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FANDOM, POP MUSIC AND THE REPRODUCTION OF RACE-GENDER INEQUALITIES

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FANDOM, POP MUSIC AND THE REPRODUCTION OF RACE-GENDER INEQUALITIES

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For the culture!

Abstract

In *Fandom, Pop Music and the Reproduction of Race-Gender Inequalities* I explore through Critical Discourse Analysis of contemporary entertainment media discourses and interviews with Beyoncé and Rihanna ‘stans’, juxtaposition as a racialized–gendered technique of power used by entertainment media discourses to not only dichotomize Beyoncé and Rihanna, but also reproduce upgraded controlling images of Black women in popular music. The development of the concept of juxtaposition as a critical analysis of gendering/racialization as a major technique of power in this thesis, is an important contribution for the disciplines of Cultural Studies, Postcolonial studies, and Black feminist theory. I explore how celebrity discourses (i.e., entertainment news, gossip) reposition Beyoncé and Rihanna back into service through juxtaposition and the controlling images of Black women (e.g. virgin/whore, controlling images, respectability politics, villain-seductress-perpetrator/victim-in-need-of-rescue). As part of my original contribution to Cultural Studies knowledge I argue that the ‘controlling’ function in controlling images has been deregulated through neoliberal mechanisms, such as resilience discourse (James, 2015). To develop juxtaposition as a concept, I interview Beyoncé and Rihanna fans in elicitation interviews to capture the ways in which fans interpret and reproduce these juxtaposing discourses through their fan labour practices. Juxtaposition is a technique a power that places and organises Black/Brown people (particularly women) side by side with contrasting effects. It is different from Barthes’ ‘binary oppositions’ (1992) in the sense that Barthes’ discussion lacks a focused concern with race and racism, whereas in my thesis, I account for the role of enslavement and colonial violence in the technique of juxtaposition. Juxtaposition is a mechanism of white supremacist capitalist patriarchal

violence, separation and surveillance of Black and Brown people, particularly Black and Brown women. Fundamentally, juxtaposition is the upgraded colonial structuring of 'divide and rule'; it is the neoliberal version that looks like deregulated competition and choice but it is in fact a continuation of deep inequality.

Introduction

Fandom, Pop Music and the Reproduction of Race-Gender Inequalities is an exploration into the neoliberal processes by which race-gender inequalities are reproduced within contemporary pop music culture. The research critically analyses the relationship between entertainment media discourses (online celebrity gossip, news and music media articles), Black women singers Beyoncé and Rihanna, and their fan communities the BeyHive and the Rihanna Navy. I analyse and conceptualise juxtaposition as racialized–gendered technique of power which places Black women in popular culture discourses side by side producing contrasting effects (i.e., competition), and reproducing controlling images (Collins, 2000). Black women entertainers are expected to perform the affective labour of resilience (James, 2015; Oksala, 2016; Hardt and Negri, 2004) as a spectacle (through Beyoncé and Rihanna’s celebrity mediated personas in entertainment news discourses) and juxtaposition “deploys a strategy of ‘splitting’” as it juxtaposes the good, resilient Black woman from “the abnormal”, insufficiently resilient Black women (Hall, 1997: 258). Hall (1997) argues that this “splitting” is a strategy of stereotyping which essentializes and naturalizes stereotypes; in other words, resilience discourse naturalizes misogynoir.

My research will explore the extent to which neoliberal processes within popular music culture efficiently reproduces race-gender inequalities. Popular music culture in this study is constituted by media discourses (online celebrity gossip, news and music media), fans and their favourite popular musicians. In particular, I focus on Beyoncé and Rihanna, currently two of the most commercially successful and visible (Owens,

2016) female artists, and their fan communities the ‘BeyHive’ (or ‘Hive’) and the ‘Rihanna Navy’ (or ‘Navy’). Within pop music fan culture (or ‘stan culture’ as it is colloquially known), the Hive and the Navy have had a well-documented rivalry (Owens, 2016; Katz, 2016; Grant, 2018) which places Beyoncé and Rihanna as imagined adversaries. I have chosen to focus on both Beyoncé, Rihanna and their fan communities because their manufactured juxtaposition, generated and intensified by media discourses, serves to produce archetypal stereotypes of black femininities “according to how well they adhere to race, class and sexuality norms” (Springer, 2007: 257). The broader aim of this project is to consider how neoliberal power relations and race-gender politics operate between black female popular musicians, their fans and the entertainment media discourses that surround them.

I explore how Beyoncé and Rihanna’s Black femininities are constructed through their public–private personas and cultural works, along with how popular media discourses socially construct their Black feminine conduct into controlling images. I explore media discourses and the social constructions of Beyoncé and Rihanna through Critical Discourse Analysis and examine how media discourses have recurrently juxtaposed and aligned them along the trajectories of race, class, gender and nationality, ever since Rihanna’s musical debut in 2005 (Beyoncé debuted in 1997 with girl group, Destiny’s Child and made her solo debut in 2002). The analysis will be conducted to also understand the relationship between neoliberal mechanisms (including Resilience discourse and post-feminism) and how black women are constructed in popular culture. Post-feminism in particular “has been contextualised in ways that ignore black women” (Chatman, 2015: 937) which determines that contributions to existing discussions (Springer, 2007; Joseph, 2009) of the relationship between Black

women and neoliberal mechanisms is much needed. Being a fan of Black women entertainers is also a very much under-discussed and neglected area within fan scholarship. Therefore, the intention of my research is to open up a much-needed dialogue to generate an understanding of current underlying social issues, including the processes that reproduce race-gender inequality and the ideologies which facilitate the efficient continuation of neoliberal capitalism and multi-racial white supremacist patriarchy (MRWaSP) (James, 2015; hooks, 1981). The methodology (Chapter 1) of this research will discuss the methods used to collect data through Critical Discourse Analysis and elicitation interviews with Beyoncé and Rihanna fans. The main purpose of triangulating methods is to gain insight into how fans read and interpret (via article elicitation) entertainment media discourses which juxtaposed their favourite artists, Beyoncé and Rihanna, and to explore to what extent that impacts how they practice fandom within their respective fan communities.

In Part 1, I will review the social history which underpins the juxtaposition of Black women in the generation of controlling images (archetypal stereotypes). The point is to understand that the juxtaposition of Rihanna and Beyoncé is part of a larger societal picture and structurally these techniques (i.e., white-colonial-ascribed antithetical narratives of Black womanhood to ensure the economic and ideological efficiency of the colonial project), which reproduce race-gender inequalities (hence *white supremacist patriarchy*) have had centuries to adapt. The chapter will discuss these narratives by looking at the archetypal stereotypes of Black women through time such as colonial discourses of Black women c. 1650-1838 during plantation slavery in the Caribbean and the US, discourses about and performances by Black women entertainers in the 20th century (e.g. Josephine Baker and Grace Jones) and looking

at 20th century American cinematic examples to demonstrate how these master narratives of Black women entertainment deriving from slavery-era economics and white supremacist ideology, interlinks with Beyoncé and Rihanna's career trajectories and how they are socially constructed via entertainment media discourses. During this chapter I will begin to look at juxtaposition as a technology of power that we simply understand as the strategy, 'divide and rule'. After reviewing Beyoncé and Rihanna's lives and careers, I will then turn to their juxtaposition as a technology of power, which in this research will be analysed through the Critical Discourse Analysis of entertainment media discourses.

In Part 2, I will zoom in on *The Beyoncé/Rihanna Juxtaposition* more specifically in terms of how the entertainment media discourses present their 'public private selves' (i.e., what the celebrity presents to the public of their private lives) and 'transgressive intimate selves' (i.e., an exposure of the celebrity's 'true' personality) (Marshall, 2010: 44-45). However, as Black women entertainers, Beyoncé and Rihanna's personas in entertainment media discourses have to be considered in a "crooked room" which means that the archetypal stereotypes of Black women as a group inform the way that Beyoncé and Rihanna are socially constructed and juxtaposed (Harris-Perry, 2011a: 35). In this chapter, I will also examine how neoliberal mechanisms such as the affective labour of resilience come into play when we consider how Beyoncé and Rihanna are juxtaposed. Taking the colonial origins of the virgin/whore dichotomy from the previous chapter into consideration, I will review the work of James (2015: 6) in looking at resilience discourse as the discursive element that "ties contemporary pop music aesthetics to neoliberal capitalism and racism/sexism". I will argue that the ecology of neoliberal pop music culture requires Beyoncé and Rihanna perform the

affective labour of resilience by which the virgin/whore dichotomy is recut and controlling images are upgraded to a process subjectification (rather than objectification), in order to further entrench and normalise white supremacist patriarchal misogynoir (Bailey, 2014). I will return to juxtaposition as a discursive neoliberal mechanism that has adapted from colonial economic principles in subdividing populations in order to maintain white supremacist power and its contrasting effects such as competition, in order to maintain white supremacist power of Black/brown labour.

In Part 3, I will turn to fandom and Fan Studies, to discuss the social structures of contemporary fan culture. I will discuss how entertainment industries harness fan practices and how fans perform forms of fan labour which generate surplus value for the economic and ideological profit of multiracial white supremacist patriarchy and the neoliberal capitalist ecology of pop music culture. The study of fan communities attached to Black women entertainers is an under-theorized area which I will highlight further with a review and discussion of fan studies scholarship, pleasure and whiteness within the paradigm. Here is where I will discuss how racial and representational analysis within the paradigm is seen as a 'robbing' of pleasure to white aca-fans (academic-fans) and how this is deeply problematic in the process of decolonization of a paradigm. In Chapter 4, I will conclude that conclude the thesis *Fandom, Pop Music and the Reproduction Race-Gender Inequalities* and the development of juxtaposition is a critical analysis of gendering–racialization as a major technique of power in this thesis and is an important contribution for the disciplines of Cultural Studies, Postcolonial studies, and Black feminist theory.

Research Positioning: On Becoming a Fan

I was first introduced to Destiny's Child in 1999 with the release of their sophomore album *The Writings on The Wall*. It was the first CD I had ever owned. Uniquely, each track on the album had an introduction which were fashioned on the Ten Commandments from the Bible. For example, "Thou shall not hate", "Thou shall get your party on!" and "Thou shall know when he's got to go". The introductory track "Intro (The Writings on The Wall)" was inspired by the 1996 movie *Set It Off*, starring Jada Pinkett-Smith ('Stony'), Vivica A. Fox ('Frankie'), Queen Latifah ('Cleo') and Kimberly Elise ('T.T.'). The 'Godfather scene' in *Set It Off* was a parody of *The Godfather* (1972) in which Fox impersonates Vito Corleone (Marlon Brando) by stating "We started out as gang of four we must always be four". On the track, Letoya Luckett refers the rest of Destiny's Child as "all the other Dons of the four families" (1999). The intertextuality is significant because ultimately both scenes are about the discussion and dialogue between Black women; they are about the *formation* of Black women to bring a discussion to the table - 'table talk' – to talk, plan, exchange ideas, laugh and experience joy with kin or *fictive kin* around a table (see Chapter 2). But also, it was about imagining that they were powerful together like *The Commission* as the ruling body of the Mafia – they did not have to agree all the time but this can be discussed and resolved as different units of the same body. In the late 1990s, we can also find numerous examples in Hip-Hop culture where Mafia style/ Mafia film is appropriated (e.g., The Firm rap group branding – Nas, Foxy Brown and AZ). Either way, these

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were the first Hip-Hop feminist works that I knew as a child. The Writings on the Wall's Outro is a rendition of Amazing Grace; the lyrics of a song that my Jamaican, Windrush generation, maternal grandmother has hung up and framed on her living room wall.

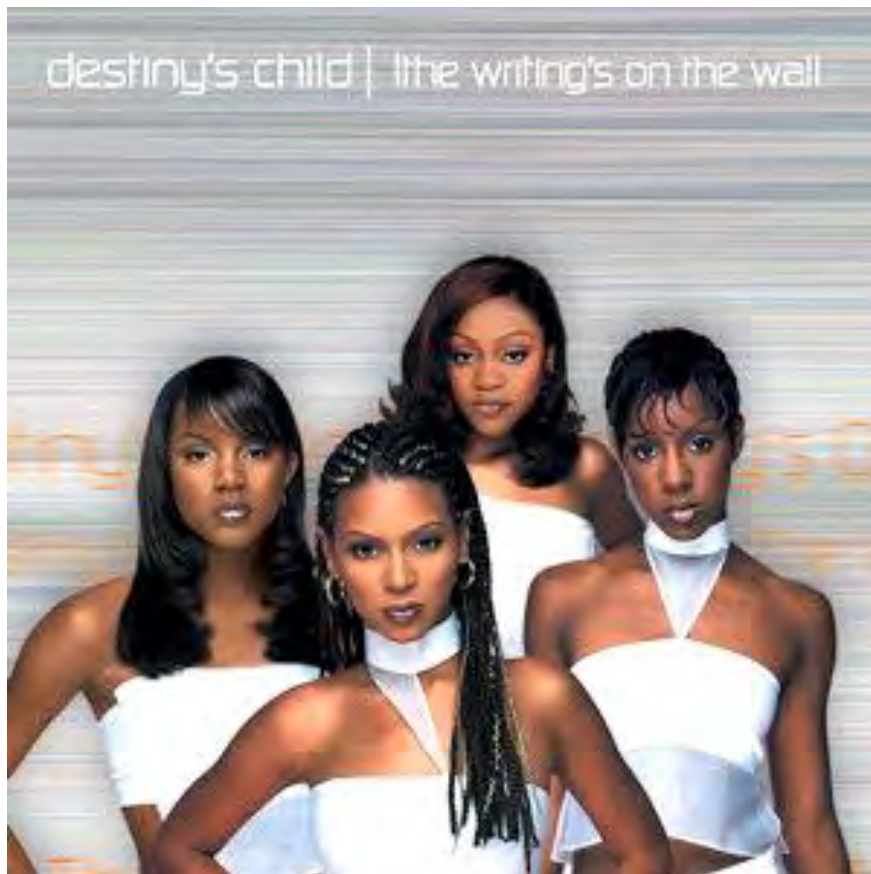


Figure 1: Destiny's Child 'The Writings on The Wall' album cover (1999)



Figure 2: *Set It Off* (Set It Off, 1996)

Epistemology for me is not how I as a Black woman look *at* and *study objectively* other Black women; that is an impossibility. The binary of objectivity/subjectivity that I have been taught in Sociology (BA and MSc) does not fit me. It is not a binary for me, it is a constant process of relation, reflexiveness and intertextuality; I am connected to each part of this research, every part of this research is connected to me, and I am in constant negotiation and communication with its themes and the people in it. Furthermore, we have learned from Lorde who observes that “much of Western European history conditions us to see human differences in simplistic opposition to each other” (1980: 114). These ‘simplistic oppositions’ are not ones I aim to endorse,

put myself into or put other Black women, like myself, into; I aim to break these binaries apart (deconstruct). If I ever do fall back into a binaries at any point, in any way, it will be because I was born in the UK and raised on the margins of it – i.e. Afro-Caribbean, woman, working class, council estate – poverty, deprivation and crime. When I was at school our friend was shot dead when she was 14-years-old down the road from my house (Carter, 2004)– and we were largely educated in portacabins because someone set fire to our school (BBC News, 2003); it will be because of the “triple-consciousness” I have had to adopt in order to survive such conditions in the UK (DuBois, 1903; Henry, 2013). I cannot talk about the economics of colonialism, slavery, indentured servitude and capitalism without talking about myself; that is how I came exist as Black-British – even Afro-Caribbean, even Afro-Bajan, even Afro- and Indo-Jamaican (directly linked to the British East India Company).

Destiny’s Child and Beyoncé were my gateway into fandom and fan culture. In 2001, I purchased the *Survivor* album and subsequently their autobiography, *Soul Survivors: The Official Autobiography of Destiny’s Child* (2002). It was the first book I remember reading front to back by myself and I carried it to primary school every day. Beyoncé went solo the same year but my fandom carried on. Destiny’s Child would not come back until 2004 with their album *Destiny Fulfilled* and a tour (2005), during which they announced their disbandment. In 2004/2005, I was spending more time on the internet and discovering how to download free content like music, films and music videos (via the illegal and now defunct, *Limewire*). During this time, I joined the online forum, the BWBoard (BeyonceWorld.net forum – now defunct). Rihanna debuted with *Pon De Replay* in the summer of 2005, that I first remember hearing as a 14-year-old on my way back from school. Later, along the BWBoard, I joined the UltimateRihanna forums

(Rihanna Daily) where I started to interact with Rihanna fans a lot more. Back then (2006-2009) Beyoncé and Rihanna's online fan bases existed but did not have 'official' self-referential nicknames until 2011- 12 (BeyHive) and 2009-10, respectively, along with the growing popularity of social media (i.e. Twitter, including the popularization of hashtags - #RihannaNavy).

Origin of the Beyoncé/Rihanna Juxtaposition in Entertainment

News Media Discourses

In 2005, excitement surrounded Jay-Z's presidential takeover of Def Jam Records (2005-2007) during which he had signed Rihanna, Tierra Mari and NeYo in his first year at the label. Jonathan Hay, Rihanna's first publicist while at Def Jam, was approached by Vada Nobles (co-producer of Rihanna's debut single 'Pon De Replay') to promote Rihanna with her debut single. Hay giving an interview with *HipHopDx.com* (Carter, 2015), said that while Rihanna was still an unknown artist back in late 2004, Nobles referred to Rihanna as a "16-year-old from Barbados that looked like Beyoncé" and notes that in Rihanna's first promotional photographs "someone intentionally made her resemble Beyoncé a little bit". Subsequently in order to promote Rihanna, Hay pitched a false rumour to the press; that a 36-year-old Jay-Z was having an affair with 17-year-old Rihanna which was unbeknownst to Beyoncé (Jay-Z's girlfriend at the time). In 2015, Hay confessed that he came up with the rumour when he was "smoking pot [...] It was like a total Seth Rogan scene out of a movie" and that "...back then I'm sure I didn't think about a contingency plan. My main focus during that time was trying to find my birth parents." Hay has since apologized; first to Jay-Z, then to

Beyoncé. Although Hay is an individual and I do not wish individualise and reduce White Supremacist Patriarchy, I must look at this through the lens of “a political world that we all frame ourselves in relationship to” (hooks, 2005: 7). What Hay’s story demonstrates more than anything is white cis het male misogynoir and the disposability of Black women and their relationships; it is Black dehumanisation (as in extracting our image) packaged and published, such as Hay’s press release (2005) igniting the Rihanna/Jay-Z affair rumour at the profit (for the entertainment industry) without consent or the consent of a teenage girl (Rihanna was 17-years-old). White Supremacist Patriarchy’s justifications for violence rely on creating a monolithic image of the people it is exacting violence upon (archetypal stereotype) and that image is generated through juxtaposition (Part 2); this is how Hay operated in his decision because it was profitable, despite Rihanna being 17-years-old and Jay-Z being 18 years older.

The repercussions of Hay’s action would affect the Beyoncé and Rihanna fan relationship indefinitely. Hay (2015) states that:

“In 2005 the rumor was just a pitch and a rumor to try and get people talking about Rihanna. It was never intended to be a big ordeal, it was just intended to get people asking, “Who’s Rihanna?” [...] I didn’t think that far ahead. I wanted a hit record. I went all out by any means necessary — not by some means but any means“.

Subsequently, the rumour spread across entertainment news media outlets. I remember being at my Grandparents’ house one Sunday; my Grandad always bought the Sunday newspapers in the morning. On a Sunday, my family and I would watch television and each have our turn at reading the newspapers and accompanying TV guides. One of these newspapers that my Grandad frequently bought was the *News*

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of *The World* on Sunday. I went to my Grandparents' house on Sunday 11th February 2007 and read the *News of the World* like everyone else. As a practice of my fandom offline, I would collect anything to do with Beyoncé and/or Rihanna, including news items about them and celebrity gossip magazines aimed at teenage girls such as *Sneak* (2002-2006). That Sunday I read the headline "Bey with me not Rhi, Jay" written by Rav Singh, the *News of the World's* showbiz columnist at the time (Singh, 2007).



Figure 3: 'Bey With Me Not Rhi, Jay', *News of The World* (Singh, 2007). Original cut-out from newspaper.

As pictured, a 17-year-old Rihanna is central to the story. The image is taken from Rihanna's sophomore album promotional shoot; *A Girl Like Me* (2006). Hay's

as it was not officially founded until the year after, 2011. According to statistics, in the first quarter of 2010 Twitter had 30 million active users and by 2011 that figure more than doubled to 68 million active users, and as of 2020 that number is 356 million (Iqbal, 2021). Here on Twitter in 2010, I am comparing the years of career length and saying that five years is better than (>) thirteen years. Career length is quantifiable and I am going to argue that in a neoliberal culture such as pop music fandom, any quantifiable feature of said culture will be utilized in competitive circumstances; “Biopolitics grabs hold of “life” by modelling it statistically and “effect[ing] distributions around the norm”” (James, 2015: 8-10; Foucault, 1978: 144). My post is based on how quickly Rihanna and Beyoncé have achieved their success. I have juxtaposed and placed them both competition as a practice of my fandom, to say one is better than the other on the basis of time-span but also how hard Rihanna and Beyoncé have worked (to which I am saying that Rihanna has worked harder than Beyoncé because it has taken her a shorter amount of time to achieve success). Moreover, Rihanna and Beyoncé are quantified as brands and as a consumable product; they too are crunched into numbers and modelled statistically – e.g., record sales, certifications (RIAA), streaming numbers (Spotify), charts (Billboard Hot 100), number of accolades (Grammys) and music video views (YouTube/Vevo). However, as the fan (i.e., consumer) in this scenario I am also propagating my practice to other fans to show that I *am* a fan and part of the fan base. This propagation is also a way of showing and *performing* my love for Rihanna (i.e., Lovebor – Stanfill, 2019). As I am propagating, I am internalizing the deregulatory conditions of Twitter (the space) because I am using it to propagate - it is the *ideal* platform (deregulated - individual choice and freedom) for such a practice. I only made a Twitter account in 2009 because another Rihanna fan encouraged me to do so (propagation) and that is where fans started to migrate in

order interact daily (also propagation); it is one of the ways the 'norm' is maintained (i.e., homeostasis), internalized and reinforced. Propagation is text/discourse travelling with different trajectories (e.g., Promotional Labour – Stanfill, 2019).

Stan Life

Within my own experience of becoming a fan, the trajectory of discourse can shape social relations and structures. Entering the lexicon of digital fan culture in mid-late 2000s, I started using 'stan' during Rihanna's *Good Girl Gone Bad* album era (2007-2008) on Rihanna Daily Forums. 'Stan' stood for the portmanteau of 'stalker fan'. However, 'stan' was borrowed from Stanley Matthews, a fictional obsessive Eminem fan created by the rapper, Eminem (Mathers, 2000). The name Stanley is shortened to Stan which travels to mean 'stalker fan' in the portmanteau 'stan'; the verb (to stan) and the noun (I am a stan) (Oxford Languages, 2021). 'Stanning' also became an additional verb added to the lexicon of popular culture. However, 'stan' also became a way to confer and classify status within fan communities. To be a stan was to be distinct from a fan, to be more than a fan and to 'go harder' – *work harder* within the forms of fan labour – and to "assert their distinctive character and affirm that they are not anonymous members of an undifferentiated mass" (Buchanan, 2015; Thornton, 2005: 185).

