and between Black men in society who identify as heterosexual or gay. Although the lyrics in the present study primarily focused on the demise or dissolution of romantic



relationships between men and women, a growing body of scholarship has focused on the relationship between masculinity, homosexuality, and Hip Hop.<sup>69</sup>

Fourth, future scholars can specifically examine the perspectives of those who listen to the sensitivity expressions provided by Black male artists. In particular, researchers would focus on how listeners feel about that Black artist, and Black male sensitivity, more broadly. Essentially, scholars would be interested in how listeners feel about Black male artists who are known for their sensitivity, the level of respect that they have for Black artists who do and do not admit that they cry, as well as the circumstances that make it permissible for Black men in society to cry.

Fifth, future scholars can examine the extent to which Black artists in the R&B and Hip Hop genres are able to lyrically express themselves under the confines of a larger music industry. In other words, a study of this nature would be interested in whether record executives choose the sensitive songs that will be sung by their artists, whether artists make these decisions, or whether the decision of what sensitive songs are sung is a shared one by the music executives and the artist. Scholarship related to this recommendation would reveal whether Black male sensitivity is driven by the artist or the label to which they are signed. Lastly, future scholars should specifically examine how Black women in the R&B and Hip Hop genres express Black sensitivity via emotional vulnerability. Such a comparison would unearth the nuanced ways in which Black femininity is expressed within a dominant culture that limits the opportunities of Black men, discourages same-sex love between women, and encourages women to be subservient to men.

### Conclusion

As Black male artists in R&B and Hip Hop continue to reveal how they express sensitivity in private, partnered, perceptive, and public ways through song, it is imperative that the world listen. For far too long, Black men in society have been expected to adhere to norms associated with White masculinity, yet they have courageously and unapologetically expressed their most vulnerable feelings in song. In support of previous studies in which Black men create an alternate masculinity that is not constrained by white hegemonic norms,<sup>70</sup> the Black male artists in Hip Hop and R&B featured in this study revealed the complexities in which Black male artists in these music genres express sensitivity.

Although there are times when Black men may need to grieve in solitude (Private Sensitivity), they have the ability to establish intimacy through crying with others (Partnered Sensitivity), demonstrate awareness of the hurt, pain, and disappointment of those around them (Perceptive Sensitivity), and courageously and publicly show emotion in the form of tears (Public Sensitivity). Thus, the 79 songs representative of the R&B and Hip Hop genres are a solid testament to the ways that Black men singly and collectively express sensitivity over a 57-year period.

<sup>69</sup> Hill 2009; Means and Cobb 2007; Shimeles 2010.

<sup>70</sup> Chaney 2009b; Hughley 2012; Jamison, 2006; Means and Cobb 2007; White and Peretz 2010.

As Black women, we look with anticipation to the ways that Black men in these genres and others express sensitivity in the form of tears. In addition, we hope that this study will motivate future scholars to use theoretical approaches that continue to honor the lyrical talk of Black men<sup>71</sup> and results in the development of new conceptual frameworks related to the various ways that Black men demonstrate sensitivity. Given the global appeal of R&B and Hip Hop,<sup>72</sup> it is time for scholars to give attention to a side of Black men that has been ignored for far too long, namely their emotionally vulnerable and sensitive side that allows them to cry.

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<sup>71</sup> Hopkins and Moore 2006; Shamir 2002.

<sup>72</sup> Aloi 2011; Chaney 2005; George 1998; Mitchell 2001; Nichols 2006; Osumare 2001; Pough 2004; Price 2005; Ramsey 2003; Stewart 1979; Taylor and Taylor 2007; Watkins 2005.

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## Appendix A

Song Title, Singer, Year Released, Composer, and Genre

Song Title	Singer/s	Year	Composed By	Genre
"Drown in My Own Tears"	Ray Charles	1956	Henry Glover	R&B
"Lonely Tear Drops"	Jackie Wilson	1958	Tyran Carlo (the pen name of Wilson's cousin Roquel Davis) and a pre-Motown Berry Gordy	R&B
"Tears on my Pillow"	Little Anthony and The Imperials	1958	Sylvester Bradford Al Lewis	R&B
"In The Rain"	The Dramatics	1960	Tony Hester	R&B
"I Count the Tears"	Ben E. King	1960	Ben E. King	R&B
"Rainin' In My Heart"	Slim Harpo	1961	James Isaac Moore and Jerry West	R&B
"I Cried My Last Tear"	Ernie K-Doe	1961	Allen Toussaint	R&B
"Stand by Me"	Ben E. King	1961	Ben E. King, Jerry Leiber, and Mike Stoller	R&B
"A Little Bit of Soap"	The Jarmels	1961	Bert Berns	R&B
"You Don't Miss Your Water ('Til The Well Runs Dry)"	Otis Redding	1961	William Bell (Later Recorded by Otis Redding in 1965)	R&B
"Cry to Me"	Solomon Burke	1962	Bert Berns	R&B
"I Couldn't Cry If I Wanted To"	The Temptations	1962	Edward Holland, Jr. and Norman Whitfield	R&B
"My Heart Cries for You"	Ben E. King	1964	Guy Mitchell	R&B
"I'm Gonna Cry (Cry Baby)"	Wilson Pickett	1964	Wilson Pickett, Don Covoy,	R&B
"Ohh Baby Baby"	Smokey Robinson & The Miracles	1965	Smokey Robinson and fellow Miracle Pete Moore (produced by Robinson)	R&B

"The Tracks of My Tears"	Smokey Robinson & The Miracles	1965	Miracles members: <u>Smokey Robinson</u> (lead vocalist), <u>Pete Moore</u> (bass vocalist), and <u>Marv Tarplin</u> (guitarist)	R&B
"River of Tears"	Ben E. King	1965	Ben E. King	R&B
"It's The Same Old Song"	The Four Tops	1965	Brian Holland and Lamont Dozier (Holland-Dozier-Holland)	R&B
"Ain't that Peculiar"	Marvin Gaye	1965	The single was produced by <u>Smokey Robinson</u> , and written by Robinson, and fellow <u>Miracles</u> members <u>Ronald White</u> , <u>Pete Moore</u> , and <u>Marv Tarplin</u>	R&B
"It Tears Me Up"	Percy Sledge	1966	Ivy and Marlin Greene	R&B
"Standing in the Shadows of Love"	The Four Tops	1966	Brian Holland and Lamont Dozier (Holland-Dozier-Holland)	R&B
"Tears of a Clown"	Smokey Robinson & The Miracles	1967	Stevie Wonder, Hank Cosby, and Smokey Robinson	R&B
"Tears, Tears, Tears"	Ben E. King	1967	Ben E. King	R&B
"I Wish It Would Rain"	The Temptations	1967	Norman Whitfield, Barrett Strong, and Roger Penzabene	R&B
"(Loneliness Made Me Realize) It's You That I Need"	The Temptations	1967	Norman Whitfield and Edward Holland, Jr.	R&B
"Come See About Me"	Jr. Walker	1967	Brian Holland and Lamont Dozier (Holland-Dozier-	R&B