When we began to migrate to Twitter, celebrities started using the platform themselves; Rihanna being one of the first to do so in October 2010 (she was just about to release her 5th album, *LOUD*). As this happened and as celebrities became easier to interact with directly, our fandom became instantly available and visible to

“the eyes of the relevant beholder”, that being Rihanna and the stans in proximity to her (who she has interacted with, followed, tweet, retweeted etc.) (Thornton, 1995: 11). By this time, the self-referential nicknames of fan bases had been set: I was a part of the Rihanna Navy. The name derived from the Rihanna song ‘G4L’, on her album *Rated R* (2009); the specific lyrics that the fan base name came from were, “we’re an army, better yet a navy, better yet crazy, guns in the air” (Fauntleroy, 2009). Day in, day out, ‘like we were getting paid for it’ (Stan Wars, 2021), we would be on Twitter requesting Rihanna’s songs on US radio stations, in which we would use a radio request site called *Yes.com* (now defunct); we would start Trending Topics on Twitter such as ‘#HappyBirthdayRihanna’; promote her music by posting iTunes links and encouraging people to buy Rihanna’s music and we did the same for music videos also to boost Rihanna’s YouTube/Vevo views (part of our efangelism). Rihanna first tweeted me on 8th February 2011, followed me in March and tweeted me twice more in the following 6 months. By that August (2011) I met her for the first time at Reb’L Fleur perfume launch in London. This was also the first day that I met other Rihanna stans who I had been talking to on forums and Twitter for years. Stanning would then take on a different form as Rihanna began to tour the country and do events here more often as she began to become more popular with hits such *S&M* (2011) and *We Found Love* (2011). Stan Life, as we called it, meant that we would wait outside of hotels and events to get glimpsed of or a wave from Rihanna; and/or maybe an autograph, a selfie or if we were lucky we would get to talk to her. Any interaction would have done because we collectively loved her and that was the *intentionality*, to love and be a fan of someone or something is the *intentionality*, meaning that love is to *stretch out* towards that someone or something (Bourdieu, 1991). I would meet Rihanna a few

more times over the years as a result of these activities; I had been a *hard-working* Rihanna stan (i.e., love(bor), promotional and content labour).

Taking the above example of my tweet into consideration I also participated in Stan Wars as a part of my fandom in defence and advocacy of Rihanna. In 2016 when Rihanna released *ANTI* and Beyoncé released *Lemonade* there began to be a cultural shift in stan culture; here we had Beyoncé and Rihanna, two of the most successful Black women entertainers of all time and we, as fans were at war trying to play a game of one-upmanship on their behalf using album sales (e.g., 460 – a weaponised claim from the Hive that Rihanna had only sold 460 copies of *ANTI* in the first week in the USA). The stan war was so intense that Rihanna herself had to intervene. What sparked into this PhD journey into motion was an Instagram post by a Rihanna stan in 2016. It was a picture of Rihanna in the crowd at Barbados' annual Crop Over carnival with the word 'SHOOK' in the middle in bold capital letters. Rihanna 'liked' this meme on Instagram without reading the caption. The post came after the 2017 Grammy nominations were announced, where Rihanna had gained eight nominations and Beyoncé had nine nominations.



♥ badgalriri and 563 others

██████████ Congrats and all to @badgalriri and all for her 8 Grammy nods but tbh fuck them because they snubbed her for Song of the Year and Album of the Year. Like how my nigga!? I think they didn't want her tied or passing someone else *cough cough* 🍋 . Cause if they wouldn't have played her she would have been in the lead with most Grammy nods. Fuck u Grammys, ANTI did amazing things this year and y'all played her. I think y'all shook!

Figure 5: Instagram post by a stan in the Rihanna Navy (Instagram, 2016)

The caption written by a Rihanna stan congratulates Rihanna on her Grammy nominations but the caption also includes a jibe at the Grammy academy and Beyoncé. In the above image, the stan says “I think they didn’t want her tied or passing someone else *cough cough*” and you can see a lemon emoji pictured which symbolises Beyoncé and her album *Lemonade*. The Rihanna stan feels that Rihanna was snubbed in juxtaposition with Beyoncé having more nominations and there is an accusation towards the Grammy academy for showing preference to Beyoncé. Rihanna (@badgalriri), realising what the caption had read replies:



Figure 6: Rihanna posts a comment under the Rihanna stan's post (Figure 5) (Instagram, 2016).

Entertainment news media discourses began to construct the narrative that Rihanna liking the post was Rihanna disrespecting Beyoncé (Clevver News, 2016). However, Rihanna says here that she did not realise the nature of the caption until she saw it “pop up over and over” (i.e., seeing it via entertainment news and social media discourses), going onto say “I wish y’all would drop *this topic!* And see things from the *bigger picture!* We don’t need to be putting black women against each other! We deserved to be celebrated, and the Grammy Academy agrees!” The phrase that struck me was “see things from the bigger picture” because what is the bigger picture and why were Black women always pit against each other? This question was the initial research question. The research will explore this bigger picture in more depth, including the way that the Beyoncé/Rihanna juxtaposition is connected to colonial archetypal stereotypes socially constructed of Black womanhood.

Prizefighting

At this point, I want to draw on Wanzo's (2015) discussion of Gerald Early's ([1989] 2012) work on being a fan of boxing as a Black aca-fan (an academic who identifies as a fan). He recounts his discomfort in attending and watching prize fights, questioning why he goes to these fights and why the fighters fight in the first place, especially when both fighters were Black. As Wanzo describes in this discussion, Early "sees boxing as an allegory of black life [...] Boxing is an allegory about the injuriousness of life: it injures the performers, and the culture injures the spectators most implicated in the performance" (2015: 4.5). The allegory is also relevant to my own fandom in the Rihanna Navy, in that participating in online pop music fan culture over the years (via online forums and Twitter), I have witnessed and taken part in 'stan wars' (i.e. social media fighting between fan bases) with the BeyHive—as Jenkins states, fans are "important theorists of their own practices" (2006b: 61-62). Much like Early's nuanced account of his participation in boxing culture, my positioning as an aca-fan is made more complex by my race and gender, in that I gradually recognised that these 'stan wars' injured Beyoncé and Rihanna as Black women, and injured myself and other Black female spectators because as a participant in "the culture" we are the "spectators most implicated". Even though I used to predominantly practice fandom in support of Rihanna; I have also in my girlhood identified and practiced fandom of Beyoncé through "fictive kinship" (Harris-Perry, 2011: 102). In this sense, I have embodied insight in which my identity as a Black woman aca-fan of Black women in pop music is "haunted by spectres of stereotypical, grotesque representations and

performances” (Wanzo, 2015: 4.6; hooks, 1992). It is because I am haunted by these spectres in entertainment media discourses that analyse here with I aim the aim to deconstruct the techniques that structure juxtaposition as a master discourse governing representation of Beyoncé and Rihanna.

Chapter 1: Methodology

Methodology Introduction

Fandom, Pop Music, and the Reproduction of Race-Gender Inequalities is a research study that combines Critical Discourse Analysis of entertainment media discourses (cultural analysis) surrounding Beyoncé and Rihanna, with qualitative interviews conducted with Beyoncé and Rihanna fans (experiential analysis). The aim of *Fandom, Pop Music, and the Reproduction of Race-Gender Inequalities* is to analyse the techniques of power which reproduce cultural archetypal stereotypes of Black women entertainers in pop music culture. Pop music culture consists of the social and power relations between the artist, the music industry, entertainment news discourses (online – entertainment news, celebrity gossip sites, music reviews, and offline – newspapers, magazines including celebrity gossip columns), and the fan communities of Black women entertainers (i.e., the Rihanna Navy and the Beyhive) as readers and participants in the culture. I aim to focus my analysis on Black women entertainers Beyoncé and Rihanna specifically in order to carry out a comparative analysis on how the above techniques of power are connected to British and American colonial-era techniques and discourses used in the US, the UK and the Caribbean in order to

generate archetypal stereotypes of Black women. Specifically, Beyoncé is an African-American woman and Rihanna is a Barbadian woman which also will guide this analysis.

In the first part of the research, Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995) will be used to analyse a range of online articles (i.e., online celebrity/gossip/entertainment, news, music sources) gathered from a combination of news archives such as Lexis Nexis and Google archives. The aim of collecting these articles will be to extract through coding in NVivo, the implicit ideological patterns of how race-gender politics intersects with neoliberal power relations within pop music culture (Fairclough, 1992: 9). This method is focused on how media discourses have constructed, aligned and juxtaposed Beyoncé and Rihanna since the year 2005. In total I collected and analysed 117 articles from the year that Rihanna had made her musical debut in 2005. Through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), I will analyse the visual semiosis (semiotics) of these articles, including images (Wang, 2014; van Leeuwen, 2001). According to Fairclough (1992: 9), in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) the 'critical' "implies showing connections and causes that are hidden". This means that practitioners of CDA decode underlying ideology through discursive patterns. Ideological apparatuses are hidden-in-plain-sight through entertainment news. That includes misogynoiristic colonial ideologies about Black women and the discursive patterns that are continuously adapted to the socioeconomic environment; this is to say 'the more things change, the more they stay the same', maintaining the status quo of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. Specifically, in this research, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is integral in capturing how race-gender archetypal stereotypes are reproduced through language, images and the power relations at play

within them. In the context of this research, CDA is used to uncover the structure and organization of discourse (juxtaposition), the ideologies (i.e., white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, MRWaSP/neoliberalism, colonialism), and therefore, the power relations that are narrated and socially constructed through entertainment media discourses.

Self-analysis and the analysis of the ideological production inherent in one's own logic in research is important. Reflexivity and the capacity for self-reflection is paramount in social and cultural research; even more so with regards to the highly relative and constantly changing discourses, slippery social constructs and social contradictions inscribed in the media texts under study. Therefore, in my methodological process, I have reflected and will continue to reflect on my own research positioning (as a Black aca-fan), contextualising how I came to the point of proposing the research study of Fandom, Pop Music, and the Reproduction of Race-Gender Inequalities. Reflexivity is like a mirror. In my epistemological contribution to the field Cultural Studies, I intend to take 'self-subversion' further when it comes to my own developing of an anti-colonial perspective and the continued decolonisation of my own mind in the discussion of Black women in pop music culture, neoliberal capitalism and the reproduction of social constructs (Hirschman, 1995: 59).

The next part of this Methodology chapter will discuss the CDA research design. My analysis of entertainment media discourses will be approached through both macroanalysis and microanalysis, or as Meyer describes a "constant movement back and forth between theory and data" (2001: 27). I see this way of analysis as more of a constantly moving pendulum, swinging backward and forwards from the semiotic

microanalysis of image, language and narrative, to the macroanalysis of social structures, ideologies and power relations “that these texts index and construct” (Luke, 2002: 100). The empirical foundation of the Critical Discourse Analysis methodology will encompass the visual semiotic analysis of entertainment picture news. I am not just analysing language but the entire page; the language, the images, widgets (e.g., interactive polls) and relational reading in what meanings, values and attitudes they convey together (Wang, 2014; Kress and van Leeuwen, 1992). The objective of my research is to decode white supremacist patriarchal ideology and identify (neo)colonial techniques of power which juxtapose Beyoncé and Rihanna in entertainment news discourses. Further to this, I conduct interviews with members of Beyoncé and Rihanna’s fan communities. This is where I explore how entertainment news discourses which juxtapose Beyoncé and Rihanna effect fans as readers. In the interviews I conduct, I incorporate article elicitation during the interview where I will place an entertainment news article from my sample for the fan to read and interpret. One of the objectives of this research is to explore how fans as readers are affected by Beyoncé and Rihanna’s juxtaposition in entertainment news discourse; in what ways do these ideologies and techniques of power effect the fan’s ways of practicing their fandom and participation in pop music culture.

Data Collection Methods: Critical Discourse Analysis

This research combines Critical Discourse Analysis of online media discourse (cultural analysis) surrounding Beyoncé and Rihanna, with qualitative interviews conducted with Beyoncé and Rihanna fans (experiential analysis). In the first part of the research,

Critical Discourse Analysis was used to analyse a range of online articles (i.e., online celebrity/gossip/entertainment, news media) gathered from a combination of news archives such as Lexis Nexis Library and Google archives. From my experience of online fandom, there were articles that were familiar already such as discourses that had circulated on Twitter and discussed between fans, so these articles became important in my search and selection criteria for articles (i.e., *Social Circle: Is Rihanna Worthy Of Becoming Beyoncé's Future Successor?* – Vibe, 2011). In the selection criteria, articles should have a significant amount of Beyoncé and Rihanna's coverage (% in Lexis Nexis); the data should represent some relationship between Beyoncé and Rihanna for example, if they have a connecting social relationship which between Beyoncé and Rihanna (e.g., "Beyoncé vs. Rihanna: Which Star is The Biggest?", Deino, 2016a); How are they aligned (juxtaposed)? What are social relations that are being constructed in the discourse? The entertainment news articles should be from Anglophone countries (i.e., USA, UK, Ireland, Australia) and entertainment news with pictures are preferred which will allow for visual analysis; different entertainment news reports on the same event regarding Rihanna and Beyoncé will be taken into account as there will be potential that this reveals ideologies and relationships which may have been hidden on the surface. The aim of collecting entertainment news articles is to extract through coding in NVivo, the implicit ideological patterns of how race-gender politics intersects with neoliberal power relations within pop music culture (Fairclough, 1992: 9). The main focus here is how media discourses have constructed, aligned and juxtaposed Beyoncé and Rihanna since the year 2005.

The use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is integral in capturing how race-gender archetypal stereotypes are reproduced through language and the power relations at

play within that language. The “critical” in CDA “implies showing connections and causes that are hidden”; the connections and causes that are hidden are the social structures, constructions and social relations that are reproduced through discourse (Fairclough, 1992: 9; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). In the context of this research, CDA is about uncovering how the structure and organization of discourse (juxtaposition), the ideologies (white supremacist capitalist patriarchy/ MRWaSP/ neoliberalism/ colonialism), and therefore the power relations that are narrated and socially constructed through discourse. The focus for this research is on the technique of power embedded within the discourse: juxtaposition with contrasting effects such as competition. Foucault similarly states of competition as an organizing principle (of discourse) that:

“We can only analyze it by taking the real historical systems within which these formal economic processes function and are formed and conditioned. [...] Economics analyzes the formal processes and history will analyze the systems in which the operation of these formal processes is either possible or impossible” (Foucault, 2008: 120-121)

Colonialism and the archetypal stereotypes that were created of the colonised people are “real historical” social systems that these “economic processes function... are formed and conditioned”. The processes (juxtaposition) are made possible through socially constructed images and discourses of Black women to maintain monopoly on their labour, and to justify white supremacist abuse and exploitation. The juxtaposition

and narratives created by these ideologies are therefore the discursive patterns I am looking for when interpreting text. While CDA focusses on the discursive narratives, analysing entertainment news articles that include images and interactive polls (widgets) brings the need to analyse the relationality between the discursive and the images which go with it. The images in entertainment news are an integral part of the text and convey meanings in relation to the text. Therefore, the empirical framework for this study encompasses social and visual semiotics in which I look at discursive narrative and visual intertextuality of entertainment news articles (Fairclough, 1995; Wang, 2014). Fairclough's framework of Critical Discourse Analysis which takes into account the text (i.e., the vocabulary and structure of the text), the discursive practice (i.e., the production, distribution and consumption) and the sociocultural practice (i.e., power relations and social constructs) (1992: 73). This three-dimensional method will allow the analysis to convey the interconnectedness between neoliberal race-gender politics and how Rihanna and Beyoncé are constructed and positioned within media discourses. According to Fairclough's theoretical framework, Critical Discourse Analysis encompasses "visual grammars" (VGs) in which the researcher deconstructs the visual elements of an article. Here, the researcher looks at what each element means for the other visual elements; what meanings, values and attitudes do these elements convey together.

Kress and van Leeuwen (1992) discuss the structures of visual representation (visual grammars) using the example of a chapter on Aboriginal people from the Australian primary social studies textbook *Our Society and Others* (Oakley et al, 1985). The chapter includes various images of Aboriginal people but the point is that the text and the image are in relation to one another. Kress and van Leeuwen (1992: 92), suggest

that Aborigines are at “considerable distance from the viewer” which “make them seem remote” and there is minimal eye-contact with viewer because they are at a distance which means the connection with the viewer is diminished. There is one picture in the chapter that is different from the others; it is a photograph of an Aboriginal poet called Oodgeroo Noonuccal (1920-1993) who was the first Aboriginal Australian to publish a book of verse. The picture is a close-up of Oodgeroo where she is smiling and giving direct eye-contact to the reader; it feels like she is *one of us, like us and close to us*. Accompanying her image is a quotation (text) from one of her poems *The Dawn is at Hand* (1966) – “Dark and white upon common ground/In club and office and social round/ Yours the feel of a friendly land/the grip of the hand” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1992: 93). The text and the accompanying image work together to produce meanings and values “reassuring white readers” as the poem is about Aboriginal inclusivity and equality in Australia with white Australians in a “friendly” way (i.e., non-threatening to the status-quo of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy). She reassures white readers that Aboriginal people are “friendly” and accommodating through text and image but she is socially constructed this way by the white Australian encoders of the textbook (Hall, 1973). In the same chapter, there is a contrasting image which shows Aborigines where “we look at them ‘from the sidelines’” rather than being close to them. With the image at an oblique angle, if they are making eye-contact, you would not recognise this at such a distance. Kress and van Leeuwen (1992: 93), conclude that these juxtaposing images have racist attitudes encoded in them because the white reader is invited to dehumanise Aborigines at a distance, and juxtaposed this, humanise the Aborigines they find non-threatening to the social status-quo and are most *like them*; both instances play a part in the visual, discursive and colonial (social) constructions of Aborigines in Australia. It is this contrast that I am interested in, the technique of

power and structuring (not to seem structured); the juxtaposition embedded in the visual semiosis of the article encompassing text and image.

Similarly to Van Dijk (1991) who analyses racism in the press, the aim is to analyse the news media in the depiction of Black women in entertainment how their personas are instrumentalized and juxtaposed (Van Dijk, 1991; Neuendorf, 2002: 6). Van Dijk (1991: 176) takes a look at racism and xenophobia in the British press (e.g., the *Telegraph*, the *Daily Mail*) where we see racism written through implicit semantic strategies and structures to reproduce racial archetypal stereotypes from British and European colonial ideologies about Black people in the UK. According to Van Dijk (1991: 180-81), the most powerful “instruments in the critical study of discourse is the systematic analysis of implicitness”. Here is one such example that Van Dijk (1991: 197) uses from the *Sun* and the *Telegraph* reporting on the Handsworth Riots (Birmingham, UK, 1985):

“BLACKS ‘ENVY RICH ASIANS’. West Indian jealousy of Asian immigrants’ success could have sparked the Birmingham riots, a Tory MP claimed yesterday ... Mr Stanbrook said: ‘Indians and Asians have adapted better than West Indians. Many of them work very hard. (Sun, 11 September)”

Van Dijk shows through these examples, the implicit semantics of comparison, contrast and division in the British press. The first headline “BLACKS ENVY RICH ASIANS” implies that this is what “sparked” the Handsworth Riots. The rhetoric here is used to create “the illusion of ethnic rivalry – a well-known divide and conquer strategy” with the Black community of Handsworth, Birmingham, being constructed as ‘jealous’ of the “success”. The author using a statement from right-wing Tory MP, Ivor

Stanbrook, attributes Indians and Asians' "success" to 'adaptation' and 'hard work'. The implicit contrasting effect here is generated by the comparative phrase "better than"; a hierarchy is then created between Asians and Black Caribbean people. This hierarchy is conditional upon adaption to 'Britishness' and *hard work*; conditional upon both labours, conduct and ethic. The implication is that "West Indians" are lazy and therefore, have not adapted to 'Britishness'. "West Indians" are othered as the bad race and dehumanised. Gilroy (1987: 327) notes that during and after the Handsworth uprising "spontaneous feelings of joy [were noted] as further evidence of the inhuman, alien behaviour of Afro-Caribbean people" by *The Sun*. Similarly, Van Dijk critically analyses a softer, more implicit comparison:

"(Rastas are involved in the riots in Handsworth) In countries like Trinidad and Barbados, cults like Rastafarianism are roundly condemned by the Press, politicians and church leaders. There are far fewer Rastafarian 'dreads' in Trinidad or Barbados, than in Brixton or Liverpool. (*Telegraph*, 12 September)"
(Van Dijk, 1991: 196)

Here in the *Telegraph* (1985), we have a similar technique of juxtaposition with "In countries like Trinidad and Barbados, cults like Rastafarianism are roundly condemned". The use of "cults" again demonstrates the "alien behaviour of Afro-Caribbean people" that are implicated as 'uncivilised' *unlike* their 'civilised' and 'adaptable' counter-parts; the church (Christianity), politicians (the elite) and the press (protecting and promoting elite interests) (Gilroy, 1987: 327). There is another comparison made on the basis of hairstyle (and implicitly, texture) which does more of the same in that the Rastas are condemned even by their *own people*. This discourse as Van Dijk (1981: 196) notes, "again implies that making negative remarks about

Rastas is not a question of white racism but based on an objective evaluation of their activities". Another part these implicit semantic structures that Van Dijk (1991) crucially points out is how comparative structures utilize the irrelevancy of topics being juxtaposed. Functional irrelevance describes how news stories give 'irrelevant' detail that are only relevant to the 'bad' person(s) while generating a good/bad narrative. The relational narrative (e.g., this 'bad' person(s) should be more like this 'good' person(s)) is implied and their positions presupposed because there are societal and cultural preconditions to those positions in the narrative. Van Dijk (1991: 186) uses this example from the *Mail* (1985): "(Rastafarians patrolling Handsworth) The man behind the deal appeared to be a 31-year-old unemployed Rastafarian. (Mail, 12 September)". The 'irrelevant' information here is that the Rastafarian is "unemployed" but it is relevant when we consider that this is the white author's racist stereotypical view of young Black Caribbean men in the UK. We also see this "unemployment" implicitly used as a cause of the Handsworth uprising. This 'irrelevancy' becomes more relevant when we consider the colonial history of Britain in the Caribbean and their stereotypes of Black Caribbean colonial *subjects* as 'lazy' (Hernandez-Ramdwar, 2005: 81). It is in this way as demonstrated by Van Dijk (1991), I will fulfil the objective to identify the techniques of power that reproduce societal race-gender archetypal stereotypes when, for instance, Beyoncé and Rihanna are juxtaposed in entertainment news discourse.

NVivo and Coding

In my analysis of entertainment news articles, I use NVivo for the Critical Discourse Analysis of 117 articles. The types of articles analysed via coding and annotation were celebrity, gossip and music media news articles for which Thematic Coding was used to identify ideological patterns and trace the race-gender politics at play between the articles in the way that they socially construct, align and juxtapose Beyoncé and Rihanna. In this process of coding, it was important that I was familiar with the entire data set by reading through entertainment news articles to gain first impressions and make initial annotations (Braun and Clark, 2006). Secondly, I generated my initial codes in relation to the theoretical concepts in the Literature Review (Chapter 2). Open coding in NVivo allows for flexibility when getting a feel of the data set, developing and refining codes. I organised these refined codes into both semantic and latent themes because both processing helped with answering the research question. As demonstrated through Van Dijk (1991), and Kress and van Leeuwen's (1992) examples, I critically analysed the visual semiosis of each article, coding passages of text and image in relation to one another. The ordering of my annotations followed the methodological framework provided by Fairclough (1992: 73) which analytically considers the text (i.e., the vocabulary and structure of the text), the discursive practice (i.e., the production, distribution and consumption) and the sociocultural practice (i.e., power relations and social constructs) within each entertainment news media article under study.

Limitations of Critical Discourse Analysis

There are limitations to Critical Discourse Analysis which I address through my practices as a researcher, such as triangulation. The reason I wanted to use multiple methods of knowing is that Critical Discourse Analysis can encourage deterministic interpretations of discourse although it is grounded in social theory and the analysis of power relations. Although criticisms of CDA claim that readers and analysts have a “particular disposition” and “in so doing, plays its part in the production of a certain kind of subjectivity”, you can argue that no form of empirical research is independent of the researchers own subjectivity. There is no solely “raw” data that can be developed into theory as even the approach to collecting such data is influenced by one’s subjectivity; your epistemology is *your way of knowing* (Breeze, 2011: 508; Archer, in Cruickshank, 2010). However, reading entertainment news media discourses as a researcher *and* as someone who has participated to the fan cultures under study, I have to consider gathering evidence that is set apart from my own interpretation of such discourse because being a part of a fan base, a community within society, it is important for me to have other Beyoncé and Rihanna fan interpretations of the discourse itself. As introduced at the top of the Methodology chapter, reflexivity is a process of ‘self-subversion’ which seeks to show “that a tendency or line of causation [that a scholar considers] ... needs to be substantially reconsidered and qualified by attention to the opposite line, in the light of subsequent events or findings” (Hirschman, 1995: 90). In other words, what is methodologically required to tackle determinism in the Critical Discourse Analysis of the role that entertainment news media discourses play in the reproduction of race-gender archetypal stereotypes of Black women, is to ask other people (apart from myself) who

participate in the culture; the fans. The fans act as a mirror of consumption but also as a countermeasure to *my own* consumption; where they exert “a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy” as an aca-fan (Sandvoss, 2005; Foucault, 1984: 4).

Fan Interviews and Elicitation

One of the objectives of this research is to explore the implications of these techniques of power for Black women entertainers and their fan communities by analysing Rihanna and Beyoncé’s engagement or responses to dominant representations and voices from within their respective fan communities, namely the Rihanna Navy and Beyhive. Therefore, I conducted elicitation interviews face-to-face and on the application, Zoom with Beyoncé and Rihanna fans to obtain their view of the entertainment news media discourses under study, and gain insight into their own fan experiences and practices. In order to do this, I asked participants to read one article (analysed in the first part of the research) prior to the interview and also provided a printed copy/ link of the article during the interview for the participant to refer to as I asked questions about what they saw. To incorporate the interpretation of the entertainment news media discourse into the second phase of the research, there was a participatory element in article elicitation which included (like the practices of fandom), reading and consuming entertainment media news discourses. In order to do this, the triangulation of methods was necessary to open up different ways of knowing and exploring how Beyoncé and Rihanna’s alignment in entertainment news media discourses is socially, culturally and subjectively interpreted by their fans (the reader). The use of a triangulating approach to researching fandom is also encouraged

within the interdisciplinary Fan Studies paradigm as the analysis of cultural phenomena is often combined with the use of personal fan experiences and reflections which can be acquired through qualitative interviews (Flick, 2011: 76-79; Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998; Stubbs, 1997: 6; Evans and Stasi, 2014). During the interview, I asked for the fans' interpretation of the article as their interpretations provided evidence of the way Beyoncé and Rihanna's juxtaposition via media discourses are read and consumed. Also, the participant's interpretation showed what power relations are at play in the discursive relationship between the text and the fan, and their social practices. Hall's (1973) encoding/decoding framework shows how meaning is socially constructed (encoded) and deciphered (decoder-receiver) and asserts that "there is no law to ensure that the receiver will take the preferred or dominant meaning [...] in precisely the way in which it has been encoded by the producer" (1973: 4-9).

The fans also had the option to bring an artefact related to their fandom to the interview (e.g., a picture or video memory). This artefact was used as an aide memoire so that the participant could recall their fan experiences, for example, they may recall a past event from a picture where they describe where they were at the time (i.e., space and time), what they were doing (i.e., practices), how they view their object of fandom, and how this affected their view of themselves and their own fandom (i.e., subjectivity). As the interview included methods of object/text elicitation, the interview was semi-structured, using this elicitation to structure my interview questions. These visual methods are important for evoking experiences and interpretations that may otherwise remain hidden in an ordinary verbal interview. Also, interpreting discourse and bringing their own artefacts means the fans are actively engaging and contributing to the research process (Harper, 2002; Collier and Collier, 1986).

My past participation within online pop music fandom allows me to navigate the field for I am an aca-fan that “already know[s] their territory” (Hills, 2002: 18). Within the Fan Studies paradigm Brooker (2002: xiii) also sees that fan participants feel more comfortable being interviewed by a researcher that has also been a fan within their own fan culture because they know the social norms and language of the culture, which will contribute significantly to the generation of data. The criteria for the selection of fans were that they must be or have been an active member of either the BeyHive and/or the Rihanna Navy. They will have participated within these fan communities online and/or offline. This participation, however, must be evidenced online (e.g., via Twitter, Instagram) as a public display of their fandom. They could have affiliations with other fan communities outside of the BeyHive (Beyoncé) and the Rihanna Navy (Rihanna). The researcher used snowballing as a sampling method to recruit participants by contacting them directly via Twitter and/or Instagram (participants could have an alias/pseudonym online) or were recruited by another interviewee who asked people to contact me directly through Twitter/Instagram's private Direct Message or via an email (to ensure privacy and confidentiality). For the safety of the researcher and confidentiality of the participants, I set up separate social media and email accounts specifically for the purposes of this research. The seven interviewees remained anonymous to protect their confidentiality and only allowing their age, pronoun(s), ethnicity and fan base to be known. Part of the reason for this is that with snowball sampling, the participants may be familiar with each other (say if they are part of the same fan base or follow each other online), so it was important to safeguard their identity. Snowball sampling, however, is suited for the nature of the social media dwelling fan base because these are “shifting populations” which have a constant flow of people coming in and out of the culture. Therefore, it would have been difficult to

have a fixed sampling strategy for choosing participants (Becker, 1963: 46; Bryman, 2004: 102).

Using NVivo, the analysis of interview transcripts initially used a combination of Process and Values coding which captured the experiences and practices of the participant. For example, with the utilization of process coding say a passage as 'Concert Attendance' to record the practices of fandom Beyoncé and Rihanna fans partake in. In addition to the labour they perform as fans, I wanted to capture what they subjectively value in those practices such as a 'sense of belonging' (Saldana, 2009: 5-8). Then I compared both sets of code from the Critical Discourse Analysis and Interview transcripts, by categorizing and linking patterns in codes (Pattern coding) to develop major themes and concepts which has derived from the data) in which I have been able to draw links between the text (the discourse used in the article), the discursive relationship (the article and the participant's interpretation), social practices (how the participant practices fandom) and the fan's subjectivity (experiences and attitudes) (Saldana, 2009).

Ethical Considerations

The Beyoncé and Rihanna fans that participated in this study were safeguarded with confidentiality agreements and informed consent (Appendix 3). I used pseudonyms instead of their real names or social media handles such as 'HIVE 1' to signify the fan community they represent in this study. The confidentiality of fans is also important for the study as fans, being a part of the same community, we might have the same acquaintances. For this reason, any other fans from the community that were mentioned in interviews was also anonymised. Given my research position as an aca-

fan (academic researcher using their own fandom as a base for research), there are advantages to my positioning in the community and having “members’ resources”, where the researcher can draw upon the cultural norms of these fan communities during interviews, however this does not give the researcher the right to supersede other fan interpretations of the community and pop music culture (Fairclough, 2001: 20).

Conclusion

Fandom, Pop Music, and the Reproduction of Race-Gender Inequalities is a research study that aims to analyse the techniques of power which reproduce cultural archetypal stereotypes of Black women entertainers, namely Rihanna and Beyoncé. The main objective of the study is to identify and explore the implications of these techniques of power which generate race-gender inequalities, for Black women entertainers and their fan communities. Analysing the power relations in pop music culture requires me to engage with methodologies such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) where I will examine entertainment news media discourses in the way that Beyoncé and Rihanna socially and culturally construct through their juxtaposition. During the Critical Discourse Analysis of entertainment news media, I will focus on patterns of discursive narrative and visual intertextuality of 117 articles through Fairclough’s framework of CDA; the text (i.e., the vocabulary and structure of the text), the discursive practice (i.e., the production, distribution and consumption) and the sociocultural practice (i.e., power relations and social constructs) (1992: 73). With the exploration of entertainment news media discourses, I will take into account the visual semiosis of a page such as how the images, text and interactive features (e.g., polls)

are relational to one another in an article (Wang, 2014). The reason for this is to capture the implicit social and cultural meanings behind the juxtaposition of Black women entertainers, Beyoncé and Rihanna. Similarly, to Van Dijk (1991), I will look at the ways in which entertainment media news discourses use implicit semantics to juxtapose to Beyoncé and Rihanna to create the “illusion” of Black women rivalry in pop music culture like “the illusion of ethnic rivalry” generated in British tabloids – “a well-known divide and conquer strategy” (Van Dijk, 1991: 197). Exploring the implications of these techniques of power for Black women entertainers and their fan communities, I will include voices from within Beyoncé and Rihanna respective fan communities, namely the Rihanna Navy and Beyhive. The interviews will include article elicitation which will see the fan-participant read an article from the CDA phase of the research and give their interpretation of the article. It is important to triangulate methods in this way to tackle determinism and open up different ways of knowing that are a part from my own as a researcher. The combination of CDA and qualitative elicitation interviews will also potentially show the process how meaning is socially constructed (encoded in entertainment news media) and deciphered (fan as decoder-receiver) (Hall, 1973).

In the next chapter, I will explicate my research question of how entertainment news media discourses play a role in the reproduction of race-gender inequalities in pop music culture. The focus of my analysis will also identify techniques of power that are connected to British and American colonial-era discourses used in the US, UK and the Caribbean in order to generate archetypal stereotypes of Black women. Specifically, Beyoncé as an African-American woman and Rihanna as a Barbadian woman will guide this comparative analysis. As highlighted in the Methodology, I will analyse the

formal processes and strategies of entertainment news media discourse in the reproduction of race-gender inequalities but it is equally important to discuss historical processes which make these formal processes “either possible or impossible” (Foucault, 2008: 120-121). There is a need to understand the colonial and patriarchal white supremacist social conditions in which archetypal stereotypes were generated of Black womanhood, and why these techniques of power are *still* ideologically profitable for neoliberal pop music culture in the present day. I will explore the way Black women in entertainment, including Rihanna and Beyoncé, have navigated racist-sexist tropes through their careers and cultural outputs (e.g., music, music videos, their own responses voiced in interviews etc.). Through examples of performances, Hollywood film and entertainment media discourses, I will centre this discussion on how juxtaposition, as a (neo)colonial and white supremacist patriarchal technology of power, develops as an organising principle and recuperative mechanism of Black women’s affective labour in popular music culture.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Part 1: Generating and Responding to Controlling Images

Introduction: Colonial Discourses on Black women

Part 1, *Generating and Responding to Controlling Images*, reviews how controlling images of Black women entertainers are generated by white supremacist patriarchal techniques of power. I explore the reproduction of controlling images through early 20th century cinema and contemporary entertainment news discourses. An important aspect of Part 1 is to show how these archetypal stereotypes are navigated by Black women entertainers through their cultural productions and responses. First, we have to travel back in time on the construction of Black female identities before we can begin to consider the Beyoncé/Rihanna juxtaposition in terms of their media persona and their fans. Controlling images have been socially constructed over a long period of history. In the sentiments of Maya Angelou, Black women's survival and navigation through slavery in the Caribbean and US was observed by British and American societies and colonialists who then set out to create mythologies of black womanhood, including "fabulous fiction of multiple personalities" to "dissolve the perversity of the Black woman's life" (1989: 9). Early European constructions of Black womanhood in American and Caribbean plantation slavery are inherently contradictory and the contradictions of these archetypal stereotypes are generative. Juxtaposed and conflicting, such stereotypes/archetypes which are used to represent Black women indicate "inconsistencies in the internal 'logic' of racist stereotypes of black women..." which reflect "distorted elements of reality" (Bush, 2000: 762). It is this erratic white

supremacist patriarchal logic – the juxtaposition of Black women – which derives from racist ideologies that defines the colonial subject as the ‘other’. The same white supremacist mechanisms in the generation of stereotypes of the ‘other’ show how “‘primitives’, ‘orientals’, and colonized Black people have been expected to behave in particular ways and obliged to occupy particular position...” in film, music and entertainment (Young, 1996: 49). Young (1996) and JanMohamed (1985) discuss how colonial discourses in the 18th and 19th centuries characterized colonized Black people as a “primitive, homogenous mass” juxtaposed and denigrated against the masculine ‘civility’ of whiteness and Empire, and how this plays out through the Manichean allegory of good/evil. As noted in Chapter 1, there are dominant economic processes of colonialism outside of the discursive patterns they produce, such as the development of slavery. For such economic and political systems to function, the Manichean allegory is the central colonialist cognitive framework which develops through discursive patterns (particularly through race-gender specific presentations colonised people in literature) which create a range of arbitrary oppositions; good/evil, black/white, superiority/inferiority, civility/savagery, subject/object, self/other, and virgin/whore (JanMohamed, 1985: 63). The objective of Part 1 is to explore these colonial derived juxtapositions in how they are still generated through contemporary popular culture discourses (e.g., cinema, music and entertainment news media). For Black women entertainers in contemporary popular culture, juxtapositions are embedded in the discursive function controlling images and this developed alongside the economic and political aims of Black enslavement by Britain and its former colony of America (Collins, 2000).

Documenting fictitious constructions of Black women's identities c.1650-1838, Bush goes on to discuss the early white constructions of enslaved Black women which were simultaneously created to reflect the economic and sexual aims of white supremacist patriarchal colonialism. For instance, multiple representations were invented to reflect these needs such as the 'Sable Venus' archetype, which represented "male erotic fantasies", concubinage and the "sexual exploitation of black women", while 'the drudge' represented the "backbone of the slave labour force", responsible for labour as well as child bearing. Constructed as a counter-representation to the former archetypes was the 'She Devil' which:

"...suggests the degree of resistance of black women against 'slave labour' and also illustrates the ways in which changes and developments in stereotypes reflect the anxieties of powerful groups. Stereotypes of black women were thus highly gendered and clustered around contradictory representations" (2000: 762)

Even in these early socially constructed representations of Black women, there is tension between stereotypes/archetypes fabricated for the surveillance of Black women's bodies and sexuality ensuring the economic efficiency of colonialism ('Sable Venus' and 'drudge'), and the resistance of Black women in slavery negating the above representations as "erotic fantasies" and as asexual "backbone[s] of the labour force" in the white imaginary ('She Devil'). The interplay of tension herein lies between white patriarchal narratives of Black womanhood to serve and protect colonial ideals ('Sable Venus' and the 'drudge'), and the resistance and solidarity of Black women's "womanist culture" (2000: 776), whom in turn were demonised in racist discourse as 'She Devils' thus reflecting "the anxieties of powerful groups". In this epoch, Black

women's identities were "remade" in the image of which suited was to the colonial project, leading women to construct oppositional identities in order to retrieve their 'personhood'. It is at this point of resistance that new white-ascribed stereotypes were created to recuperate control and punish Black women for fear that they would not perform the labour that was expected of them (2000: 778).

However, in pro-abolitionist discourse Black female identities were again "remade" in attempts to 'moralise' Black women through Christian and Victorian 'respectability', where they were passive victims in need of rescue which had a lasting effect on Black female representations in contemporary media discourses. But even more telling is that Black and mixed-Black women stereotypes were dichotomized, in that assuming 'respectability' "of the bourgeois ideal of [white] womanhood" they would have to "deny their 'bad' African side" (Bush, 2001: 132). Also, the use of the word 'Venus' at this time was a derogatory term used to place Black women, like that of Sarah Baartman ('Hottentot Venus'), as sex workers and locate whites as racially, sexually and morally superior. Conventionally, it also places Black women as 'whore' and white women as 'virgin' because in opposition to the hypersexualised Black woman, sits the connotation of sexual purity as whiteness (Dyer, 1997). In other words, "black "whores" made white "virgins" possible" and this master narrative of Black women's 'sexual deviancy' becomes the yardstick in which to dictate and measure norms of womanhood (Collins, 2000: 145). Collins, quoting Hazel Carby (1987), states further that:

"The sexual ideology of the period as is the case today "confirmed the differing material circumstances of these two groups of women . . . by balancing opposing definitions of

womanhood and motherhood, each dependent on the other for its existence” (Carby, 1987:25)” (Collins, 2000: 266)

Therefore, we get these mutually defining dichotomies such as good/bad, black/white, virgin/whore and victim/villain based on highly racialised (and racist) and gendered stereotypes created for the purposes of oppression and out of white patriarchal fear of Black women’s resistance. Lorde substantiates that “much of Western European history conditions us to see human differences in simplistic opposition to each other: dominant/subordinate, good/bad, up/down, superior/inferior” (1980: 114). The juxtaposition produced of Beyoncé and Rihanna in media discourses is a by-product of these conditions. The ascribed archetypal stereotypes within such juxtapositions metamorphize and upgrade – meaning that “Neoliberalism upgrades regulatory systems into deregulated ones” including the way ‘controlling images’ of Black womanhood are controlled (James, 2015: 97), which will be discussed in Part 2. The technique of “remaking” and dichotomizing black women’s identities through European and North American-ascribed archetypal stereotypes has been enduring for Black women across the diaspora, especially in popular and contemporary media discourses. In mainstream popular culture the technique of dichotomizing and juxtaposing Black women, along signifiers and trajectories of nationality, age, stratifications of class and sexuality, serves to essentialize differences, naturalize controlling images and functions to dehistoricize these controlling images and differences. The technique invites us to see differences and controlling images in a binary ‘versus’ relationship (e.g., Beyoncé vs. Rihanna). Hall (1993: 110-111) states that these binaries are not seen “in a positional way, but in a mutually exclusive, autonomous, and self-sufficient one”, so then the juxtapositions created appear

outside of historical and cultural production, and are rather seen as a natural way of seeing difference, in turn “remaking” and thus naturalizing controlling images of Black women. Thus, looking more closely at Black women archetypal stereotypes within the context of contemporary popular culture and reconnecting the functioning of these juxtapositions to the racist-sexist economic, political and ideological aims of slavery and colonialism is vital to understand how mechanisms are re-enacted repeatedly, particularly through the hyper-visibility popular culture and entertainment news media.

Later in Part 1, I will explore Beyoncé and Rihanna through their navigation and response to controlling images via their personas and cultural productions. It must be noted that their Black women identities are not fixed by an essence nor fixed by the social constructions under discussion. As stated, if racialized dichotomies are used to essentialize Black womanhood and dehistoricize our positioning in popular culture, then in this exploration I must practice what Gilroy (1993: 100-102) calls an “anti-anti-essentialism” because Beyoncé and Rihanna are “always in negotiation, *not with a single set of oppositions that place us always in the same relation to others*, but with *a series of positionalities*” (Hall, 1993: 112: my emphasis). In Gilroy’s chapter *Black music and the Politics of Authenticity*, “anti-anti-essentialism” is an alternative to two positions outlined as “racial essentialism” (i.e., essentializing position) and an opposite pluralistic position which Gilroy presents as the casual phrase “Different strokes for different folks” (i.e., a dehistoricizing position). Adopting either position would end up reproducing the “Western European history” and the conditioning in seeing “human differences in simplistic opposition to each other”. Therefore, my aim is to take ‘simplistic oppositions’ (i.e. the juxtaposition of Rihanna and Beyoncé) as they are in media discourses with the intention of deconstructing them show the inner

mechanisms which generate them. While deconstructing the “series of positionalities” that Beyoncé and Rihanna navigate, I must also acknowledge that their Black female identities are “lived as a coherent (if not always stable) experiential sense of self” by both women in life, music and popular culture because the “pre-eminence of music within the diverse Black communities of the Atlantic diaspora is itself an important element in their essential connectedness” (1993: 102). Beyoncé and Rihanna’s agentic navigation and response to the cultural scripts of Black women in popular music culture can show how they are “flipping the script”, as other Black women entertainers have done before them in popular culture (Lee, 2010: xii).

20th Century Black Venus

The Sable-Saffron Venus (Sable indicating Black and Saffron indicating ‘mixed-raced’) was an image constructed of enslaved Black women by the white European male gaze as justification for their brutality and barbarity during plantation slavery. The image of *The Voyage of the Sable Venus from Angola to the West Indies* (Stothard, 1793), Tate describes as a re-presentation of the enslaved Black woman diminishing the reality of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and gives a “version of the birth of Venus because the slave ship, with its brutality, rape, murder and deprivation is transformed into a shell, while dolphins replace deadly sharks ready to consume African bodies whether dead or living” (Tate, 2015: 19–21). The Black Venus narrative evolved as part of the colonial discourses that juxtaposed Black women into sexual and cultural scripts which cast Black women as hypersexual; as ‘savage’. As noted in the introduction, these images of Black women reflected white anxieties that Black women would resist slave

labour (which many did establishing a womanist culture). Labour such as concubinage, which many young enslaved Black women in the Americas undertook for survival. Tate (2015) suggests that these women were very much in control of their sexuality and that of white male plantation *owners*. However, in British literature, along with social constructions defined by white male slavers as justification for their crimes against humanity, the Black Venus was constructed “as tempting, scheming, wanton and non-labouring slave body who was always prepared to lead white men astray because of her dangerous hyper-sexuality (Bush, 2000)” (2015: 22). Moving into 20th century, we see this cultural script of the Black Venus played out in European and American entertainment media discourses.

The Black Venus cultural script constructed about Black women, formed through a series of colonial juxtapositions (e.g., Manichean allegories – black/white, virgin/whore, good/evil, civility/savagery) and understanding this discursive pattern is imperative to show how it is produced structurally, how it is displaced by the Black women it seeks to construct, and how juxtaposition reproduced as a recuperative mechanism (re-establishing juxtaposition). Bhabha (1994: 54–55) talks about this tendency for white supremacist patriarchal societies to differentiate (rather than homogenize and unify) through strategies of discourse (i.e., virgin/whore, drudge/She Devil, Mammy/Jezebel) in *contradictory ways*, and therefore the meanings produced have no “unity or fixity; [...] the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew”. The Third Space, as Bhabha describes, is the space in which we take these juxtapositions which construct and make “the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process destroys this mirror of representation” (1994: 54). I am interested in this ambivalent process in which Black women

entertainers like Beyoncé and Rihanna operate, but also the recuperative mechanisms (juxtaposition) which reorganise Black women back into juxtaposing and colonial Manichean structures in pop music culture (Young, 1996; JanMohamed, 1985).