			Holland)	
"Stay In My Corner"	The Dells	1968	Bobby Miller	R&B
"I'm In Love"	Wilson Pickett	1968	Wilson Pickett	R&B
"I Heard It Through The Grapevine"	Marvin Gaye	1968	Norman Whitfield & Barrett Strong	R&B
"These Eyes"	Jr. Walker & The All Stars	1969	Harvey Fuqua	R&B
"I Can Sing a Rainbow"	The Dells	1969	Arthur Hamilton	R&B
"Honey (I Miss You)"	O.C. Smith	1969	Bobby Russell	R&B
"How I Miss You Baby"	Bobby Womack	1969	Bobby Womack and Darryl Carter	R&B
"Walk on By"	Isaac Hayes	1969	Burt Bacharach and Hal David	R&B
"What's Going On"	Marvin Gaye	1971	<u>Renaldo "Obie" Benson, Al Cleveland, and Marvin Gaye</u>	R&B
"Starting All Over Again"	Johnnie Taylor	1972	Phillip Mitchell	R&B
"Sideshow"	Blue Magic	1974	Vinnie Barrett	R&B
"Joy Inside My Tears"	Stevie Wonder	1976	Stevie Wonder	R&B
"Cry Together"	The O'Jays	1978	Kenneth Gamble, Leon Huff, and Bunny Sigler	R&B
"I Can't Live" "Without Your Love"	Teddy Pendergrass	1981	Leon Huff and Cecil Womack	R&B
"Lately"	Stevie Wonder	1981	Stevie Wonder	R&B
"A House Is Not A Home"	Luther Vandross	1981	Burt Bacharach and Hal David	R&B
"Tears"	Force MD's	1984	Doug Wimbish; Antoine Lundy; The Force M.D.'s; Robin Halpin; Keith LeBlanc	R&B
"4 The Tears In Your Eyes"	Prince	1985	Prince	R&B
"Cryin Through The Night"	Stevie Wonder	1987	Stevie Wonder	R&B

"I Need Love"	LL Cool J	1987	James Todd Smith	Hip Hop
"If It Isn't Love"	New Edition	1988	James Harris and Terry Lewis	R&B
"It Ain't Over Til It's Over"	Lenny Kravitz	1991	Lenny Kravitz	R&B
"Don't Say Goodbye"	Tevin Campbell	1993	Burt Bacharach, Sally Jo Dakota, and Narada Michael Walden	R&B
"Cry for You"	Jodeci	1993	DeVante Swing	R&B
"Lately"	Jodeci	1993	Stevie Wonder	R&B
"Me & My Bitch"	The Notorious B.I.G.	1994	The Bluez Brothers, Chucky Thompson, and Sean "Puffy" Combs	Hip Hop
"So Many Tears"	Tupac Shakur	1995	Tupac Shakur, G. Jacobs, R. Walker E. Baker, and S. Wonder	Hip Hop
"Tears"	Babyface	1997	Babyface	R&B
"What I Feel/Issues"	R. Kelly	1998	R. Kelly	R&B
"When Thugz Cry"	Tupac Shakur	2001	Johnny "J"	Hip Hop
"I Cry"	Ja Rule (featuring 'Lil Mo)	2001	'Lil Mo	Hip Hop
"This Woman's Work"	Maxwell	2001	Musze (Maxwell's publishing moniker) and Hod David	R&B
"Cry"	Michael Jackson	2001	R. Kelly	R&B
"Song Cry"	Jay-Z	2002	Shawn Carter Douglas Gibbs Randolph Johnson and Justin Smith	Hip Hop
"Burn"	Usher	2004	Usher Raymond Jermaine Dupri, and Bryan-Michael Cox	R&B
"Cry"	Lyfe Jennings	2004	Lyfe Jennings and Rhemario "Rio"	R&B

			Webber	
"Don't Want You To See Me Cry"	'Lil Wayne	2005	Gillie da Kid Drake	Hip Hop
"Down the Aisle"	LL Cool J (featuring 112)	2006	Lyfe Jennings, Trackmasters, Keezo Kane	Hip Hop
"So Sick"	Neyo	2006	Mikkel S. Eriksen, Tor Erik Hermansen, Shaffer Smith	R&B
"Cry"	LL Cool J (featuring 'Lil Mo)	2008	Atkins, Blackshere, Dombrowski, Gamble, Huff, Lorenzo, Loving, Mays, Sigler, Smith	Hip Hop
"Cry Out"	'Lil Wayne	2008	Nicolas Warwar (aka STREETRUNNER)	Hip Hop
"The Hardest Moment"	Mario	2009	Elvis Williams, Harold Lilly, & Mack Woodward	R&B
"Cry No More"	Chris Brown	2009	Chris Brown	Hip Hop/R&B
"Fistful of Tears"	Maxwell	2009	Musze (Maxwell's publishing moniker) and Hod David	R&B
"Sometimes I Cry"	Eric Benét	2010	Eric Benét and George Nash	R&B
"Done Crying"	Lyfe Jennings	2010	Lyfe Jennings, T- Minus, & Troy Taylor	R&B
"World Cry"	Lloyd (featuring R. Kelly, Keri Hilson, & K'naan) (2011)	2011	King David "The Future", Polow da Don (co.), Jason "Pooh Bear" Boyd	R&B
"Heart Attack"	Trey Songz	2012	Tremaine Neverson (Trey Songz), Richard	R&B