Tate (2015) and Hobson (2005: 94–100) give the examples of iconic African American entertainer, Josephine Baker and Jamaican model, singer and actress, Grace Jones who have reclaimed the Black Venus narrative and destroy this “mirror of representation”, both of which have heavily influenced Beyoncé and Rihanna throughout their careers. Hobson (2005: 95) states that Josephine Baker’s embodiment and mocking of the Black Venus stereotype was performed through “...*danse sauvage*, she recreated popular stereotypes of the black female savage, femme fatale, and wild animal but altered her performance of these stock types to mock European concepts of black female beauty and sexuality”. Baker’s performances and images, such as Baker’s famous banana skirt (this image was replicated by Beyoncé at her 2006 Fashion Rocks performance), played to the fascination of Black female exoticism in Europe in the early 20th century. Baker’s performances are disruptive in the sense that she displaces the dichotomy of subject/object and makes the dichotomy ambivalent. For this reason, Cheng (2011: 3) considers that we see Baker “not as an example of but a *fracture* in the representation of the black female body” (my emphasis) because she is not just an object of the white male gaze; she appropriates it and mirrors it back causing a fracture in the subject/object dichotomy.



Figure 7: Grace Jones in 'Jungle Fever' (Goude, 1982)

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Figure 8: Rihanna in 'Rated R' outtake (Unwerth, 2009)



Figure 9: Josephine Baker (Walery/Getty Images, 1925)



Figure 10: Beyoncé performing at Fashion Rocks 2006 (KMazur/WireImage, 2006)

Similarly, Grace Jones also exists in this space of the Black Venus as, in collaboration with Jean Paul Goude during the 1970s, she also plays to mythical stereotypes of black female alterity. Hobson (2005: 99-100) notes through Goude's depiction of Jones, (most notably the "Don't Feed The Animal" image (1978) in which Jones caged nude and surrounded by raw meat), is subversive to a point but ultimately reinforces European colonial traditions of exoticizing female racial 'others'. Fulani (2012: 234-236) argues alternatively that Jones "may be eminently *objectifiable*, but she is not an object per se" because of her "shape shifter's ability" to transform her personae within the context of her own subjectivity of "growing up black and female in post-colonial Jamaica". Josephine Baker and Grace Jones recreated stereotypes which reminded us of their sexist and racist representational power, and both were "removed by a century from Baartman, able to turn the static body of black female sexual exploitation

into a dynamic, mobile enterprise” (Brooks, 2007: 2). Their performances were strategic and as Sweeney-Risko (2019: 508) argues further, the satirical quality to their performances, allowed them to subvert white European racist-sexist understandings of Black femininity, where they toed the line between “racist disrespect” and professional “respect” as an entertainer creating a space in-between to explore their own self-definition. Cooper (2017: online) calls this a “politics of disrespectability” which I will return to later in this chapter.

During the 20th century however, Jones and Baker were more popular in Europe (particularly in France) because “American culture [...] does not have a similar celebration of black femininity. The more popular icon of black femininity in this context, the mammy, is often interpreted as devoid of sexuality” (Hobson, 2005: 100). The other emergent dominant cultural stereotype of Black women in early 20th century popular culture was the “tragic-mulatta” (e.g., *Imitation of Life*, 1934); a 19th century literary trope and a sexualized antithesis of the ‘Mammy’ (Griffin, 2001: 27; Lefkowitz, 2017: xiii). There is also the factor of a hegemonic cultural shift and the emergence of American mainstream media becoming “the centre of global cultural production and circulation” (Hall, 1993: 104). Taking this hegemonic shift and Hobson’s point into consideration, the circulation of American-preferred archetypal ‘Mammy’ image, the ‘tragic-mulatta’ and the existing exoticization of Black women in Europe presented contradictory representations at which point social constructions of Black female identities undergo another period of “remaking” and dichotomizing.

Mammy/bad-black-girl Antithesis

There are many archetypal stereotypes of Black women which have pervaded a shifting popular culture, each one informing the other. As Gilkes (1983: 294) puts forward, “Black women emerged from slavery firmly enshrined in the consciousness of white America as ‘Mammy’ and the ‘bad-black-girl’”. As mentioned before, the hegemonic cultural shift and centralization of American mainstream media inserted these mythical images of Black women such as the Mammy into the popular imagination, along with the antithesis of ‘bad-black-girls’ (e.g. Jezebel, Sapphire, the Tragic-Mulatta). Here again, we see juxtaposition as a framework used to generate controlling images and sexual scripts for Black women characters and entertainers. Mammy was the American archetypal upgrade of the ‘drudge’ and – keeping in mind that Rihanna is from Barbados – Bush (2000: 764) interestingly notes there was no “good” Caribbean equivalent to the American ‘Mammy’ because by the 20th century it was viewed that African-Caribbeans “had been ‘civilised’ by colonial rule and transformed into loyal subjects”.

The Mammy image portrayed a black woman who was an asexual, nurturing, domesticated and loyal servant to the white patriarchal family. She was non-threatening to American white institutions and even came to the defence of these institutions, often at the expense of her and her children’s well-being. In addition to this Mammy was “a mother figure who gave all without expectation of return, who not only acknowledged her inferiority to whites but who loved them” (hooks, 1981: 85). For example, in the *Imitation of Life* (Laemmle and Stahl, 1934) actress Louise Beavers plays the Mammy role as ‘Aunt Delilah’ where she offers her domestic services to Miss

Bea (her boss) and says “Don't worry about wages [...] If I could get a home for my little girl [Peola], I'd be glad to work for just room and board”. In this image, Mammy accepted her social positioning and was “glad” to be of service, where the image of her often depicted her smiling. However, without white female supervision, Mammy was rendered of no value to her own children and was only “permitted to love and care for white children” (Jordan-Zachery, 2009: 38). This is displayed in the mother-daughter relationship between Aunt Delilah and Peola (embodying the rebellious, uncontrollable and self-hating mythical stereotype of the Tragic-Mulatta), in which Peola rebels against Delilah, blaming her mother for her blackness and inferior social standing. Furthermore, the Mammy, in the case of Aunt Delilah, is positioned as a woman who knows “her place in the Jim Crow hierarchy [...] Hers is an accommodating resignation, bordering on contentment” (Pilgrim, 2012). Delilah, in particular tries to convince Peola to be satisfied with this social positioning and “insists that Peola learn to accept her place, saying: You gotta learn to take it and you might as well begin now” (Smith, 1994: 49). The messaging here is that Delilah as a ‘good’ archetypal stereotype is a figure that Peola could learn from if her life is to be less troubled and tumultuous as a Black woman. Therefore Peola (the Tragic-Mulatta), is Delilah’s (the Mammy) rebellious antithesis and their antagonistic relationship is a ‘dispossession’ of kinship (Spillers, 1987: 80), except it is a representational ‘dispossession’ which disseminates stereotypical messages of Black female relationships with one another.



Figure 11: Louise Beavers (*Delilah*) and Claudette Colbert (*Peola*) in *The Imitation of Life* (Stahl, 1934)

The narrative of Mammy is not just reserved for the popular American cinema however. Denene Millner's NRP article, *Beyoncé Is Not The Magical Negro Mammy* (2017), examines the comments and speeches of Adele and Faith Hill at the 59th annual Grammy Awards ceremony (2017) noting how Adele and Hill 'mammify' Beyoncé as they praise her while she is sat in front row. Adele in her acceptance speech for Album of The Year (which she won for the album *25*, beating Beyoncé's *Lemonade*) says "You move my soul every single day. And you have done for nearly 17 years. *I adore you, and I want you to be my mummy, all right*" [my emphasis]. Similarly, Hill reiterates "I'm older than you, but I want you to be my mommy, too". These comments come after a pregnant Beyoncé gives a performance celebrating Black motherhood specifically (towards *her own* children), channelling the Ancient West African Yoruba deity Oshun, the goddess of love, generosity and kindness (Finley and Willis, 2019: 17). The problematic issue of Adele and Hill 'mammifying' Beyoncé after her performance, is that historically for black women (during and post-slavery) "motherhood as [a] female blood-rite is outraged, is denied" where she is "both mother and mother-dispossessed" because her own children were viewed as property

(Spillers, 1987: 80). The process of ‘mammifying’ therefore ‘dispossesses’ Black women of kinship because they are positioned as Mammy to white institutions, children and white female adults in the case of Miss Bea (1934), Adele and Faith Hill (2017).

bad-black-girls: The Tragic-Mulatta/Jezebel

The Tragic-Mulatta (or Mulatto) is an archetypal stereotype used to represent fair-complexioned Black female entertainers who possess some physical form of European standard of beauty. Lefkowitz (2017) cites early-mid 20th century actresses Lena Horne and Dorothy Dandridge for forecasting the representation of the Tragic Mulatta in American cinema, going on to mention further entertainers such as Halle Berry and crucially, Rihanna. The cultural stereotype is directly tied to representations of the Jezebel, which depicts black women as hypersexual “deviants incapable of mature, romantic sophisticated love” (2017: ix). The “bad-black-girl” as Jewell (1993: 46) describes, was depicted as an “alluring, sexually arousing [...] worldly seductress”, which were typified by the roles that Dandridge, in particular, was cast (e.g. *Carmen Jones*, 1954; remade in 2001 as *Carmen The Hip Hopera* starring Beyoncé). The pathologies created of the bad-black-girl stereotype were personal in that she lacked agency, social power and were often characterized as depressed, uncontrollable and destructive. Her troubled existence and ‘badness’ were racialized as it was associated with her Blackness and proximity to Blackness, while her ambition and competitiveness were associated with her proximity to whiteness. At once, the Tragic-Mulatta was met with “pity and scorn, not sympathy” in which “white writers insisted

on the “tragic-mulatto’s” unhappiness” (Pilgrim, 2012: online; Lefkowitz, 2017: x). This gave the representation a contradictory disposition as a victim-in-need-of-rescue and as villain-seducer-perpetrator which signified the concomitant “fear” and “fascination” of her (James, 2015: 81; Tate, 2015).

Carmen Jones (1954) was the one of the first cinematic mainstream films to feature an entirely Black cast and was viewed as a positive change in the representation of African-Americans, which had superseded negative portrayals (e.g. ‘Aunt Jemima’ and ‘Uncle Ben’) of African-Americans as subservient and unintelligent. Focussing on individual characters within the production however, presents problematic narratives, for instance, Carmen (Dorothy Dandridge) exemplified the ‘tragic’ disposition in *Tragic-Mulatta*. Carmen is eroticized whilst she ‘seduces’ Joe (Harry Belafonte), a soldier, as he drives her to jail after a fight with a co-worker leaving behind his loyal fiancé, Cindy Lou (Olga James). The introduction of Carmen with the song ‘Dat’s Love’ explicitly foregrounds her as destructive “seductress” and subsequently fights with her co-worker emphasizing her criminality (Holliday, 2014). Interestingly, Holliday (2014: 53) notes that:

“Carmen’s golden toned sex appeal is especially emphasized when she and Cindy Lou are compared against each other. [...] Carmen and Cindy Lou come to embody a Madonna/whore juxtaposition. When the viewer first meets Cindy Lou, she is a portrait of innocence.”

Cindy Lou is loyal, submissive and modest embodying the ideals of respectability politics; ideals which African-American women in the early 20th century were expected

to embody in order to combat racist representations of Black female sexuality (Higginbotham, 1993). Cindy is Carmen's antithesis because just as Carmen's "sex appeal" is emphasized by Cindy's respectable demeanour, Cindy's respectability is emphasized by Carmen's exoticism and criminality; another mutually defining dichotomy based on archetypal stereotypes and race-gender normativity. Carmen and Cindy are both disposable characters as Joe rejects Cindy to be with Carmen and subsequently in the last scene Joe, calling Carmen a "tramp", murders Carmen after she refuses his obsessive advances. This 'tragic' end, verifies Pilgrim's point that "In a race-based society, the tragic mulatto found peace only in death" (2012: online). The narrative functions upon a familiar sexual and cultural script of the "Madonna/whore juxtaposition" but it also functions as a cautionary tale. From the beginning, Carmen functions as a "threat" to the respectable African-American woman and man (who is depicted as vulnerable to her destructive 'seduction') and their normative heterosexual relationship. However the *literal* death of Carmen, "the death of the bad race", does not guarantee Cindy Lou's safety (as disposable to Joe) or Joe's safety (upstanding soldier converted to unemployed, fugitive and criminal) in society but it eliminates the "threat", for it is a cautionary tale of what *could* happen to "bad-black-girls" if they do not adhere to heteronormativity and 'good' ideal respectability which continues to posit them as an internal "threat" to the life progression of 'good' archetypes such as Cindy and Joe. This also creates a hierarchal distinction among Black women based on respectability and sexual politics (Foucault, 2003: 255-256; Collins, 2000; Zaire, 2016: online).

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Figure 12: Cindy Lou (Olga James, left) and Carmen Jones (Dorothy Dandridge, right) face-off (Preminger, 1954)



Figure 13: Joe (Harry Belafonte, left), Carmen (Dorothy Dandridge, middle) and Cindy Lou (Olga James, right) (Preminger, 1954)

As mentioned previously, the Tragic-Mulatta archetype is closely tied with the mythical construction of Jezebel. Jordan-Zachery (2009: 39-40) notes that the Jezebel image was also an antithetical construction of 'good' Black female archetypes (i.e., Mammy; but it also served to sexualise Mammy in form of the African-American "Sapphire" and "Welfare Queen" stereotypes). In addition to her hypersexual construction, she was positioned as "greedy, tricky, threatening, out to seek revenge against white society" in the post-slavery epoch, which reminds us of the 'She Devil' construction of 17th century Caribbean plantation slavery noted by Bush (2000). This is in conjunction with the side of the villain-seductress-perpetrator disposition of the tragic-mulatta, as the control of Black women's sexuality and their redemption in the eyes white supremacist patriarchy can be recuperated if they "redefine" themselves as victim-in-need-of-rescue (Ferreday, 2017); the other condition of the bad-black-girl's mythical image. In the following recent example, news media discourse dress up these conditions as 'concern' for society and the Black woman of focus (rather than depicting literal elimination like in *Carmen Jones*). The Daily Mail (UK) column by Liz Jones (2013) entitled *Pop's poisonous princess: Glorifying in drugs, guns and sleaze Rihanna's toxic role model for her army of young fans* depicts Rihanna as ambitious and materialistic, descending into constructions of toxicity and hypersexuality using phrases such as "toxic", "wanton", "vile" where she is the "opposite of feminine" and "invites rape" (Davis, 1981; hooks, 1981). This column is reminiscent of historic constructions of the Jezebel as she is:

"constructed as non-woman [...] therefore not entitled to the same protections as "real" women [...] it was important for the slave era as it was for the post-slave era

because it justified the rape and sexual violence committed routinely against female slaves--she wants (sexual abuse) it" (Jordan-Zachery, 2009: 40)

Simultaneously, Jones describes the smell of Rihanna's fragrance (Reb'L Fleur, 2011) as "Fear", "Loss" and "Heartache". Jones also states that Rihanna "had an opportunity to be a poster girl for young women escaping abusive relationships" and wishes that Rihanna would stop pretending to be "her own person". Rihanna, as tragic-mulatta/Jezebel/bad-black-girl here, is at once a 'tragic' victim-in-need-of-rescue as she "had an opportunity" to uptake this position; to redefine herself ("be a poster girl") as an objectified victim. The assumption embedded in this stance is that she essentially lacks agency (it is seen as "fake", "false" and "bogus" if she behaves as "her own person" on terms not befitting to 'good' victimhood *first*). As Rihanna rejects victim-in-need-of-rescue positioning, she is met with "pity and scorn" and remade into villain-seductress-perpetrator who should come with a "government health warning", and therefore, positioned as a "threat" (like Carmen) which fails to make society "healthier and purer" (Lefkovitz, 2017; Pilgrim, 2012; Foucault, 2003: 256).

Considering the above examples of how Beyoncé's African-American and Rihanna's Afro-Caribbean identities are "remade" through American and British discourses in popular culture, demonstrates how violent and dichotomizing ideologies of Black womanhood are rooted in European colonial conquest in the Caribbean through to 20th century American mainstream media. I have insinuated ways in which Josephine Baker, Grace Jones, Beyoncé (e.g., celebrating her motherhood to her *own* children through African religious traditions) and Rihanna (e.g., rejecting the objectifiable victim-in-need-of-rescue position) frame their subjectivity and retrieve their

'personhood' within popular culture. On the other hand, I have identified some processes which counteract this retrieval, for instance, "remaking" and essentializing Black female identities through; antithetic positioning of mythical archetypal stereotypes, 'mammifying' and the contradictory victim-in-need-of-rescue/villain-seductress-perpetrator dichotomy. The combination of European colonial stereotypes, the global centralization of American cultural production and their dissemination of antithetical images (i.e., Mammy and bad-black-girl), informing how black women are valued and marginalized (Collins, 2000; Gilkes, 1983), evidently, burdens Beyoncé and Rihanna's representation within popular culture. While I have attempted to geographically locate how contradictory representations have developed, the focus will turn to contextualizing Beyoncé and Rihanna, as transnational entertainers of African-American and African-Caribbean origins, respectively.

Beyoncé Giselle Knowles(-Carter)

Beyoncé's integral place in contemporary popular music is part of an important legacy of beautifully talented African-American female entertainers; as mentioned, Josephine Baker, Dorothy Dandridge and Diana Ross, just to name a few. Since her 1997 debut with Destiny's Child (subsequently going solo in 2002), Beyoncé has cultivated a brand that purposefully shifts between multiple positionalities including good respectable Christian girl from Houston, Texas; a virtuosic singer, a dynamic performer and dancer; actress; wife, daughter and mother. Beyoncé's intelligently crafted image and

shape-shifting gives her the space to formulate the power of self-definition. Beyoncé plays on the “fantasy of the mulatta temptress” (e.g. *Carmen The Hip Hopera*, 2001 and alter-ego Sasha Fierce), except she does not occupy a ‘tragic’ or threatening position, being that she arose from a materially middle-class upbringing (Griffin, 2011: 138). Beyoncé often cites her Creole ancestry in her music and music videos (e.g. ‘Déjà Vu’, 2006); singing in ‘Formation’ for example, “My daddy Alabama, Mama Louisiana. You mix that Negro with that Creole make a Texas bama” (Brown, Hogan, Will Made It, Knowles-Carter, 2016).

I am...Sasha Fierce

Beyoncé’s Black female multivocality allows her to occupy a relatively more comfortable space in popular music than her predecessors, as Griffin (2011: 138) notes “Unlike her predecessors, she has not been forced to choose between “respectable lady” and “bombshell.” She comfortably occupies both spaces, having selected the alter ego Sasha Fierce to express the latter”. Beyoncé, up until her album “4” (2011), successfully compartmentalized Beyoncé Knowles, the respectable good southern black girl-next-door and Sasha Fierce (and arguably, Yoncé too), the overtly sexual performer taking ownership of her sexuality and pleasure. She utilizes the virgin/Jezebel-whore dichotomy, arguably in a way that had not been done by her predecessors because of their racialized and gendered existence in popular culture. Sasha Fierce maintained the respectability of Beyoncé Knowles the entertainer just as Beyoncé Knowles maintained the fearless sexuality of Sasha Fierce; as Bradley (2013) puts it this was “a dichotomy of grit and grace, two polarized representations of

black femininity that only co-exist via performances of alter ego(s)". It was also a response to the cultural scripts previous African-American women performers had been "forced to choose" a side in the demands of respectability politics. For example, Dandridge is said to have "despaired" at playing roles that were constructed specifically for Black actresses in American cinema such as "servants, slaves, or 'loose' women" but in order to "make ends meet" she was forced to take some of these roles (Kohlman, 2016: 30; Gates and Wolfe, 2015). Smith (2017) maintains that Beyoncé's performance as Sasha Fierce was just one of various methods that she uses to confront black female cultural scripts such as the Jezebel. Beyoncé navigates between the "simplistic oppositions" generated by the restrictive cultural scripts of the music industry and balances on the margins of respectability politics placed on black womanhood, "where black women are over-sexualised, yet expected to act submissively" (Sweeney-Risko, 2019: 511).

"Sasha Fierce is done. I killed her"

In a February 2010 interview with Allure magazine Beyoncé announced that "I don't need Sasha Fierce anymore, because I've grown and now I'm able to merge the two. I want people to see me" (Allure, 2010). The subsequent year, Beyoncé cuts ties with her father/manager Mathew Knowles, and established her own management company, Parkwood Entertainment. In the context of music industry branding, Lieb (2016: 76) argues that the merging of Beyoncé and Sasha Fierce riskily complicated her brand "from her classy, elegant, untouchable-in-a-good-way diva persona, and

turning up her sex appeal and sexual focus [...] she shrugged off the very meanings that made her distinctive". However, the merging of her brand being viewed as problematic presents another issue that is far more to do with how Black womanhood is expected to be performed within the restrictive music industry-ascribed coders of race and gender. It shows that when Beyoncé exercises the retrieval of her 'personhood' at this point, as she does later in her song 'Freedom' expressing "cut me loose" (Coffer et al, 2016), the music industry view this retrieval as *potentially* unprofitable and threatening, not just in a commodified sense but also in an ideological sense as she attempts take control of controlling dichotomies.

What made Beyoncé "distinctive" according to Lieb was being "a classy, dignified R&B diva" which "actually derived from all the things *she didn't say* and all of the things *projected onto her*" (2018: 75, my emphasis). Embedded in this brand distinction is the link to the "culture of dissemblance" which returns to early 20th century middle-class African-American women, particularly in the antebellum American south (e.g. Houston, Texas) in effort to escape the hypersexualized constructions of black femininity by exercising "the politics of silence" (Hammonds, in Price and Schildrick, 2017; Higginbotham, 1993; Hine, 1989). Dissemblance, defined by Hine (1989: 912) as "the behaviours and attitudes of Black women that created the appearance of openness and disclosure but actually shielded the truth of their inner lives and selves from their oppressors", was a valued feature of brand Beyoncé in the early of part her career because, as above, she is valued on the things *she didn't say* and did not reveal about her personal life. Sasha Fierce was *only* for the stage. Durham (2011: 45) corroborates in her textual analysis of 'Check On it' that Beyoncé's early dissemblance

communicates a culture of silence that looms large in the everyday lives of Black women as:

“...the self-identified Christian has to be possessed by an alter ego named Sasha Fierce to perform sensual dances on stage reveals how much work Black feminism and the burgeoning field of hip hop feminism—as a political, intellectual and cultural movement—has not done to undo the good–bad girl dualism”

Beyoncé’s eventual merging of Sasha Fierce is another way she navigates the margins of this impossible dualism where Black femininities are policed by the hegemonic politics of popular culture and Black women are required to police themselves to guard themselves from the above politics (Lewis, 2013).

Beyoncé’s Disrespectability Politics

Undoing the good-bad girl dualism which is informed by the politics of respectability and the culture of dissemblance, requires finding a third space and the creation of oppositional identities. As Cooper (2012) and Durham (2011) have pointed out, respectability politics and dissemblance has failed as the double-bind of virgin-whore/good-bad girl dualisms and “the black strategy for equality based upon conservative, middle class white values, damages black women’s ability to express themselves fully” (Sweeney-Risko, 2019: 500). Cooper (2012: online) originally describes disrespectability politics as:

“the space between the diss and the respect [...] This space between the disses we get and the respect we seek is the space in which Black women live our lives. It is the crunk place, the percussive place, the place that makes noise (and music), the place that moves us, the place that offers possibility in the midst of two impossible extremes.”

Revisiting Josephine Baker, Beyoncé’s homage in her Fashion Rocks performance (featuring Jay-Z) in 2006 is used as an early example in Sweeney-Risko’s (2019) analysis of Beyoncé and Baker’s disrespectability politics. Before her performance at Fashion Rock 2006, Beyoncé states that she took inspiration for the performance from Baker because “it seemed such as if she just danced from her heart, and everything was so free” (Francis, 2007). Beyoncé finding freedom in Baker’s performance is significant as she replicated the iconic banana skirt worn by Baker which, at first, alludes to racist representations of ‘exotic primitivism’. However, Cheng (2013: 46) argues that the representations in Baker’s performance are hard to define due to its many signifiers of dance and costume where Baker appears to be in control of her own body, therefore, “preventing any sort of totalised image of colonial desire from ever taking hold”, and so disrupting the historical stereotypes of Black women in which they were objectified totally by the colonial gaze (e.g. Hottentot Venus) (Sweeney-Risko: 2019: 508). With this performance, Beyoncé pays homage to this third space; the space where she is not totally possessed but expressive in “noise (and music), the place that moves us” because the “two impossible extremes”, these dualisms are what prevent freedom of expression for Black women.

Later, in the *BEYONCÉ* era (2013) Beyoncé redirects her voice but this time she is ‘talking back’ in a self-definitive southern black feminist voice; more specifically, Smith

(2017) reads *BEYONCÉ* as a hip-hop feminist work. In March 2013, Beyoncé released a promotional track called 'Bow Down/I Been On' (the former part of the song, 'Bow Down', later became '***Flawless' featuring feminist author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie) which sonically evokes Houston hip-hop aesthetics such as the mixing style 'chopped and screwed'. The song starts with the high-pitched auto-tuned "I'm out that H-town. Coming, coming down. I'm coming down dripping candy on the ground" (Knowles et al, 2013); Beyoncé firstly situates herself in her hometown, Houston, as a southern African-American woman where she is "dripping candy" which is a variation of the (specifically) Houston hip-hop colloquialism of 'candy paint' used in Houston hip-hop music (e.g. Mike Jones, 'Still Tippin'; UGK, 'Candy') and Houston's Slab car culture (the cars are known for their colourful and glossy paint work and rims, hence 'candy paint'). More importantly, Beyoncé resituates herself towards 'ratchetness' which Bradley (2013: online) notes as a "southern export" that Beyoncé uses sonically as a "sound to signify not only her southern "ruts" (roots) but utilize an aesthetic that allows her to vindicate her southern black womanhood while sustaining her (visual) global image". The use of the term 'ratchet', is usually to describe a woman who is loud, hypersexual and unrespectable, but it is especially used in a way that connotes blackness; "every controlling image of black women Patricia Hill Collins taught you about *all* rolled into one" (Lewis, 2013). Beyoncé, in 'Bow Down/I Been On', performs 'ratchet' in a proud and joyous way because she is celebrating her Houston "Ms. Third Ward" origins in tandem with her southern Black womanhood. This performative and commodified movement towards the 'ratchet' also helps Beyoncé to subvert the respectability politics burdening southern African-American women; ratchetness in this sense is revalued as "an intervention of sliding contemporary politics of respectability currently in place against women (of color)" (Bradley, 2013: online).



Figure 14: Beyoncé cover art for the single "Bow Down/I Been On" (Instagram, 2013)

What emphasizes the subversion of Beyoncé's move towards the 'ratchet' was the negative and anxious reaction of entertainment media discourses in their review of 'Bow Down/I Been On'. The *Independent* (Ireland) ran the headline, *Has Beyoncé Lost Her Halo?* (Power, 2013), with the first sentence stating "Rihanna got there first but if Beyoncé was looking for a title for her next album, the obvious option is surely 'Good Girl Gone Bad'": note how Beyoncé's move towards the 'ratchet' is associated and aligned with another Black woman in pop music (Rihanna), losing her respectability ("Lost Her Halo") and going 'bad'. As mentioned in my discussion of the bad-black-girl, 'badness' as racialized and associated with proximity to blackness. Another anxious reaction to 'Bow Down/I Been On' from the *Washington Post* (US) (Tesfamariam, 2013), ran the headline *Beyoncé sabotages her female empowerment efforts with 'Bow Down'*. The article focusses on the song's lyrical use of "bitches" in

comparison to her previous universal female empowerment song ‘Run the World (Girls)’ (2011), describing the song as “forceful and mean” and “domineering and crass”. Tesfamariam’s last point expresses ‘concern’ that “there are [...] times when the pride Beyoncé takes in being “Queen B” and “Mrs. Carter” overshadows her efforts to affirm other women [...] you’re either committed to female empowerment or you’re bowing down to patriarchy”. The issue here is that Beyoncé is *expected* to “affirm other women” *over herself*. In affirming *herself first*, Beyoncé is presented with an ultimatum, the female empowerment of “other women” — not necessarily including herself as affirming herself “overshadows her effort to affirm other women”— or “bowing down to patriarchy”. Beyoncé is not afforded the space for alternative frameworks or complex expressions of “female empowerment”. Contradictorily, while Beyoncé is in danger of “bowing down to patriarchy”, she is also masculinized by the assigned traits of “forceful”, “mean”, “domineering” and “crass”; the way that “‘good’ aspects of Mammy are omitted” and masculinized into ‘Sapphire’/‘Angry Black Woman’ — “domineering”, “aggressive” and uneducated, in Beyoncé’s case, about the *proper* way to perform “female empowerment” (Jordan-Zachery, 2009: 42; West, 2018).

Beyoncé’s alignment with the ‘ratchet’ and affirmation of self through Houston hip-hop cultural aesthetics, in which “she sonically blends hip hop bravado and misogynistic representations of black womanhood, and in that way stretches what is considered respectable” positions her as toxic to progressive feminist politics (Bradley, 2013: online). The performance of “female empowerment” which Tesfamariam and Power allude to is shrouded in the rhetoric of post-feminism as “white and middle class by default” (Tasker and Negra, 2007: 2). Therefore, Beyoncé’s performance in ‘Bow Down/I Been Down’ as ratchet, southern and Black cannot be appropriated as

empowerment because she enforces herself as dominant in a southern Black feminist voice; a voice that the whiteness and middle-class respectability in post-feminist “female empowerment” cannot assimilate (unless that voice is *of service*). What ‘Bow Down/I Been On’ and reactions via media discourses brings to light is that this respectability is less about being virginal and respectable (as in Virgin/Whore), and more about how celebrity women (especially Black women) perform female empowerment; this is a kind of new respectability politics. As shown by this example, Black women in pop music in their performance of female empowerment must perform in an assimilable voice, meaning empowering the self must also empower white middle-class standards of feminism but Black female empowerment must be *of service* to the latter standard of empowerment through appropriation; inassimilable Black female empowerment of self *only* “overshadows her efforts to affirm other women”. Similarly, Khanna (2003: 22) notes that “the inassimilable paradoxically becomes the site of [...] critical agency” and this is the space where Beyoncé’s disrespectability politics stands.

The Formation of Brown Skin Girls

At the beginning of this chapter I discussed how Black women in plantation slavery constructed oppositional identities by developing an African derived womanist culture, which was deeply feared and “reflects the anxieties of powerful groups” (Bush, 2000: 776). This includes challenging dichotomies dominant in white patriarchal constructions in the “remaking” of us. I also use Spillers (1987) to suggest that black women’s kinship is “dispossessed” in order to reposition black women as of service to

white institutions. Beyoncé's more recent visual and creative message of female solidarity is clearly addressed to those like herself; Black and female. As I watched Beyoncé's Coachella performance in 2018 (also on the *Lemonade* visual album and attending the *On The Run II Tour* with the UK BeyHive), the moments that stood out to me the most were Beyoncé's visual centring of Black female solidarity. At 'Beychella' as it is named by fans on social media and with Rihanna cheering her on in front row, Beyoncé powerfully closes 'Don't Hurt Yourself' (J. White et al, 2016) as she sings "Tonight I'm fucking up all your shit, boy!"; she struts back to the mainstage with her black female dancers lined up to the side of her to create a path. While Beyoncé starts walking towards the mainstage, we hear Malcolm X's voice ring out:

"The most disrespected person in America is the Black woman. The most unprotected person in America is the Black woman" (1962)



Figure 15: Beyoncé performing at Coachella from the documentary Homecoming (Knowles and Burke, 2019)

As Beyoncé reaches the mainstage she says “This is your final warning, you know I give you life. If you try this shit again, you gon’ lose your wife”. After Beyoncé stands there for a moment, the camera pans to an entire band of Black female violinists playing as Beyoncé sits down with her dancers. The camera pans back to show the dancers laying their heads to rest on one another’s shoulders, eventually resting their heads onto Beyoncé’s legs. This powerful image evokes a togetherness and connectedness which shows Black women finding comfort in one another’s company and in this moment, against the backdrop of being “disrespected” and “unprotected” in America, they are visually protecting each other. The visual is a metaphorical representation of Beyoncé as Yemayá, a Yoruba and Afro-Caribbean religious deity. Yemayá is the patron of women, governing and protecting every aspect of the women’s lives, in which she “bears witness to the suffering of her children, but also

offers practical strategies for overcoming “sickness”, including ailments caused by economic exploitation, racial discrimination, and patriarchal oppression” (Pérez, 2013: 28). While Beyoncé appears to be singing about her husband’s (Jay-Z) infidelity on the surface, the imagery speaks to a “Formation” (also a song on *Lemonade*) of Black women as “a tool of imagining community, turning a personal problem into a mighty communal struggle” (Stewart, in Brooks and Martin, 2019: 27). When Beyoncé gives the “boy” (i.e., exploitation, discrimination and patriarchal oppression) his “final warning”, reminding him that “I give you life” (i.e., women, labour and motherhood) and what she *intends* to do “Tonight” if she is “disrespected”, she communes with her fellow Black women (i.e., dancers and violinists) as she *readies* herself so that she is not left “unprotected”. Therefore, the imagery centred by Beyoncé makes conscious in popular music culture the ways in which Black women commune *building up to* resistance; “it is not the protest movement itself, but “the alignment, the stillness, the readying, the quiet, before the twerk, the turn-up, the (social) *movement* (Robinson, 2016)” (Stewart, in Brooks and Martin, 2019: 27). Beyoncé’s evoking of African diasporic religions also challenges restrictive dichotomies constructed of Black womanhood, as femininity in these religions are seen as complex, “beautiful, wealthy, fierce, sexual, and all warriors” (Valdés, 2014: 11).

With Beyoncé starting her career in girl group Destiny’s Child (whom she reunites with at ‘Beychella’, as a trio consisting of Kelly Rowland and Michelle Williams) it is easy to see that the ‘formation’ of Black women is of great importance to Beyoncé. ‘Beychella’ was not the first example of this ‘formation’; we visually see this ‘formation’ as bringing the *idea of protest* into popular music’s cultural consciousness at the Superbowl 50 halftime show in 2016 (as Beyoncé performs the song ‘Formation’). Donning outfits

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that resembling the attire of the Black Panther Party members and the Black Power Movement (i.e. black berets, Afros, black boots), the entirely black female dance crew and band performed on the organisation's 50th anniversary in the Bay Area (California) where the organisation was founded in 1966. During the performance there are different 'formations' which reference these movements; first, we see Beyoncé and her dancers pose with raised, clenched fists (i.e. Black Power salute); then we see the dancers form a forward arrow with Beyoncé at the apex, which most significantly, forms into an 'X'. The 'X' visual was in reference to Malcolm X.



Figure 16: Beyoncé performing at the Superbowl, 7th February 2016 (How/Getty Images, 2016)

Beyoncé takes a political stance as she aligns with movements that aim to combat police brutality and promote self-love in the African-American community. Another example of this 'formation' is featured on *The Lion King* soundtrack, *The Gift* (2019), is Beyoncé's track 'Brown Skin Girl' (featuring Beyoncé's six-year-old daughter, Blue Ivy and Afro-beats artist, WizKid). The song lyrics promote the self-love and affirmation of 'brown skin girls', telling us to embrace our "melanin", hair including "braids" and "nappy curls" and "complexities" among other attributes. The song has sparked another 'formation' of, not only black women, but young black girls taking part in the '#BrownSkinGirlChallenge' on Instagram. What this shows is that these 'formations' are political acts which, through music, performance and social media, are "unquestionably political and irrevocably beautiful at the same time" (Morrison, 1984: 345).

Robyn Rihanna Fenty

Rihanna continues to navigate multiple positionalities throughout her complex 14-year career including 'diasporic citizenship' (Weheylie, 2005); being the 'daughter' and 'face' of a nation-state; the discourses surrounding her negotiation of her own Black female identity; sexuality; and overcoming of domestic violence in the public eye. Rihanna came into the music industry as a 16 year-old from Barbados with her first single, the light dancehall-inspired 'Pon De Replay' (2005), which coincided with the short popularity of dancehall/reggae music entering mainstream pop charts in the mid-2000s (e.g. Kevin Lyttle, 'Turn Me On'; Sean Paul, 'We Be Burnin'). According to Epic Records CEO, LA Reid (2016), Rihanna auditioned for Def Jam Records in February 2005 with a Beyoncé song and after being signed performed at in-house showcase with Beyoncé present. Reid (2016) notes in his memoir that "A bell went off for me, however, when, after the showcase, Beyoncé came up to me. "That Rihanna girl," she said, "she's a beast.""; the first of many examples where the two have affirmed one another's worth.

The Face of Barbados

Now the 'Barbadian Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary' with the "specific responsibility for promoting education, tourism and investment for the island" (Austin, 2018), Rihanna shifts through multiple cultural positionalities like her Caribbean predecessor, Grace Jones. Building upon Grace Jones' legacy, she has the "shape shifter's ability" to transform her personae within the context of her own subjectivity of coming from and growing up in post-colonial Barbados (Fulani, 2012: 234-236). Marshall (in Beckles and Russell, 2015: 42) goes further to say that Rihanna emerges:

“...like many of her migrant Caribbean forebears and today’s Caribbean youth as a navigator of the complex interplay between the boundaries and limits of race, class, gender, sexual difference and national/territorial allegiance – all encased within the unconscious psychodynamics of anti-colonial resistance”

Rihanna as a “navigator” of these boundaries and “psychodynamics of anti-colonial resistance” are navigated at home and on a public world stage where her subjectivity, personae and cultural productions are always “in flux” and in negotiation with such dynamics through contestation, reinforcement and conflict (Braidotti, 2012). Despite the marginalization of Caribbean identities in the American mainstream market and media, Rihanna has unapologetically emphasized her Bajan subjectivity throughout her career. She has kept her Bajan accent and vernacular, sonically within her singing voice (e.g. ‘Work’, 2016) and during major American and British media events (e.g. MTV Video Music Awards 2016) in ways where other entertainers of Caribbean origin may have passed for American or British in the past (e.g. Harry Belafonte, Grace Jones and Billy Ocean). Therefore, while “Rihanna may be crossing” transnationally across mainstream popular culture, “she is not passing” as she resists the US and British standardization of her vernacular while incorporating her Barbadian nationality and Afro-Caribbean female subjectivity into her cultural production (Russell, in Fulani, 2012: 300).



Figure 17: Rihanna performing in Madison Square Garden, New York at the MTV Video Music Awards, 2016 (Wargo/Getty Images, 2016)

Rihanna as the ‘face’ of a post-colonial nation-state, however, produces complex power relations pertaining to the “veritable phantasmagoria of colonial history, nationalism, globalization and sexual politics” (Russell, in Fulani, 2012: 300). Rihanna being a ‘diasporic citizen’, as Weheliye puts, “entails culturally and politically aligning oneself with communities beyond the borders of the nation-state [...] in addition to negotiating legal and cultural positionalities in relation to this very nation state” (2005:

148). This citizenship places different burdens on her presence in Anglophone mainstream popular culture in addition to navigating this landscape as a Black woman; it also produces added complexities of the archetypal stereotypes constructed of her within media discourses at home and abroad. 'Diasporic citizenship' here also presents another dichotomy which Rihanna occupies as it produces her as both a representative and a representation of Barbados; a predominantly Christian society, in which, middle-class sections value the notions of Christian respectability. In 2011, during the making of the music video for 'We Found Love' in Bangor (Northern Ireland), Alan Graham, a farmer and DUP councillor (Democratic Unionist Party), reportedly told Rihanna to "cover up" as she was filming the video on his wheat field (BBC News, 2011). Later in November, this incident was commented on at the Democratic Labour Party's (DLP) independence anniversary celebration in Barbados by Bishop Dr Marlon Husbands alongside expressions of 'concern' for immorality and homosexuality in the country. In relation to the incident, he stated that Rihanna is "always doing foolishness" and "not fit" to be the country's cultural ambassador as she was an "inappropriate role model for Barbadian youth" (King, 2011; Kamugisha, 2015: 159). This demonstrates Russell's (2012: 300) "veritable phantasmagoria of colonial history, nationalism, globalization and sexual politics".

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WELCOMING EMBRACE:
Acting Prime Minister Ronald Jones (centre) hugging Bishop Dr. Marlon Husbande at yesterday's church service at the Sanctuary Empowerment Centre. At right is Sir Branford Tallit. (Photo by Steve Haskings)

RIHANNA 'NOT FIT'

Preacher lambastes star over 'foolishness' she does

by **MIKE KING**

CONCERNED THAT BARBADOS is in a state of decay and immorality, a church leader has accused world-class singer Rihanna of "always doing foolishness",

and called her unworthy of being an ambassador.

At a service marking the Independence anniversary celebrations being put on by the Democratic Labour Party (DLP), Bishop Dr. Marlon Husbande took issue with some of the actions of the pop star, and also expressed concerns about the level of indiscipline, immorality and homosexuality in the country.

Speaking at the Sanctuary Empowerment Centre on Country Road, St Michael, before an audience that included Acting Prime Minister Ronald Jones, President of the Senate Sir Branford Tallit and Speaker Michael Carrington and fellow Members of Parliament Steve Mackerron and Patrick Todd, Bishop Husbande lambasted Rihanna for the controversy that ensued last September in Dublin when a farmer told her to cover up after she stripped down for a video in a wheat field.

"The international public lambasted the farmer because he did not want any

INSIDE
QEH plugging pay loophole
PAGE 3

Making a living from coconuts
PAGES 16&17

Carlton take title
PAGE 24

Figure 18: Nation News Barbados. Front Page: 21st November 2011. "Rihanna 'not fit': Preacher lambastes star over 'foolishness' she does " (King, 2011)

Firstly, we have a transnational patriarchal allegiance on the politics of respectability between Graham and Husbands in policing Rihanna's "inappropriate" displaying of skin. On the other hand, Barbados in the global market place (e.g. tourism), uses Rihanna's image and cultural production as commodity as the transnational and transcultural 'face' of Barbados (i.e. Barbados tourism campaign in 2013 featuring Rihanna and her 2012 song 'Diamonds'). Therefore, Rihanna as a representative and representation of the nation is expected to adhere to the sexual politics of Bajan middle-class respectability but she also strategically challenges these notions within her cultural image and production refusing to be stripped of her sexuality through respectability politics. Then this same cultural image and commercial appeal that Rihanna has is used as marketing tool for the nation. This triple-bind (nation, globalization and sexual politics) is encapsulated in the colonial history of commodifying black women's bodies and legacies which prize lighter skin due its proximity to European standards of beauty – i.e. "With her light complexion and greenish eyes, Rihanna is not phenotypically characteristic of the majority of Afro-Barbadians who constitute the principal racial group of the nation" (2012: 300). But it is also a legacy which expects Rihanna through her Blackness to drive her "sexuality underground" and if not, is constructed as "inappropriate", "not fit" and dangerous to the nation's "youth" (i.e. villain-seductress-perpetrator) (Russell, 2012: 300-306; Kamugisha, 2015); reminiscent of the Daily Mail (UK) article by Liz Jones (2013). So, even though Rihanna is proudly the 'face' of Barbados, there still exist an undercurrent of sexual politics, more specifically, a virgin/whore complex encapsulated in colonial legacies.

Good Girl Gone Bad

The first major paradigmatic shift and career-breakthrough was the release of Rihanna's 3rd studio album, *Good Girl Gone Bad* (2007). With her two previous recordings, *Music of The Sun* (2005) and *A Girl Like Me* (2006), reviewers had already dubbed her the "Bajan Beyoncé" (Taylor, 2005), where her image and songs like the electro-style 'SOS' (2006) and the emotional ballad 'Unfaithful' (2006) "wasn't enough to shake off comparisons to the likes of Beyoncé, Ciara, Ashanti and Teairra Mari" (Gracie, 2017). At this time (2005-2008), there was a trend in female Pop/R&B music, which music critic Tom Breihan (2007: online) described as "The Battle for the Heart of R&B" where singers were going in two musical and aesthetic directions – "this spare, chilly electro stuff" – e.g. Keri Hilson, 'The Way I Are' (2007) and Cassie, 'Me & U' (2006) – "and the Oprah-friendly histrionics" – e.g. Mary J Blige, 'Be Without You' (2005) and Mariah Carey, 'We Belong Together' (2005). At the peak of this era in 2007, Rihanna drastically changed her image from fresh, long-brown-haired island girl to an edgier, darker aesthetic accompanied by a sharp, asymmetric black bob; deviating from the hair and beauty mold Black female Pop/R&B singers ascribed to pre-2007 (typically long, straight/wavy, brown/blonde/black hair which was more in proximity to European standards of hair texture – e.g. Christina Milian, Ciara and Beyoncé). Signifying her album title *Good Girl Gone Bad* and playing on the virgin/whore, good/bad dichotomies, Rihanna told the *NME* (Robinson, 2015) that the night before shooting the album art for *Good Girl Gone Bad* she cut her hair without her record label's (Def Jam) permission, stating:

“Their reaction was, ‘These are way too edgy. What are we going to do with these? We can’t use these’ But the photoshoot was done. And we weren’t going to do it again [...] I had to rebel and do it my way [...] And I had to jump ship in order to achieve that” (Robinson, 2015)

For Rihanna, to “jump ship” was to cut her hair because hair for Black women is a area of political contestation. I think about my own hair in this context in which I had one side shaved bald in July 2009; the hair salon (Black female owned salon catering mainly to Black women) watched anxiously. Being of Jamaican-Indian (great-grandparents were 18th century ‘indentured servants’ sent to Jamaica from Eastern India during British colonial rule), and Barbadian decent I have been encouraged to straighten my hair because it has been suggested I should *take advantage* of ‘pretty hair’. But the politics of *taking advantage* is paradoxical as it entails reinforcing Eurocentric (assumed *advantageous*) hierarchies of hair texture which actually works against Black women as Afro-hair textures are racially devalued and scaled from good to bad (C. Robinson, 2011: 359). The record label’s reaction above to Rihanna’s transformation also reflects this anxiety of a “momentary rupture” of *taking advantage* of long ‘pretty hair’ (even though the ‘gaze’ in Rihanna’s situation might have differed), as to “jump ship” is to exercise a form of counteraction to dominant colonial discourses of beauty which idealize Eurocentric “long flowing hair” (Mama, 1995: 149; Tate, 2007, 2005: 86).



Figure 19: 'Good Girl Gone Bad', Rihanna's third-studio album cover (Reid and D'Este, 2007).