			Butler, Lex, Benjamin Levin	
"Stay"	Tyrese	2012	Brandon Hodge, Asaleana Elliott, Aaron Sledge, Christopher Lacy, James Smith, Tyrese Gibson	R&B
"Pray for Me"	Anthony Hamilton	2013	A. Hamilton, A. Dixon, K. Edmonds, P. Smith.	R&B
"Thinking About You"	Frank Ocean	2013	Frank Ocean	R&B

## Appendix B

Typology of Sensitivity, Description of Sensitivity, Lyrical Examples, Songs and Singers that Demonstrate the Typology of Masculinity

Typology of Sensitivity	Description of Sensitivity	Lyrical Examples	Songs and Singer/s that Demonstrate the Typology of Sensitivity
<b>Private Sensitivity</b>	A version of sensitivity in which the male is alone; feels lonely; disguises or hides his tears from his romantic partner or others; and expresses a determination to not cry and/or continue crying.	"Now there's some sad things known to man, But ain't too much sadder than The tears of a clown, when there's no one around" from the song "Tears of a Clown" by Smokey Robinson and The Miracles (1967)  "Red, red My eyes are red Crying for you Alone in my bed"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Drown in My Own Tears" by Ray Charles (1956)</li> <li>• "Lonely Tear Drops" by Jackie Wilson (1958)</li> <li>• "Tears on my Pillow" by Little Anthony and The Imperials (1958)</li> <li>• "In The Rain" by The Dramatics (1960)</li> <li>• "I Count the Tears" by Ben E. King (1960)</li> <li>• "Rainin in my Heart" by Slim Harpo (1961)</li> <li>• "I Cried my Last Tear" by Ernie K-Doe (1961)</li> </ul>