Rihanna's asymmetric bob was debuted in the lead single music video, 'Umbrella' featuring Jay-Z (2007). According to James (2008: 418), Rihanna embodies the Afro-futuristic "Robo-Diva" in the 'Umbrella' video in which she "could care less about humanist aesthetic values because, among other reasons, she is grounded in inaccurate and disabling stereotypes about women and non-whites"; and I will add immigrants within the United States to this. The futuristic theme is then embodied fully by Rihanna as she appears naked covered entirely in metallic paint, so though other parts show intermittently the dichotomy of good-girl-in-white (and whiteness as 'good'/'virginal') to bad-black-girl-in-black, the metallic paint shows "the opposite of "good girl" is not just "dark girl," but robo-girl (she's not just black, she's metallic)" (2008: 416). The Black female Robo-Diva poses a further threat to white patriarchy because the anxieties associated with technology and robots, like the anxieties surrounding racialized virgin/whore dichotomy and Black female sexuality, are

dichotomized as “neutral and obedient or as inherently threatening and out of control” (Huysen, 1986: 73). Rihanna as Robo-Diva in ‘Umbrella’ plays on and deconstructs the racialized virgin-whore/good-bad dichotomy in that she operates outside of “the “safe” and clearly neo-colonial role society wants to give [...] [women] of colour, that is, as either “Hu”, the “human element,” or as technology/sexuality-out-of-control.” (James, 2008: 418).

I Never Play the Victim. I'd Rather Be a Stalker: Rated R and Rejecting ‘Good’ Victimhood

In February 2009, fans eagerly anticipated Rihanna’s performance at the 51st annual Grammy Awards. As we live streamed the Grammy Red Carpet, however, it was announced that Rihanna had cancelled her appearance. The first rumour we (fans) heard was that Rihanna and, her then-boyfriend Chris Brown, had been in a car accident (MTV News, 2009) but later we would find out that Rihanna had been assaulted by Brown. Before this pivotal moment, as Wade (2013: 133) points out, Rihanna was “a rising star on her way to the status of the archetype”. Arguably in 2009, the status of the archetype belonged to Beyoncé. At the peak of the *I Am...Sasha Fierce* era, spawning mega-hits like ‘Single Ladies’, Beyoncé was invited to perform ‘At Last’ at Barack Obama’s first inauguration on 20th January 2009; 20 days before the 2009 Grammy Awards. Later, I will explain the significance of this in Rihanna and Beyoncé’s juxtaposition after this point.



Figure 20: Beyoncé singing Etta James' 'At Last' at the Neighbourhood Inauguration Ball for former-President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama, 20th January 2009 (Getty Images, 2009)

As the details of the incident unfolded through the sensationalist reporting of the media (e.g. celebrity gossip and news outlets such as *TMZ* and *CNN*), the discussion and comments about domestic violence on these sites were firmly focussed on *what Rihanna did to provoke Brown, should do next or could have done*. As Yusrik (2009: online) and Bierria (2012: 104-105) have noted, the discourse constructs Rihanna along the trajectories of sexuality, race, Caribbeanity and colonial discourses of Caribbean conquest; for instance, comments on celebrity blogs ranged from “Caribbean women are crazy, she probably cut him” to “That island b***h probably put some roots on him”. With such assertions, Bierria states that Afro-Caribbean women are constructed through the:

“prism of violent ideologies that are rooted in historical processes of British colonial expansion [...] and reinforced by U.S. imperial interests [...] Americans, in turn, consume these cultural scripts that define Afro-Caribbean women as “out of control”, “crazy” and “dangerous”. This manufactures justification for racialized, gendered violence and encourages patriarchal dominance over black women from the West Indies” (2012: 105)

Furthermore, the idea of ‘putting roots’ on someone is linked to negative stereotypes of ancient African and Afro-Caribbean religions (e.g. Yoruba, Voodoo and Santería) and the British fear of legendary Obeah women such as the Jamaican National Hero, Queen Nanny of the Maroons (1686-1755) (Jamaican Information Service, 2011). These stereotypes began to be incorporated into American cinema during the 1930s alongside controlling images of the Mammy and Tragic-Mulatta, for instance – e.g. *The Devil’s Daughter* (1939) (also juxtaposes Black women as ‘good’ Jamaican girl who moved to America and her ‘evil’ Jamaican half-sister who lives on her father’s plantation in Jamaica) and *The Love Wanga* (1936), both set in the entirety in the Caribbean (Martin, 2016: 3-5). Denied of ‘good’ victimhood through such stereotypes, Rihanna is rendered as villain-seductress-perpetrator magically luring and provoking Brown to violence (Bierria, 2012: 105).

Two days after Rihanna’s 21st birthday, *TMZ* posted the photo of Rihanna that police had taken after the incident with the headline, *Rihanna: The Face of A Battered Woman* (2009). Later, *People* (2009) broke the news that Rihanna and Brown had gotten back together and the police report was released to the public shortly after. What happens next is an immediate media redefinition of Rihanna as objectified

victim-in-need-of-rescue. The release of Rihanna's face shifted her from a girl on her way to the archetype, embodying *resilience* and neoliberal success as a migrant in pursuit of 'the American Dream' (Rodier and Meagher, 2014: 182), and therefore could appeal to Black and white middle-class audiences through her brand endorsements which gave her a space within middle-class respectability (e.g. *Cover Girl* cosmetics, *Gucci*, *Got Milk?*); to a battered black woman who represented "poor's values" (Wade, 2013: 131-133). Wade goes further to say that Rihanna was being 'held down' and 'ignored':

"in order for some women belonging to the Black middle class to seemingly ignore 'the face' that threatens to transport them back in time to place typically regulated for poor white women and urban ghettoized Black women" (2013: 131)

Considering that the first Black President and First Lady of the United States had been inaugurated into the White House just 20 days prior to the incident, I argue that the need to redirect this threat and 'weigh in' through notable Black female middle-class archetypes (e.g., Oprah Winfrey and Tyra Banks both 'weighed in' with TV specials dedicated to the incident) rather than just 'ignore' Rihanna became paramount. Moreover, Rihanna's face not only posed a 'threat to transport' Black women "back in time"; it also posed a threat to the illusion of racial transgression at the time. This represented what Wade calls 'symbolic proximity' because responses (or silence) to Rihanna's abuse revealed "the instability of Black female alignment with white middle-class culture" and entry into such spaces that seemed to offer the opportunity for racial transgression (2013: 129). Accordingly, on the 6th March 2009, Oprah Winfrey

weighed in. Analysed by Rodier and Meagher (2014: 185-188), Oprah directs her advice to Rihanna, emphasizing *her* responsibility to leave. However, Oprah's response places the obligation of leaving an abuser on Rihanna and by extension other women who have been assaulted by their partners, rather than placing the obligation to not commit acts of violence against women on the male abuser; it naturalizes 'male aggression' towards women and ultimately (although not intentionally) excuses Brown of his actions (Enck and McDaniel, 2012: 633). Although Oprah's advice is well-meaning, it is "in fact overdetermined by neoliberal and post-feminist discourses that emphasize personal responsibility" (Rodier and Meagher, 2014: 186). Here we see how 'weighing in' can also be a way of 'holding down' when Rihanna fails at "autonomous self-realization" and resilient self-determination, and is encouraged to "seek therapy, counselling, or guidance" (2014: 187; McRobbie, 2009: 60). Later, I also want to bring attention to Beyoncé's interview on *Larry King Live*, which aired on *CNN* 26th April 2009. King's line of questioning runs in a particular order, which juxtaposes Beyoncé with Rihanna along lines of these same respectability and post-feminist politics.

On *Rated R* (2009), Rihanna gives a more complex and cathartic account of domestic violence, her own subjectivity and self-protection. The album shifts from the intense 'Russian Roulette' where she sings about a relationship that might hurt her (emotionally and physically), to when she gathers her "Girls, like a soldier" and warns "trip and it's going down, down, down" in the Chase and Status produced revenge track, 'G4L' (Fenty et al, 2009) (this is the first time we hear Rihanna explicitly engage in revenge narratives but not the last). With the influence and invocation of Grace Jones in the Rated R era, Rihanna retrieves her narrative in ways that are unable to

be co-opted through ‘trauma-porn’ and neoliberal ‘overcoming’. Black female trauma-porn (i.e. fetishization of black women’s lives to tears, anguish and pain) can be fetishized by the white gaze because it confirms that Black women are *indeed* in-need-of-rescue (e.g. white saviourism) but it also satisfies the notion of Black women’s “ideologically driven, ‘true’ placement in society – the bottom” (White, 2018: online; Shackelford, 2016: online; Wade, 2013: 134). Therefore, Rihanna redefining herself as objectified victim-in-need-of-rescue requires that she embody feminized fragility (i.e., a feminized ideal traditionally attributed to white womanhood; discourse which was used in the pro-abolition period in attempts to ‘moralise’ Black women) in order to overcome it as spectacle; this is an affective labour required of ‘good’ victims (James, 2015: 81).



Figure 21: 'Rated R' album art outtake (von Unwerth, 2009).

'Russian Roulette' as a comeback single – a comeback which required her to *bounce back* and *spectacularly overcome* domestic abuse – left some critics bemused, with the feminist website, Jezebel, running the headline *Does Rihanna's New Single Defend Abusive Relationships?* (North, 2009). Rosenberg (2009: online), whom North quotes, also says that "I thought it would have been terrific for someone to *overcome* such a relationship in public. Instead, Rihanna is using a song about *embracing being terrorized*" (my emphasis). North's 'concern' of whether Rihanna had "*free choice*" strips Rihanna of agency, objectifying her as victim-in-need-of-rescue with the inability to make choices for herself where she is "*pushed*" into recording 'Russian Roulette'.

Furthermore, when Rosenberg's wishes to see Rihanna's resilient 'overcoming' are not met, it is determined that Rihanna is "*embracing being terrorized*". Rosenberg and North's white feminist 'concern' and misreading of Rihanna's complex response in 'Russian Roulette', actually ends up reproducing colonial discourse used to 'moralise' and 'remake', and justify the abuse and exploitation of Black women during slavery (Jordan-Zachery, 2009: 40; hooks, 1981; Davis, 1981). Hence, what we are actually seeing here is white feminist 'concern' serving white supremacist patriarchy because they are not "angry" out of genuine worry for Rihanna; "they're upset at Rihanna's apparent *failure to overcome* that damage *and capitalize* on it", where she must embody feminized fragility and a lack of agency as a prerequisite, especially as an Afro-Caribbean woman from a post-colonial nation (James, 2015: 143, my emphasis).

Rihanna's Back-Chat

Jamaican historian, Lucille Mair (1975) and later Shields (2015: 99), describe "back chat" as an open insurrection of defiant speech which is a vital type of resistance for Afro-Caribbean women in our workspaces. Throughout the West Indies, Caribbean women's verbal resistance has been a "coping mechanism", using subtle and indirect "humour and irony" as weaponry, which was "used to great effect 'that powerful instrument of attack and defense'" (Mair, 1975: 13). Additionally, from its launch in 2006, Twitter gave celebrities the opportunity to tweet and write in an authentic voice which re-presented them 'ordinary' and 'attainable' as a star text (Thomas, 2014: 243).

Twitter had become a part of the celebrity workspace; a part of Rihanna's workspace and a re-presentation of her persona. With Rihanna as no exception to the rise of celebrity Twitter, she took control of her Twitter account in August 2010 where we began to see Rihanna author her own tweets; to her fans and also to 'clapback' (or rather back-chat) at her critics (including fans, other celebrities and the media) who attempted to police her behaviour and cultural production along the lines of sexuality, race and respectability politics. In the following example, we see Rihanna back-chat at a Twitter user after Rihanna revealed the single cover for the song 'Man Down' (Joseph et al, 2011; Twitter, 2011):

"@NinyaBella: Why does her hair look so nappy? @rihanna #ManDown official single cover revealed <http://twitpic.com/4w9q7q>

@Rihanna: @NinyaBella: cuz I'm black bitch!!!"

The issue of the question, "Why does her hair look so *nappy*?" (my emphasis), is that it is a racist rhetorical question, where "nappy" is used as a derogative of Rihanna's aesthetic choice of hairstyle. The derogative use of "nappy" is rooted in (as I have mentioned previously) Eurocentric beauty standards which devalue and grade Afro-hair textures. As a result, "Black females have had to invent their own beauty standards" using the variety of black female hair textures to invent such standards (e.g. when Rihanna reinvents her image it is usually with a variety of Afro hairstyles, whether weaved, dyed or braided; including Bantu Knots for the *ANTI* era in 2016) (C.Robinson, 2011: 363; Tate, 2007). Rihanna's response, "cuz I'm black bitch", can be taken as "back chat" for she uses hyperbole as a rhetorical device to defend her hair and her Blackness against the racist policing of Afro-hair textures. Rihanna's "back chat" went further with this particular tweet, when she named the *Fenty Beauty* liquid eyeliner (also known as 'Flyliner'), 'Cuz I'm Black' (Fenty Beauty, 2019).

Although the statement has now been commodified and capitalized on, Rihanna has humorously and satirically turned a moment that attempted shame her blackness into a *Fenty Beauty* product.

Rihanna's back-chat extends beyond her social media responses, however. From 2011 onwards, we also see Rihanna star in and direct a string of controversial music videos. We have the bondage themed 'S&M' (Matsoukas, 2011), about a "love-hate relationship with the media" in their attempts to redefine her as victim (Van Meter, 2011); the exotic dance video, 'Pour it Up' (Fenty, 2013; as lead director), where she centres "the ontological complexities of Black women exotic dancers, mainly constructing them as multi-dimensional artists and athletes" (Lewis, 2017: 52); and the revenge narratives of 'Man Down' (Mandler, 2011), 'Bitch Better Have My Money' (Fenty and Megaforce, 2015; as co-director) and 'Needed Me' (Korine, 2016), which confront themes such as power, exploitation, rape survival, Black female sexuality and anger.

Thinking further about the music video as a workspace, the pinnacle of Rihanna's visual and lyrical back-chat is the 2015 video 'Bitch Better Have My Money' (BBHMM) (Fenty and Megaforce, 2015). The video and song are based on the true event of Rihanna's former accountant, Peter Gounis, stealing money from her and giving her the inaccurate financial advice in 2009. We see Rihanna (and her friends, Sanam Sindhi and Sita Abellan) kidnap the accountant's (Mads Mikkelsen) girlfriend (Rachel Roberts) and hold her for ransom in order to retrieve the money the accountant has stolen from her. Before I delve into the video, James (2015: online) links roles played in BBHMM to the idea of *pornotroping* laid out by Spillers (1987) and Weheliye (2008)

(this can be related to Black female trauma porn I referred to earlier; the fetishization of black female pain). Referring back to Spillers (1987) and mammifying Beyoncé at the Grammys, I talked about the dispossession of kinship and property – “eliminating someone’s kinship status is necessary to transforming a human being into chattel” (James, 2015: online) – in order to reposition Black women *of service*. This needs unpacking as far as BBHMM.

We are used to seeing *pornotroping* as anti-black racialized sexual violence and/or powerless Black pain (e.g. Liz Jones in the Daily Mail, *Roots* and by extension many movies which depict slavery, and the Netflix series *Orange is the New Black*, when Poussey Washington is murdered in the prison cafeteria) (Shackelford, 2016). BBHMM, as James puts it, resembles *pornotroping* but it is a remix of the elements; racialized sexual violence is not inflicted on Rihanna nor does she experience pain. The racialized sexual violence (most of which is implied and not shown) is toward the white couple, Roberts and Mikkelsen. Rihanna’s body covered in blood at the beginning and end “is the medium that depicts racialized sexual violence *that she did not experience*, at least as its target” (2015: online). Rihanna is taking back her property (money or reparations as Sostaita (2015) put it) from within “*the very regimes of objectification, violence and consumption*” of white supremacist patriarchy, which “as its target”, seeks to exploit *her* labour (Ferreday, 2017: 4) (i.e. dispossess her of kinship and property to redefine her *of service*, as ‘good’ victim, as respectable, as antithetical to ‘good’ and respectable in order to generate mutually defining dichotomies). BBHMM “riffs on that violence” (holding Roberts hostage) to depict Roberts as complicit in Mikkelsen’s theft of Rihanna’s money– i.e. white women as complicit to white supremacist patriarchy’s regimes of violence, redefinition and

exploitation of Black women (e.g. We saw this play out when Adele and Faith Hill mammified Beyoncé at the 2017 Grammy Awards; mammification as redefinition and dispossession of kinship). Simply put, in BBHMM, Rihanna explodes a cultural script: she puts her needs before the needs of everyone else (most notably, before the needs of Roberts) , she is not *of service* and does not work *of service* to get her money back – “rejecting historical perceptions of black women as only existing to make white lives better” (Springer, 2007: 266), nor is she rescued or yearning to be rescued (as fragile) and in the end, she is not punished nor maligned for her crimes (e.g. pity, scorn or death. The police officer (Eric Roberts) is unaware a crime is being committed). The “overkill” of Rihanna relaxing with a cigarette in her own money, in blood that does not originate from her pain, becomes “the monstrosity (of a female with the potential to “name”)” (Spillers, 1987: 80; Ferreday, 2017).

However, what we do see is such reactive scorn and white anxiety in the media (Ellen, 2015; Vine, 2015; H. Lewis, 2015) where they repeal the personal as political for a Black woman with a grievance; shown in a way that is hard to swallow, co-opt or assimilate into mainstream white feminism (Springer, 2007: 268). Lewis (2015) for the *New Statesman*, as Ferreday (2017: 12-13) analyses, remakes Rihanna into villain-seductress-perpetrator by pointing out that “a lot of men who get off on image of women being tortured are going to be turned on by this video [...] Rihanna is an astonishingly good- looking woman, with a well-documented allergy to clothes”. Rihanna is made perpetrator of the ‘male gaze’ and concomitantly, Lewis redefines Rihanna’s appearance “as engendering male violence” (2017: 13). Furthermore, this redefinition mentions Rihanna’s “well-documented allergy to clothes” because this is precisely how Lewis seeks to redefine Rihanna; as the object of titillation and racialized

sexual violence – the anti-black ideological placement of Black female bodies in *pornotroping* (i.e., victim-in-need-of-rescue), along with stereotypes of Black women as hypersexual – it reveals that this is where Rihanna would be more comfortably placed for Lewis. Lewis (2015) adds, “the answer to that is to make more noise, to raise *our voices louder*, when women who are doubly disadvantaged are objectified and marginalised” (my emphasis). White women’s voices are re-centralised for “women who are doubly disadvantaged” because as Lewis ironically points out there is a “hierarchy of victimhood”; one which does not ask *why* Rihanna is angry and how white women are complicit in the silencing of her voice and exploitation of her labour – which the video is getting at. Rihanna’s friends in the video, assist her and take a back seat as she does what she needs to do for herself – they do not centralise themselves and silence her.

Conclusion

Rihanna is scorned for BBHMM (back-chat) and Beyoncé is criticised (before it became ***Flawless) for Bow Down/I Been On (disrespectability) – for not being ‘feminist’ (even misogynist) when their cultural productions are not of service to white middle-class feminism (as a springboard) and when they remind us of their blackness (Rihanna’s Afro-Caribbeanity and Beyoncé’s southern African-American womanhood) on terms that centre their needs in ways cannot be assimilated or co-opted. For this study, the question is not whether they are feminist or not, however. The purpose of this chapter was to show examples of ways in which Beyoncé and Rihanna have

attempted to explode, play on and find space to manoeuvre amongst the controlling dichotomies, images and cultural scripts. My overall argument is that they are reinserted into these operations by being juxtaposed with one another through media discourses because this is how they are put back into service through familiar cultural scripts (e.g., Madonna/whore complex, controlling images, villain-seductress-perpetrator/victim-in-need-of-rescue, respectability politics). As I stated at the beginning, this is because of the deep-rooted colonial fear of a black womanist culture (e.g. Kinship and 'Formations'. In the context of this study, I mean the way Beyoncé and Rihanna have publicly supported one another) and fear that they would not perform the labour that was expected of them. I have demonstrated with recent examples how sections of the media anxiously react when Beyoncé and Rihanna do not perform the cultural scripts and resilient labour that is expected of them through their cultural productions and personal lives. However, with the inclusive politics of a post-race, post-feminist popular culture, media discourses cannot be seen to be exclusionary. These technologies of power have changed. It is not about "making them submit" or "destroying" black women like Beyoncé and Rihanna or their fans; it is about centralising them in 'inclusive' politics (e.g., popular culture) and organizing (e.g., juxtaposition and neoliberal competition) "the forces under it" (i.e., multiracial white supremacist patriarchy) (Foucault, 1976: 136).

Part 2: The Beyoncé / Rihanna Juxtaposition

Introduction

Black women celebrities like Rihanna and Beyoncé when presenting personas in the entertainment world already stand in a “crooked room”, which Harris-Perry (2011a: 35) describes as “a room made crooked by the stereotypes about black women as a group”. Beyoncé and Rihanna’s celebrity personas and their cultural productions (e.g. music, music videos, fashion) are a part of media discourses, including celebrity discourses of entertainment news, gossip, music and fashion (Fairclough, 1995; Marshall, 2010: 37). Celebrity discourses collect and circulate parts of the celebrity’s “public private self” (i.e., what the celebrity presents to the public of their private lives) and snippets of their “transgressive intimate self” (i.e., an exposure of the celebrity’s ‘true’ personality) in order to further construct the celebrities’ personality. These discourses are interpersonal as this is how the audience sees the ‘real’ person, as in the “visceral quality of being closer to the core of being” (2010: 44-45). However, if parts of curated celebrity personas (e.g., social media posts, interviews) are used to further to curate what is ‘real’ about the celebrity are also based in tropes and cultural narratives relating to race, gender and nationality, for instance, then we have a skewed picture of the celebrity.

Entertainment news of Black women celebrities are not just informed by the presentation of the celebrity self but by tropes attached to their race-gender, nationality and sexuality; tropes which are curated through juxtaposition. Furthermore, narratives of these women are informed by neoliberal mechanisms such as resilience discourse

which changes the way we see, for instance, their public–private self and race within the virgin/whore dichotomy. In this chapter, I will argue that juxtaposition is not just a technique used by entertainment and journalistic discourse to juxtapose celebrities based on their personas but a mechanism based in racist-sexist technologies of management, measurement and the recuperation of Black women and their affective labour, particularly if they are emblems of neoliberal success (i.e., a celebrity). Part 2 of this Chapter will argue that juxtaposition in contemporary popular culture is a major neoliberal and (neo)colonial mechanism and technique operating to generate old and new race–gender archetypal stereotypes. The Oxford Languages (2023) definition of juxtaposition is as follows: “the fact of two things being seen or placed close together with contrasting effect”. Imagine the “things” are people and that these people have been and are objectifiable in particular racialized–gendered and sexual ways in white supremacist capitalist patriarchal societies (e.g., colonisation). Juxtaposition is a technique a power that places and organises Black/Brown people side by side with contrasting effects. It differs from Barthes’ ‘binary oppositions’ (1992) because Barthes’ discussion lacks a focused concern with race and racism, whereas in my thesis I account for the role of enslavement and colonial violence in the technique of juxtaposition. Juxtaposition is a mechanism of white supremacist capitalist patriarchal violence, separation and surveillance of Black and Brown people, particularly Black and Brown women. Fundamentally, juxtaposition is the upgraded colonial structuring of ‘divide and rule’; it is the neoliberal version that *looks* like deregulated competition and choice. The development of the concept of juxtaposition as a critical analysis of gendering/racialization as a major technique of power in this thesis, is an important contribution for the disciplines of Cultural Studies, Postcolonial studies, and Black feminist theory.

Affective Labour of Resilience

Controlling images is the *objectification* of Black women through stereotypical imagery originating from juxtaposing colonial discourses (i.e., virgin/whore, mammy/bad-black-girl), justifying the white supremacist patriarchal exploitation of Black women (Collins, 2000: 69). I have argued that celebrity discourses (i.e., entertainment news, gossip) reposition Beyoncé and Rihanna back into *service* through juxtaposition and familiar cultural scripts of Black women (e.g. virgin/whore, controlling images, respectability politics, villain-seductress-perpetrator/victim-in-need-of-rescue). As part of my contribution to knowledge I argue that the ‘controlling’ function in controlling images has been deregulated through neoliberal mechanisms, such as resilience discourse. For James (2015: 6), “resilience discourse is what ties contemporary pop music aesthetics to neoliberal capitalism and racism/sexism” which demonstrates that neoliberal mechanisms, bearing in mind their racist-sexist composition, permeate through a hyper-visible culture such as pop music through discourse. Resilience discourse is important to discuss for understanding how Beyoncé and Rihanna’s media personas are framed, juxtaposed and measured within the celebrity discourse of entertainment news and gossip. Resilience discourse restructures how we see ‘ideal’ feminine and racial conduct thus it “recuts the virgin/whore dichotomy” so that it not only serves to mark out the white/black dichotomy within virgin/whore but to mark differences between resilient, good non-white women and insufficiently resilient, bad non-white women (2015: 85). Additionally, I argue that this ‘recut’ is flexible (like these processes are deregulatory) because positionalities change depending on their

mediated conduct (e.g. what are Rihanna and Beyoncé doing at this particular time?). As Ahmed (2013) puts it; “it is often a requirement upon oppressed people that we smile and be cheerful. If we comply, we signify our docility and our acquiescence in our situation”. I will go further and say that this affective labour of resilience is a requirement of those who *look like* and/or *represent* the oppressed as neoliberal emblems of capitalistic success (Beyoncé and Rihanna). The markers of resilience discourse include the ability to withstand damage, adaptability and the capacity for reinvention and bouncing back.

When referring to *service* I am really referring to an affective labour (Hardt and Negri, 2004). Affective labour is generally understood to mean a category of immaterial labour (waged or unwaged) that requires “contact with the public” but the definitions are varied (Oksala, 2016: 290–1). Affective labour has also been theorized as ‘women’s work’, in the sense that it denotes the requirement of women to produce seemingly intangible affects in other people; “a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction”, a feeling of happiness, *overcoming* and *resilience* (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 96; James, 2015). Resilience discourse is a new version of affective ‘women’s work’ because it still requires Black women to be of service, as in clean up the systemic racism-sexism which make, for example, white supremacist patriarchy and mainstream white feminism *look misogynoiristic*. Misogynoir is a term coined by Black queer feminist Moya Bailey and is a portmanteau of misogyny and the French term for black, ‘noir’, to highlight the specific misogyny that effects black women only (Bailey, 2014). Using tropes later under discussion (e.g., the Strong-Black-Woman), Boom (2015: online) expands on the term:

“the very specific convergence of anti-Blackness and misogyny, and therefore is not applicable to non-Black women of color (or white women) [...] it disrupts the tendency that mainstream feminism has of universalizing womanhood as a uniformly shared experience” (Bailey, 2014; Boom, 2015).

Therefore, resilience discourse will be read on the above terms throughout. For instance, the objectification of Black women, particularly within Collins’ concept of controlling images (2000), looks at how aesthetic elements (i.e., cinematic aesthetics) are used to manufacture justifications for white supremacist patriarchy’s ideological categorisation and violence (i.e., the *damage*) towards black women. But neoliberal mechanisms (i.e., resilience) upgrade this objectification; in other words, “we liked doing damage to women, we now like to see women overcome that damage” (James, 2014: 120; Ziarek, 2012; Mulvey, 1975). In terms of Black women, this would mean that it is the responsibility of Black women to overcome racialized-feminized *damage* – i.e., controlling images (objectification), in which they perform the affective labour of overcoming controlling images; a process which further normalizes the *damage* done by white supremacist patriarchy. There is a shift from objectification to subjectification in that Black women are expected “to perform their damage as a baseline” for which they become ‘good’ resilient Black women overcoming Black feminized *damage* (as already damaged) (James, 2014: 120; Gill, 2007: 147).

If Black women in pop music are resilient enough (i.e. recovering from damage by using it as a resource in order to capitalize on it) they are “included within” Multiracial White Supremacist Patriarchy’s (“MRWaSP”) “privilege” and rewarded with a higher placement “in the post-race pecking order” (James, 2015: 85-86; Gallagher, 2015: 51).

Resilience discourse performed as a spectacle (through Beyoncé and Rihanna's celebrity mediated personas and entertainment news in this case), "deploys a strategy of 'splitting'" as it juxtaposes the resilient and "the acceptable from the abnormal" and the insufficiently resilient (Hall, 1997: 258). Hall (1997) argues that this "splitting" is a strategy of stereotyping which essentializes and naturalizes stereotypes; in other words, resilience discourse naturalizes misogynoir. Human capital is what is accumulated from the affective labour of resilience, which means that Beyoncé and Rihanna's public-private personas and cultural works are reconceived in neoliberal terms as "a stock of capital" (Horning, 2013; James, 2014: 146). Beyoncé and Rihanna as racialized-gendered neoliberal emblem of success, also have the social, cultural and economic capital within the entertainment industry to broadcast resilience as a spectacle; all forms of capital are convertible into one another and used in the operation of juxtaposition (Bourdieu, 1986). These neoliberal attributes (from what we see of Beyoncé and Rihanna, quantitatively and qualitatively) are inserted into the operation of juxtaposition having this "splitting" effect.

When Beyoncé and Rihanna are juxtaposed in these neoliberal terms, we also see the "splitting" of "some styles of blackness" and feminine conduct in popular culture. For instance, Beyoncé (along with the former Republican US secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice) is included in "multiracial white privilege" when endorsing Sheryl Sandberg's "Lean In" campaign (2014). 'Leaning in' to the neoliberal feminism and the D.I.Y messages of the campaign involves subjectification and bouncing back (i.e. *damage* control and resilience). However, Beyoncé and other famous Black women (Condoleezza Rice, Kerri Washington and Serena Williams) are instrumentalized in the creation hierarchical dichotomies between good resilient Black women and

insufficiently resilient, bad Black women not being “ambitious” enough; this instrumentalization “augments white supremacy” (James, 2015: 13). It is the same resilience discourse, from a US/UK context, that is used to separate out (i.e., juxtapose and dichotomize into good/bad) the ‘good’ immigrant from the ‘bad’ immigrant, which is important to acknowledge being that Rihanna identifies as an immigrant; a message that has been used in her *Fenty* brand (Shukla, 2017; Shukla et al, 2016; Andrews, 2017: 2486). Rihanna’s proclamation, “Wherever I go, except for Barbados, I’m an immigrant”, emphasizes the tensions within her national and transnational ‘diasporic citizenship’ (Schneier, 2019)¹. Resilience discourse requires immigrants to ‘pass’ and accommodate their social/cultural/political environments in order to take on compliant and (self-)manageable subjectivities.

Resilience discourse therefore uses juxtaposition as a technique to generate “otherness” because MRWaSP is conditionally inclusive of “some styles” (i.e., resilient) of blackness/brownness to keep intact it’s “post-racial poker face” (James, 2015: 154-155; Appiah, 1991).

¹ “Wherever I go, except for Barbados, I’m an immigrant. I think people forget that a lot of times. I think they see Rihanna the brand. But I think it’s important for people to remember, if you love me, everyone out here is just like me. A million Rihannas out there, getting treated like dirt.” - Rihanna for the *The Cut* (Schneier, 2019).

FANDOM, POP MUSIC AND THE REPRODUCTION OF RACE-GENDER INEQUALITIES



Figure 22: Own photograph taken 8th February 2018. Manchester Evening News front page (2018).

In Figure 16, celebrity personas (i.e., footballers and actress) are instrumentalized by being juxtaposed with a “Town Hall Fraudster”. Senegalese footballer Kalidou Koulibaly (i.e., “Napoli star”), Brazilian footballer Gabriel Jesus (i.e., winning) and actress, Alexandra Mardell (i.e. reinvention through her “new look”) are pictured as successful celebrity non-white exemplars, juxtaposed above the mugshot of a nameless non-white “Town Hall Fraudster” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1992; Van Dijk, 1991). Here, juxtaposition is used to create a contrasting effect between non-white men and women (i.e., good/bad, success/failure dichotomies). This shows also that juxtaposition has different contrasting effects such as dichotomy and/or competition, which in this case is dichotomy but not competition. Both the exemplars and ‘Town Hall Fraudster’s’ racial identities are instrumental in creating a narrative that dichotomizes the good, resilient success of black/brown (and *working* migrant) exemplars to the criminalization of a black/brown person (as thief and *not working* for what they have earned in order to engage in *deviant* behaviour with “pals”). There is an affective labour that the black/brown exemplars are placed in juxtaposition to do, which is amplify the ‘otherness’ of other black/brown people when *they* are not performing the affective labour of resilience, which is to perform and broadcast resilience through overcoming social obstacles (e.g., race, gender, class, sexuality and circumstances which these come under scope). Thus “non-exceptional blackness works instead as an *affective amplifier*” operating to recuperate the black/brown affective labour that is lost or not performed (James, 2015: 154). I argue that Beyoncé and Rihanna’s juxtaposition serves the same agenda. Resilience makes MRWaSP *look* progressive and inclusive (through exemplars) while racism-sexism and ‘othering’

still operates efficiently underneath; the *look* of inclusivity is an ideological profit which generates financial profit (i.e., success) within the neoliberal agenda.

Juxtaposition, Competition and Deregulation

Simply put, juxtaposition is a form of management, measurement and recuperation of Black women and their affective labour. As we reconceive Beyoncé and Rihanna's Black feminine conduct in neoliberal terms (public–private self and mediated cultural works as 'stocks of capital'), juxtaposition and competition are essential organizing principles. Competition is a contrasting effect of juxtaposition (by placing two things side by side); competition is "actively produced" by juxtaposition and is organized as a "formal game between inequalities" (Foucault, 2008: 120). In other words, inequality is essential to juxtaposition and competition in the form of misogynoir. When Beyoncé and/or Rihanna are not performing the affective labour of resilience (e.g., *Disrespectability and Back-Chat, Part 1*) expected of them (as the resilience that white supremacist patriarchy now requires Black women perform in order for it to *appear* progressive and inclusive), this labour has to be replaced. The loss has to be recuperated. Returning to the Indo-Jamaican background on the paternal side of my family in order to ground these economics historically, the emancipation of African-Jamaicans from slavery (after a period of rebellion e.g., Sam Sharpe Rebellion, 1831) and demand for higher wages by the emancipated meant that cheap (manual) labour was lost. It was *replaced* by the British (and French, Dutch etc.) colonial indenture system. But this replacement also "meant that freed slaves' wages would decline, their

competitive leverage and fledgling bargaining power would debilitate” and in turn, ‘planters’ hoped and succeeded at creating competition between African-Jamaican and Indian immigrants (from an already entrenched caste system in Northern India) (Misir, 2017: 20). Phenotypical characteristics such as skin complexion (and hair texture as I have mentioned previously) and stereotypes were used to hierarchize African-Jamaicans and Indo-Jamaicans which increased mutual economic and racial hostility and competition (Shepherd, 1986: 15-16). What can be learned from this example, is that the juxtaposition and creation of competition between Black and brown women and men across the postcolonial diaspora is not new but was very much a part of the deliberate economic and racial aims of colonialism. Here, juxtaposition and competition are organizing principles when restrictions and repressions are lifted (e.g., emancipation, liberated labour); a deregulatory process, which demonstrates that neoliberal mechanisms cannot be divorced from colonial ones. It also creates distance and diverts attention away from the background conditions (e.g. colonial indenture regime, white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, race-gender archetypal stereotypes, phenotypic hierarchies), turning the attention towards the juxtaposition and competition itself and the conduct of individuals (e.g. meritocracy, capital, resilience and choices).

Deregulation in the context of this study is about creating and maintaining distance between the background conditions of (neo)colonialism and white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, and the individual. Individuals appear free of supervision and direction; there is no ‘control’ over these individuals because they are self-responsibilising, economically rational subjects with a ‘choice’ (up to a certain point). For instance, *Who has rocked the MTV VMA red carpet better: Beyoncé or Rihanna?*

(Lubitz, 2016): Beyoncé and Rihanna are free to wear what they want. The author and the audience have a 'choice' between "Beyoncé or Rihanna?". The mode of 'choice' is provided for you: Beyoncé and Rihanna are placed side by side (Juxtaposition) so you are circumscribed to Beyoncé and Rihanna. Furthermore, Beyoncé and Rihanna are inserted into an operation of either/or (i.e. Beyoncé or Rihanna) and this is "a mode of soft coercion" into making your 'choice' within the economic frames of contrast and competition (as placing Beyoncé and Rihanna side by side through juxtaposition has an either/or contrasting effect in this case) (James, 2015: 97). Juxtaposition itself is the regulator (of, say, Beyoncé and Rihanna), which organizes the choices in front of you; but you are artificially 'free' to make any choice you want and this 'free' choice of yours is deregulatory in itself. Deregulatory processes like this do not appear restrictive, exclusive, racist nor sexist but the juxtaposition of black women is misogynistic. What maintains the distance between these modes of juxtaposition, misogyny and the choices of the individual is the collapse of the social (e.g. popular culture and cultural dialogue within it: entertainers, fans, the media) and the economic (e.g. economic principles such as competition, which is then universalised in the social sphere). In other words, "Social relations and individual behaviour are deciphered in economic terms" (Lemke, 2019: 253). So, asking the reader *Who has rocked the MTV VMA red carpet better: Beyoncé or Rihanna?* (Lubitz, 2016) creates competitive discourse through the juxtaposition (i.e., economic) of Beyoncé and Rihanna which is meant for the audience to read and discuss (i.e., social), generating further competition between whoever prefers one over the other as a means of social interaction (i.e., social and economic).

The economic discourses involved are predicated on the values of “individualism, self-discipline, and merit” which make underlying misogynoir unintelligible as the focus is then about individual conduct (e.g., ‘concern’) (Bhandura, 2013: 236). Thinking about the anti-black racism specifically embedded within misogynoir, Foucault (2003: 254-255) names the ‘functions of racism’ where the first function is to “fragment, to create caesura” and the second being “if you want to live the other must die” but the problem here is that Foucault does not historically specify ‘racism’, he describes it in very broad terms. But if we think about the function of misogynoir (historically specific racism-sexism targeting black women) in these terms, so “to fragment, to create caesura” (/) and “if you want to live the other must die”, we start to see how juxtaposing black women is misogynoiristic because one of the aims of misogynoir is to categorize black women into archetypal stereotypes while playing these categories off against each other, in order to shape (fragmentation) and/or placing them alongside each other, and/or hierarchizing them. In other words, the first and second function of racism would emerge as “their separation, their alignment, their serialization, and their surveillance”; juxtaposition with contrasting effects (e.g. comparison, dichotomy and/or competition) (2003: 242; Collins, 2000). Fundamentally, neoliberal deregulatory processes are structured by antiblackness and misogynoir because the past (slavery and colonialism) “does not merely haunt the present; it *composes* the present” (Dillon, 2012: 115). However, these affects are hard to define or notice being that deregulatory processes produce these affects as ‘free choice’, ‘preference’ and are structured not to seem structured.

For example, Soraya McDonald (2019) documents Japanese-Haitian tennis player, Naomi Osaka’s rise to fame and how Osaka feels being placed in direct competition

with her idol, Serena Williams. McDonald, while interviewing Osaka, broaches the subject of the cartoon depicting her and Serena Williams at the US Open in 2018 (see Figure 3). Osaka says “I know that there’s a lot of people that don’t like Serena, and I feel like they’re just looking for someone to sort of jump on to be against her and I feel like they found that in me. [...] I don’t really like that”. Even though Osaka and Williams are in direct competition on the tennis court, Osaka’s response shows that their juxtaposition is about much more than tennis.



Figure 23: Serena Williams and Naomi Osaka cartoon by Mark Knight for the Herald Sun (Australia) (2018).

As McDonald later notes, it is “racism that tethers them together” and specifically, misogynoir in which tennis fans seek to replace Williams with Osaka – i.e. “if you want to live, the other must die” (Foucault, 2003: 254-255). The cartoon actually whitewashes Osaka as a blonde slim white woman, as a portrayal of innocence, juxtaposed Williams as an ‘angry-black-woman’ stomping on her tennis racket.

McDonald analyses this juxtaposition as the “ugly part of tennis fandom”, one which Osaka is “branded, without her consent, as the angel who will deliver us from such sordid unpleasanties” – unpleasanties meaning Williams’ reminders of her blackness such as Crip Walking as a celebration of her victories and her father reminding the audience of “his memories of lynching and Jim Crow” (McDonald, 2019). Even though we have two women who are the emblems of multiracial neoliberal success, their juxtaposition is predicated on anti-black misogynoir, however, it is competition (of sports and entertainment in this case) and ‘preference’ which obscure this.

“Yellow Woman”: Colourism and Juxtaposition as techniques of racial ordering

There is a reason why Knight (a white cis het man, Australian journalist/cartoonist) lightened Naomi Osaka’s skin and hair. Her mixed heritage, Haitian and Japanese, is drawn and imagined by a white man (it came from his imagination) as whiteness and proximity to whiteness via innocence (depicted as feminine) juxtaposed a masculinized (drawn/imagined as enlarged and stomping) dark-skinned angry-black-woman. Knight attempts to *exnominate* himself (his own racism, whiteness and his forthcoming imagery of racial social ordering) under the guise that tennis is a *competition*: the game itself acts as a device to hide one’s racism and colonial instincts (Brathwaite, 1971: 105; Barthes, 1972: 138). As stated before, competition is an effect of juxtaposition. If competition is the norm, racism can also be the norm because it can be normalised via competition (as an effect of juxtaposition). The image is also from the mind of a cartoonist like Knight; from the imagination of one who benefits from

white supremacist capitalist patriarchy and the *competition* that generates misogynoir for profit (ideological and economic from the labour of Black and mixed-Black women – e.g., through visualization and image).

Juxtaposition in itself is used to circumscribe preferred racial subjects and it orders them into hierarchies. When I say *preferred* in the instance, I mean Rihanna and Beyoncé as Black women with a closer proximity to whiteness due to their fair complexion. A 20-year-old Rihanna recalls in Allure Magazine (2008), that other students at school in Barbados used call her “yellow woman”; she says, “I was a little confused as a kid because I grew up with my mum, and my mum is black. So I was cultured in a very ‘black’ way. But when I go to school, I’m getting called ‘white’. They would look at me and would curse me out. I didn’t understand. I just knew I saw people of all different shades and I was light.” Likewise, Beyoncé often references her Louisianan French Creole ancestry in her music and branding (Knowles et al, 2016). Her mother, Tina Knowles, notes in a 2015 interview that Beyoncé’s lineage consists of “enslaved African maternal great-grandmother and paternal grandfather from Bordeaux, France” (Steptoe, 2016). In plantation societies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as Barbados, southern Louisiana (USA) and Jamaica, the proximity to whiteness of mulatto women gave them status among other Black women so “where whiteness denoted both freedom and higher status, color was a tangible measure by which freedom could be sought under slavery” (Mohammed, 2000: 38). The racial social order of the day was also assured with the idea that: “Protest, disagreement (and this is still very much so today) had to be censored out of the body politic” (Brathwaite, 1971: 105; Assembly of Jamaica, 1797). Specifically, one of the ways in which people were socially organised were by skin colour and labour:

“The inhabitants of this colony consist of four classes; whites, free people of colour having special privileges granted by private acts, free people of colour not possessing such privileges, and slaves... all these classes, when employed in the public service, have, as far as it has been practicable, been kept separate.” (Brathwaite, 1971: 105; Assembly of Jamaica, 1797)

It is a social order which was replicated in various different ways and in different plantation societies across the colonised Americas. One of the most recognised forms of social ordering (i.e., colourism) was the “Paper Bag Principle” located in the USA (Kerr, 2006). A brown paper bag was used as a skin tone barometer to grant/deny access to privileges; ““complexion lore” [...] tales about inclusion in or exclusion from organizations, institutions, and social groups based on hue or African facial features” (2006: 271). The principle is that proximity to whiteness “increases the social mobility of black people” and that it is “a ranking...your skin gave you access to certain things” (Morrison, in Als, 2003: 68). More specifically, “Light-skinned women were often described in slavers' records as handsome, smarter and more delicate (in fact, the word "delicate" often used to described light-skin enslaved women)” (Kerr, 2006: 273).

These are practices which still exists in the entertainment industry today. As Jones for the *Guardian* (2019) documents, colourist rappers (e.g., Kanye West, Kodak Black, A\$AP Rocky etc.) and casting directors have often used these same colourist justifications for casting light-skinned women in music videos and made statements which suggest their disdain for darker-skinned Black women even though they have a similar complexion (i.e., colourist misogynoir). Not only this but Pop/R&B star Tinashe notes that: “There are hundreds of [male] rappers that all look the same, that sound the same, but if you're a black woman, you're either Beyoncé or Rihanna. It's very,

very strange.” (Cragg, 2017). Tinashe’s statement suggests that Beyoncé and Rihanna are the *circumscribed* archetypes of the Black female performer *within* the music industry, and that these circumscribed archetypes are ones that she was expected to adhere to in her career, even with her own proximity to whiteness (white Danish mother and Black Zimbabwean father). Another recent example of colourism in the music industry was, the now defunct, Rick Ross (rapper) VH1 series *Signed* (2017). In a clip from the show that went viral (5.4 million views) on Twitter in January 2021, judges Rick Ross, The-Dream (Terius Nash) and ‘Lenny S’, sit down to listen to contestants Just Brittany (archetypal light-complexioned Black female performer – proximity to whiteness) and Kaiya (darker-complexioned Black female performer). As Just Brittany sings first, all three judges nod along and listen while looking at her as Rick Ross receives a personal massage from another woman in the room. Lenny S shakes his head in approval of Brittany’s performance. As Brittany finishes, she is met with praise; Rick Ross (still getting a massage) says “Your *future* bright shorty. Your future bright”. Lenny S adds “The smartest *move* of my life”. As Brittany ends her performance, she reveals that her and fellow contestant, Kaiya, have chosen the same backing track to sing to. The all-Black cis het male judging panel revel in the competition between the women (patriarchy juxtaposes women as form of management, control and recuperation of their affective labour). Kaiya steps up to sing the same track: Rick Ross stops her in the middle of singing and says “That wasn’t the *best platform for your voice*”. The-Dream adds “Nope”. Viewers of the reposted clip argued that Kaiya’s performance was better and that the judges responses to both women signalled their colourist bias towards Brittany (Mahadevan 2021). I want to go back to “Your *future bright shorty*” and “*smartest move of my life*” (my emphasis): we see from Lenny S’s and Ross’s language that they *view* (as they visibly stare at

Brittany as she is singing) Brittany through the means of social mobility – “smartest move”, “future bright”. Brittany’s “future bright” but also Lenny’s life will improve due to *his* smart move. Brittany is the symbol of social mobility and capitalist profit for Ross, Lenny S and The-Dream but also a desired mulatto woman prized for her proximity to whiteness (i.e., as more *palatable* and *desired* for capitalistic success in the music industry).