		<p>from the song "I Can Sing A Rainbow" by The Dells (1969)</p> <p>"Sometimes I cry babe When I'm all alone" from the song "Sometimes I Cry" by Eric Benét (2010)</p> <p>In too deep, can't think about giving it up But I never knew love would feel like a heart attack It's killing me, swear I never cried so much Cause I never knew love would hurt this f*ck*n' bad The worst pain that I ever had from the song "Heart Attack" by Trey Songz (2012)</p> <p>Dear God if you're listening now I need you do a thing for me. You see my baby, she done up and walked out I need you bring her back to me. I know that I was wrong, I was guilty as sin Probably not</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "A Little Bit of Soap" by The Jarmels (1961)</li> <li>• "You Don't Miss Your Water ('Til The Well Runs Dry)" by Otis Redding (1961)</li> <li>• "Cry to Me" by Solomon Burke (1962)</li> <li>• "I Couldn't Cry If I Wanted To" by The Temptations (1962)</li> <li>• "My Heart Cries For You" by Ben E. King (1964)</li> <li>• "River of Tears" by Ben E. King (1965)</li> <li>• "It's The Same Old Song" by The Four Tops (1965)</li> <li>• "It Tears Me Up" by Percy Sledge (1966)</li> <li>• "Tears of a Clown" by Smokey Robinson and The Miracles (1967)</li> <li>• "Tears, Tears, Tears" by Ben E. King</li> <li>• "Loneliness Made Me Realize It's You That I Need" by The Temptations (1967)</li> <li>• "Come See About Me" by Jr. Walker (1967)</li> <li>• "These Eyes" by Jr. Walker &amp; The All Stars (1969)</li> <li>• "I Can Sing A Rainbow" by The Dells (1969)</li> <li>• "Honey I Miss You" by O.C. Smith (1969)</li> <li>• "How I Miss You</li> </ul>
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		<p>priority But dear God if you're listening now Down here Dying Begging Crying Somebody need to pray for me from the song "Pray for Me" by Anthony Hamilton (2013)</p> <p>A tornado flew around my room before you came Excuse the mess it made, it usually doesn't rain In Southern California, much like Arizona My eyes don't shed tears, but, boy, they bawl from the song "Thinking About You" by Frank Ocean (2013)</p>	<p>Baby" by Bobby Womack (1969)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Joy Inside My Tears" by Stevie Wonder (1976)</li> <li>• "I Can't Live Without Your Love" by Teddy Pendergrass (1981)</li> <li>• "A House Is Not A Home" by Luther Vandross (1981)</li> <li>• "Tears" by Force MD's (1984)</li> <li>• "4 The Tears In Your Eyes" by Prince (1985)</li> <li>• "Cryin' Through The Night" by Stevie Wonder (1987)</li> <li>• "I Need Love" by LL Cool J (1987)</li> <li>• "If It Isn't Love" by New Edition (1988)</li> <li>• "It Ain't Over 'Til It's Over" by Lenny Kravitz (1991)</li> <li>• "Don't Say Goodbye" by Tevin Campbell (1993)</li> <li>• "Cry for You" by Jodeci (1993)</li> <li>• "Tears" by Babyface (1997)</li> <li>• "What I Feel/Issues" by R. Kelly (1998)</li> <li>• "Song Cry" by Jay-Z (2002)</li> <li>• "So Sick" by Neyo (2006)</li> <li>• "Sometimes I Cry" by Eric Benét (2010)</li> <li>• "Heart Attack" by Trey Songz (2012)</li> </ul>
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Pray for Me" by Anthony Hamilton (2013)</li> <li>• "Thinking About You" by Frank Ocean (2013)</li> </ul>
<b>Partnered Sensitivity</b>	<p>A version of sensitivity in which the Black male connects with his partner, other men, and/or members of the Black community through crying.</p>	<p>"Maybe baby you think these tears I cry are tears of joy" from the song "Ain't that Peculiar" by Marvin Gaye (1965)</p> <p>"I'm a man and we cry We can cry, we can cry, we can cry together" from the song "I Cry" by Ja Rule (featuring 'Lil Mo) (2001)</p> <p>"When we're laughing together, and we're crying together Having kids together, my life begins right now" from the song "Down the Aisle" by LL Cool J (featuring 112) (2006)</p> <p>"I hate to see the whole world cry" from the song "World Cry" by Lloyd (featuring R. Kelly, Keri Hilson, &amp; K'naan) (2011)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Ain't That Peculiar" by Marvin Gaye (1965)</li> <li>• "Standing In The Shadows of Love" by The Four Tops (1966)</li> <li>• "Starting All Over Again" by Johnnie Taylor (1972)</li> <li>• "Cry Together" By The O'Jays (1978)</li> <li>• "Don't Say Goodbye" by Tevin Campbell (1993)</li> <li>• "Me &amp; My Bitch" by The Notorious B.I.G. (1994)</li> <li>• "I Cry" by Ja Rule (featuring 'Lil Mo) (2001)</li> <li>• "Cry" by Michael Jackson (2001)</li> <li>• "Down the Aisle" by LL Cool J (featuring 112) (2006)</li> <li>• "Cry" by LL Cool J (featuring 'Lil Mo) (2006)</li> <li>• "World Cry" by Lloyd (featuring R. Kelly, Keri Hilson, &amp; K'naan) (2011)</li> </ul>

<p><b>Perceptive Sensitivity</b></p>	<p>A version of sensitivity in which the Black male acknowledge the tears shed by others, and shed tears themselves while being conscious of society's expectation that men suppress emotion and/or refrain from crying</p>	<p>"Everyone knows that a man ain't supposed to cry But listen, I got to cry, cuz crying, ooooooooh, Is the pain, oh yeah" from the song "I Wish It Would Rain" by The Temptations (1967)</p> <p>"I know a man't ain't supposed to cry but these tears I can't hold inside" from the song "I Heard It Through The Grapevine" by Marvin Gaye (1968)</p> <p>"Mother, Mother, there's too many of you crying" from the song "What's Going On" by Marvin Gaye (1971)</p> <p>"Who says a man is supposed to cry Wish I could crawl under a rock somewhere and just die" from the song "Cry No More" by Chris Brown (2009)</p> <p>Girl I wanna take the time and thank you Just for putting up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I Heard It Through The Grapevine" by Marvin Gaye (1968)</li> <li>• "Walk on By" by Isaac Hayes (1969)</li> <li>• "What's Going On" by Marvin Gaye (1971)</li> <li>• "I Can't Live Without Your Love" by Teddy Pendergrass (1981)</li> <li>• "Lately" by Stevie Wonder (1981)</li> <li>• "Lately" by Jodeci (1993)</li> <li>• "This Woman's Work" by Maxwell (2001)</li> <li>• "Burn" by Usher (2004)</li> <li>• "Don't Want You To See Me Cry" by 'Lil Wayne (2005)</li> <li>• "Cry No More" by Chris Brown (2009)</li> <li>• "Fistful of Tears" by Maxwell (2009)</li> <li>• "Stay" by Tyrese (2012)</li> </ul>
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		<p>with me                  And I'm sorry that                  you even had to                  deal with me                  Even though I                  made you cry, I                  wanna make it                  right                  Just give me some                  time to make it                  right                  I go the extra mile                  to make you smile                  and                  Just to make your                  day from the song                  "Stay" by Tyrese                  (2012)</p>	
<p><b>Public Sensitivity</b></p>	<p>A version of sensitivity in which the Black male cries publicly and verbally expresses that he does not care what others think of him.</p>	<p>"And now I can't have you, baby                  You know I'm all upset, child, oh, yeah                  And I'm gonna cry, yes, I, yes, I                  (Cry, cry baby, cry baby)"</p> <p>"I lost you what a price to pay                  I'm cryin'" from the song "Ohh Baby Baby" by Smokey Robinson (1965)                  "To the world I'd cry out loud                  How I love you" from the song "Stay In My Corner" by The Dells (1968)</p> <p>"I can shout about it, yeah</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I'm Gonna Cry (Cry Baby)" by Wilson Pickett (1964)</li> <li>• "Ohh Baby Baby" by Smokey Robinson (1965)</li> <li>• "Stay In My Corner" by The Dells (1968)</li> <li>• "I'm in Love" by Wilson Pickett (1968)</li> </ul>

		<p>(love, love, love) I can cry about it sometime (love, love, love)" from the song "I'm in Love" by Wilson Pickett (1968)</p> <p>"Hurry, hurry, step right up See the sideshow in town for only fifty cents....See the man who's been cryin' for a million years, so many tears (So many tears)" from the song "Sideshow" by Blue Magic (1974)</p> <p>"I lost so many peers, and shed so many tears" from the song "So Many Tears" by Tupac Shakur (1995)</p> <p>"Let the children hear when thugs cry" from the song "When Thugs Cry" by Tupac Shakur (2001)</p> <p>"But over the years I've learned to understand that I don't really give a damn what nobody say I'm a man and we cry" from the song "Cry" by Lyfe</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Sideshow" by Blue Magic (1974)</li> <li>• "So Many Tears" by Tupac Shakur (1995)</li> <li>• "When Thugs Cry" by Tupac Shakur (2001)</li> <li>• "Cry" by Lyfe Jennings (2004)</li> <li>• "Cry Out" by 'Lil</li> </ul>
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		<p>Jennings (2004)</p> <p>“I hope you ain’t too tired to cry” from the song “Cry Out” by ‘Lil Wayne (2008)</p> <p>“And I’m crying baby I don’t care who’s watching baby” from the song “The Hardest Moment” by Mario (2009)</p> <p>“When your best friend told me that You’re done crying (She said you’re done crying)” from the song “Done Crying” by Lyfe Jennings (2010)</p>	<p>Wayne (2008)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The Hardest Moment” by Mario (2009)</li> <li>• “Done Crying” by Lyfe Jennings (2010)</li> </ul>
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