Patricia Mohammed (2000) importantly notes that a “major element of desire was rooted in the belief that mulatto woman represented a distance from the indignities of poverty and enslavement”. The mulatto woman’s attractiveness was a combination of white male society seeing her as aesthetically “acceptable” and “the economic and social entrepreneurship of the more fortunate in this class” of Black women (2000:43). However, even though the mulatto woman’s skin tone gave her status, this aesthetic *desirability* was not the exclusive reason that she was considered so, as Black women retained desirability for Black, white and mulatto men (e.g., Sable-Saffron/Black *Venus*). Plantocracy rested on this racial hierarchy to harness and control labour, and it recuperated that labour (in reaction to enslaved insurrection) through social ordering: juxtaposition – belonging to the plantation/estate but to be “kept separate” if “employed in the public service” (Braithwaite, 1971; Jamaican Assembly, 1797). Fair complexioned Black women were more likely to work *in house* of the estate/plantation domestically because of their light complexion as darker Black women were seen to be for the field which could blend in with enslaved dark-complexion Black men (a form of masculinization of Black women – Sapphire, SBW, ‘strength’ stereotype). I argue that fair complexioned Black women (Rihanna and Beyoncé) are more likely to be successful in the music industry and be upheld as post-feminist subjects by multiracial

white supremacist patriarchy (MRWaSP) because of their fair complexion, hybridity and proximity to whiteness (including mainstream white feminism – also white supremacy). Through mulatticity, celebrity and social entrepreneurship, Beyoncé and Rihanna are allowed into neoliberal sphere of MRWaSP representation to perform the affective labour of resilience required to portray white supremacist patriarchy as post-racial – this is to say *some styles of blackness* (e.g., mulatticity, resilience, entrepreneurship) stand-in as bodily representation that western societies have progressed past racism and it is now relegated to the past (Hollinger, 2011; Bonilla-Silva, 2012). But also, Beyoncé and Rihanna as women are required represent the post-feminist element of MRWaSP – to represent that society has progressed past racist–sexism (i.e., misogynoir) through the affective labour of resilience.

Beyoncé & Rihanna as Post-Feminist Subjects

Post-feminism as a concept has mostly been conceptualized around white women in popular culture, however, turning now to Black women in popular culture, there is a need to conceptualize post-feminist popular culture in terms of misogynoir. Tasker and Negra (2007: 2) say that “Postfeminist culture works in part to incorporate, assume, or naturalize aspects of feminism; crucially, it also works to commodify feminism via the figure of woman as empowered consumer”. As Chatman (2015: 930) notes, the media folds and interpellates “*certain* black women as post-feminist subjects” (see Althusser, 2001). As aspirational Black ‘top girls’ (e.g., entrepreneurial, in closer proximity to whiteness) Beyoncé and Rihanna are aligned through the embodiment of

independent, entrepreneurial neoliberal success, whom have the capacity to adapt and reinvent themselves throughout their careers. While Rihanna embodies the 'rags to riches' story of individual success as a Black working-class, immigrant woman from Barbados, Beyoncé "as the daughter of married middle-class parents, comes from a particular socioeconomic position [...] provided her with the means to become an ideal post-feminist subject" (2015: 931). However, post-feminist resilience discourse is designated to Black women in instrumental and conditional ways through colonial juxtaposition and neoliberal competition based on prisms of socioeconomic class origin or position, skin tone, sexuality, upbringing, nationality and lifestyle for the ideological profit of MRWaSP (James, 2015).

"Can Do Girl / At Risk Girl"

Anita Harris (2004) has previously laid out the 'Can Do' girl versus the 'At Risk' girl dichotomy to show how young women have become the subject of neoliberal postfeminist discourse. This dichotomy separates out the exemplars of neoliberal success and the risky subjects of failure. As McRobbie (2001, 2000: 20-1) corroborates women are regulated on their social behaviour, their bodies, their labour power, and become "a metaphor for social change". Young women's decisions are especially important. Harris (2004: 16-24) states that there four main stages 'Can Do' girls follow (in no particular order); "Girlpower", "Success at Work", "Consumption", "sexual assertiveness" and "Delayed Motherhood" (waiting until after marriage). These aspects of success are done through a "philosophy of DIY [...] assuming they can have (or at least buy) it all". 'At Risk' girls put these aspects of success at risk therefore risking their future or are constructed as more likely to take risks. They are often

constructed as moral concerns and as toxic role models for other young women and girls (e.g., Rihanna as “Pop’s poisonous princess” in Jones’ 2013 Daily Mail article). However, black girls are more likely to be symbolically constructed as ‘at risk’ and a concern for society, unless they ‘grow up right’ as in having ‘symbolic proximity’ to white middle-class culture and having ambitions but being humble and respectable about it. As touched upon before, successfully integrated and “upwardly mobile” migrant women are also used as “symbols of social success” (2004: 15; Mirza, 1992; Wade, 2013: 129).

As previously discussed, (Part 1: *I Never Play the Victim. I’d Rather Be a Stalker: Rated R and Rejecting ‘Good’ Victimhood*), pre-2009 Rihanna was constructed as a successful, young woman from Barbados ‘with potential’ – “a rising star on her way to the status of the archetype” (i.e., archetypal Black ‘Can Do’ girl is Beyoncé) (McRobbie, 2009). However, this construction changes after February 2009 where Rihanna’s success and future success is put ‘at risk’ (i.e., abusive relationship). There is a “caesura” (or split); a new dichotomy created between Beyoncé (Can Do) and Rihanna (At Risk) but this happens through juxtaposition. One example is Beyoncé’s interview on *Larry King Live*, which aired on CNN 26th April 2009. In one section of the interview, King asks questions in this order: 1) he asks about Beyoncé’s marriage and her 1-year wedding anniversary; 2) then about Michelle Obama’s comment on Beyoncé being good role model to her daughters, Sasha and Malia; 3) King then asks Beyoncé a leading question “You like that idea then?” (being a good role model); 4) King then asks “*Your husband Jay-Z had a lot to do with Rihanna’s early career. Back in February he said he thought everyone should support her in that mess with Chris Brown. How do you feel about that whole thing?*” (my emphasis).

FANDOM, POP MUSIC AND THE REPRODUCTION OF RACE-GENDER INEQUALITIES

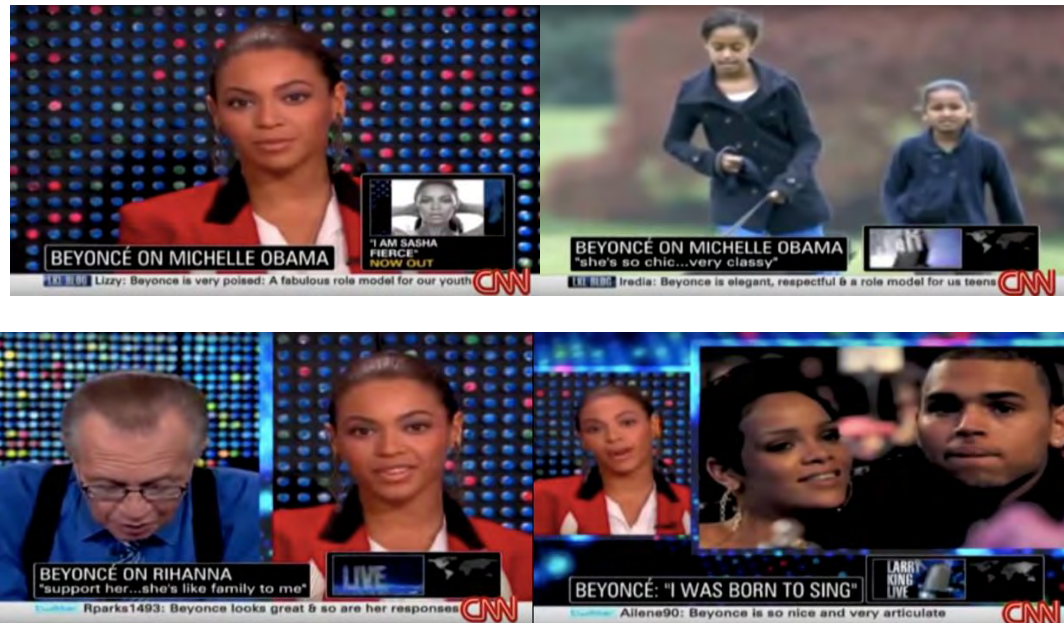


Figure 24: Screenshots of Larry King Live on CNN (in order of appearance) (Youtube, 2014)

At this point in the interview, we know that Beyoncé has “delayed motherhood” until *after marriage*. Next, the Obamas are symbols of “social success” with Sasha and Malia being the focus “to ensure that girls make a successful transition to normative adulthood” (Harris, 2004: 15-23). Beyoncé is constructed as an archetypal ‘Can Do’ role model that young girls should look up to, subsequently stating that “I am conscious of that when I make decisions” according to her role model status. King’s leading question draws a more definitive and extended answer from Beyoncé about being a role model to which she describes *how* she is one; for instance, supporting other women (i.e., Girlpower) and working hard for “anything that you want” (i.e., Success at Work and Consumption). Beyoncé’s marriage is brought up again to start the next question (“Your husband...”) which stands in as a stable, heteronormative relationship juxtaposed an unstable one (“*that mess* with Chris Brown”, see figure 18). Finally, the question juxtaposes Beyoncé as a model Can Do girl (heteronormative relationship

and marriage, career and success) with Rihanna involved in a “*mess*” – in other words At Risk, meaning risking her future success, risking Girlpower by being in a vulnerable position and making bad choices (2004: 27). Furthermore, it is a cautionary tale meant for young Black girls ‘with potential’ like Sasha and Malia Obama. Juxtaposition regulates all Black girls and women involved in this scenario, and it is media incited (e.g., Larry King and CNN). In this case (on US national television), successful, heteronormative and African-American women (Beyoncé and Michelle Obama’s mediated personas) are instrumentalized to generate a successful migrant Black woman within the prisms of violence, poor choices and failure (i.e. Rihanna putting her success ‘At Risk’).

As of 2020, Beyoncé and Rihanna are also juxtaposed on the basis of their entrepreneurship and their ability to be ‘inclusive’ in their brands. It is here where we see that their positioning as ‘Can Do’ and ‘At Risk’ is interchangeable and oscillates depending on their mediated outputs. For instance, the Business Insider (Hanbury, 2020) posted the article entitled *Beyoncé fans are slamming her new Ivy Park x Adidas streetwear collection over its lack of plus sizes*. Subsequently, the SCMP (2020) reposted the same article with a different title: *Beyoncé vs Rihanna: Bey’s Ivy Park x Adidas streetwear collection slated for having fewer plus sizes than Riri’s Savage x Fenty lingerie*. The headlines and fan tweets that Hanbury uses to evidence his point are focussed on Beyoncé’s failure (not Adidas) to be ‘inclusive’ of plus sizes in Ivy Park X Adidas or rather, to do the cultural work of body diversity and inclusivity. Beyoncé and Rihanna “embody diversity” in their own brands but they also have to do the extra cultural work that make these brands financially and ideologically profitable for MRWaSP, in the sense that it is *not sexist* (i.e. exclusive of body types) and it

cannot be racist because Beyoncé and Rihanna, “embodying diversity”, are both brands’ *leading* women (Ahmed, 2009: 41; Harris, 2004: 74-78). When Ivy Park X Adidas does not do this *work sufficiently*, Beyoncé as it’s leading Black woman bares the responsibility of *insufficiency*. This *insufficiency* is then juxtaposed with resilient and “inclusive” *sufficiency* of another Black woman – “Beyoncé’s new collection stands in stark contrast to Rihanna and her Savage x Fenty lingerie collection, which is available in US sizes 20-22” (Hanbury, 2020). The juxtaposition subsequently produces competition, not ‘Adidas vs. Savage X Fenty’, but most significantly “Beyoncé vs Rihanna”. So, they are required to be ‘self-made’ and ‘enterprising’ as this couples them with “money and success” but as Black women it their responsibility to overcome feminized damage (i.e. affective labour of resilience); their gendered and racialized *work* must be *for everyone else* (James, 2015: 152; Harris, 2004: 74; McRobbie, 2000: 211). Juxtaposition recuperates Beyoncé’s insufficiently carried out labour; using ‘entrepreneurial’ and ‘inclusive’ Rihanna to tie up Beyoncé’s loose ends.

Racial Imperatives: Fictive Kinship/Shame and the Strong-Black-Woman

What “tethers” these two together, however, is not just the affective labour required of them as women through their profession and mediated personas; it is their race as McDonald (2019) notes earlier with Williams and Osaka. According to Harris-Perry (2011a: 102-103), “fictive kinship” refers to shared social and economic ties between members of a social group who are unrelated by blood or marriage (e.g. a form of homosociality in which unrelated Black women are “sisters”. Also think of Beyoncé’s ‘formations’). The positive side of “fictive kinship” ties is that it has been important

survival and political strategy for countering the racial stereotypes and it is partly why Black History Month exists so, for instance, we can say ‘Beyoncé did this in history so you, as a Black woman, should feel proud and aspire to be as successful because if she can do it you can do it too’ but there is a negative side; “like racial pride, racial shame is an important political emotion” (2011a: 103; Harris-Perry, 2011b; Stack, 1983). Beyoncé and Rihanna share various social ties as cisgendered, heteronormative, fair-complexioned black female performers with prominent economic and career success post-2000 (e.g. musical acclaim, entrepreneurship, sales, cultural impact). These social factors are what tie them together but also provide the basis for their political essentialization as black women in pop music culture, for instance, it means their successes are connected and it means their failures are also connected (e.g. like their sufficient/insufficient affective labour, or like when one of them puts their success ‘at risk’ the other is asked about it in a TV interview).

Like the politics of respectability, which was a pushback against negative hypersexual stereotypes of African-American women (e.g., Jezebel), the Strong-Black-Woman (SBW) is an archetypal stereotype that emerged in an effort to do the same; as an internalized positive archetype for Black women for which they are strong, able to withstand any damage and manage, and overcome difficult obstacles however unfair (Higginbotham, 1993). However, the archetype actually sets Black women up for another form of misrecognition through the expectation of *natural* strength because it originates from slave-era ideas of Black women having “inordinate strength” and “was a myth created by whites to rationalize their brutality” (Wallace, 1999: 107; Morgan, 1999: 101; Harris-Perry, 2011a; 2011b). The SBW is a construction that black women are now expected to embody as an essential characteristic of Black womanhood

(Harris-Perry, 2011a; 2011b). According to Springer (2007: 252, original emphasis), SBW is not the racialized version of “having it all” (see McRobbie, 2015) but it:

“assumes that a black woman has *too many obligations* but she is expected to *handle her business* [...] racialized postfeminism, at least for black women, means continuing to be everything for everyone else *and* maintaining a sense of self”.

However, the notion of strength and the SBW is not just about the maintaining a “sense of self”. Due to ‘fictive kinship’ these notions actually become racial imperatives which Harris-Perry (2011b) takes further: “If you are weak, if you are sad, if you need help, then you’re not only failing in terms of the general American...rugged individualism but you’re actually failing the race. You’re actually generating shame in your neediness”, meaning you are everything for everyone else inside and outside the race. Imagine the SBW archetype as the affective labour of resilience in practice (e.g., the ability to withstand damage, to bounce back and to manage); resilience is a race-gender imperative because *essentially* the ‘strong’ labour *should* come *naturally* to Black women for herself *and* for everyone else (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2007). The insufficiency of that labour generates failure and shame reflecting on the race, which does not leave room for “routine human weaknesses and fragility” (Harris-Perry, 2011a: 186). For instance, if Beyoncé or Rihanna are insufficiently resilient through their “public private self” or “transgressive intimate self”, the pushback on that failure is generated through juxtaposition and competition because there needs to be a recuperation of the loss of affective labour. The way that this insufficiency is recuperated is through the discursive clustering of these public private and

transgressive intimate moments – i.e., celebrity and entertainment discourse (e.g., celebrity gossip, entertainment news sites).

Furthermore, like bad-black-girls (e.g., Jezebel, Tragic Mulatta, Sapphire) were the antithesis of Mammy (e.g., 'Black Lady'), the SBW needs an antithesis as "*MRWaSP visualisation produces some women as toxic so that others can be resilient*" (James, 2015: 106, original emphasis). Therefore, the construction of the celebrity SBW is instrumentalized as an "*affective amplifier*" for another celebrity Black woman's transgressions; transgressions which may be discursively constructed as unprogressive (e.g. un-'feminist', non-'inclusive'), toxic or 'messy' as opposed to being super strong, in control and resilient for self and for everyone else (2015: 154; Springer, 2007). Moreover, as these transgressions means "failing the race", the SBW is made responsible for her 'bad' black or insufficiently resilient 'fictive kin', for instance, Beyoncé is asked to give her thoughts on Rihanna's intimate transgressions as a "role model" (CNN, 2009) or Beyoncé "should have taken a leaf out of Rihanna's book about inclusivity" – i.e. "taken a leaf" meaning Beyoncé adopting part of Rihanna's public and/or private self as a younger aspirational figure for entrepreneurial ambition, Girlpower and 'inclusive' politics (for everyone else) (Hanbury, 2020; Harris, 2004).

Construction of maturity and life course

Age also has a part to play in Beyoncé and Rihanna's juxtaposition given their 7-year age gap. Chatman (2015) and others (Weidhase, 2015; Alessandrini, 2017) have argued that Beyoncé has been interpellated into the postfeminist discourse of 'having

it all'; marriage, children *after marriage*, and career success. Beyoncé is instrumentalized to push 'badgalriri' (Rihanna's Instagram handle) into the same discourse because MRWaSP "expects the 'bad girl' to eventually grow up" (Miyake, 2018: 84). In other words, 'badgalriri' must grow up and follow in Beyoncé's SBW footsteps; like Pitchfork (Hopper, 2012) urges "where she's learned from her pain and is back to doing diva triumph club stomp in the shadow of Beyoncé". The 'push' is also a way of to direct their conduct or direct the audience on how Rihanna and Beyoncé *should* conduct themselves as spectacle; as a form of governmentality. For Beyoncé and Rihanna 'becoming a woman' is additionally about becoming an SBW; much more than becoming a mother and a wife but exemplars of racialized "diva triumph" (i.e. racialized resilience and inordinate strength). As Labennett (2018: 179) puts it, Beyoncé as SBW "has had to execute a miraculous achievement"; having three children (including twins), achieving the post-pregnancy "yummy mummy" body (McRobbie, 2006; Hewett, 2012), overcoming miscarriages, repairing and maintaining her own marriage to Jay-Z, *and* being an entrepreneur *and* "flawlessly slaying her way, in one show-stopping performance after another, to the status of "our greatest living artist". Is this what one has to do to become the hardest working (black) woman in show business?".

Embedded in this life narrative is heteronormativity, however as Labennett (2018) argues, Beyoncé and Jay-Z as the "'First Family" of the hip-hop generation" are both prototypical and queer, in that they are a prototypical nuclear family and queered in that heterosexual black couples "although engaged in heterosexual behaviour, have often found themselves defined as outside the norms and values of the dominant society" and so are socially constructed as dysfunctional, which is inescapable due to

the connectedness of race, sexuality and gender even though Beyoncé and Jay-Z possess privilege and power in terms of socioeconomic class (see Moynihan Report, 1965, as an example of such social constructions). In order for Beyoncé and Jay-Z's relationship to appear dysfunctional there also needs to be the existence of "potential threats to a perceived fragile black manhood and a broken black family"; one of those "potential threats" being the proliferation of rumours that Jay-Z's infidelity included a younger, single Rihanna (Durham, 2014: 82; Singh, 2007). In Chapter 1, I use *Carmen Jones* as an example to demonstrate how this particular narrative works to emphasize the juxtaposition of Carmen Jones and Cindy Lou, where Carmen is positioned as sexual threat to the black heterosexual relationship between Joe and Cindy. Rihanna discursively constructed as a "potential threat" to Beyoncé and Jay-Z's marriage, highlights the following; Beyoncé and Jay-Z are often referred to as "Beyoncé and her husband" by fans (Labennett, 2018) which is queer in that Beyoncé is seen to be the head of the household but this is also highlighted in celebrity gossip discourse in various ways. For example, in the *Closer* magazine article *Beyoncé 'furious with Jay-Z for having private Rihanna mobile'* (White, 2015), Beyoncé is "furious" and "the normally calm and collected Beyoncé lost it over the amount of time her rapper husband spends on his phone". Jay-Z is passive while Beyoncé is angry at him and also Rihanna. The article slips Beyoncé into the Black Matriarch/Sapphire role where she antagonistic towards her husband. The "broken black family" is not only her fault but it is Rihanna's fault for posing a sexual "potential threat". Black women become yardsticks for why black heterosexual relationships are dysfunctional; for being too angry and independent or too sexually threatening. Also Jay-Z's constructed Black male fragility and passiveness (via potential and alleged infidelity) alludes to stereotypes which depict black men as oversexed and weak in comparison to their

SBW counterpart. Such narratives of black male passivity and weakness was necessary during slavery for upholding the mythology of the SBW (Collins, 2004: 59; Morgan, 1999: 119). Coincidentally, the narrative is also necessary for upholding the SBW as the archetypical Black female postfeminist subject for it places the archetype in a position to where she has the opportunity to demonstrate resilience and overcoming as spectacle (i.e., Beyoncé's overcoming of Jay-Z's alleged infidelity – learning “from her pain and is back to doing diva triumph club stomp”). But this is also about “saving brown women from brown men”– i.e., victim-in-need-of-rescue– in order to centre Black women as the postfeminist and post-racial contributors to the efficiency of MRWaSP and neoliberal capitalism (Spivak, 1999: 289).

Conclusion

Centring Black women as postfeminist and post-racial subjects in this way is necessary for MRWaSP (multiracial white supremacist patriarchy) because it is more efficient for white supremacist patriarchal processes to include Black women can be instrumentalized to uphold that white supremacist patriarchy as not racist and sexist (misogynoir). This is facilitated through juxtaposition which is “the fact of two things being seen or placed close together with contrasting effect” (Oxford Languages, 2023). Juxtaposition is a technique a power that places and organises Black/Brown people side by side with contrasting effects. Fundamentally, juxtaposition is a racialized–gendered neoliberal mechanism of white supremacist capitalist patriarchal violence, separation and surveillance of Black and Brown people, particularly Black and Brown women. Juxtaposition is the neoliberal version of ‘divide and rule’ that *looks*

like deregulated competition and choice. Therefore, we reconceive these old colonial techniques as natural neoliberal competition rather than being actively produced/reproduced by white supremacist patriarchy as a form of generating controlling images (Collins, 2000). MRWaSP includes and uplifts Black women in popular culture on the condition (inclusivity in white supremacist capitalist patriarchy is conditional) that they perform the affective labour of resilience. The affective labour of resilience and resilience discourse within entertainment news require Black women celebrities to produce feelings of overcoming, the ability to withstand damage, reinvention and *bouncing back*; the *look* and the feeling that MRWaSP has overcome misogynoir. MRWaSP is more efficient when Black women in popular culture are interpellated through media discourses such as the 'Lean In' campaign (2014) with Sheryl Sandberg to being a 'good role model' through the coders of "Girlpower", "Success at Work", "Consumption", "sexual assertiveness" and "Delayed Motherhood" (waiting until after marriage) and the "philosophy of DIY" (Harris, 2004: 16-24). But what if say, Beyoncé and/or Rihanna are seen as insufficiently resilient within popular culture discourses? Hall (1997: 258) argues that a "splitting" strategy is deployed in popular discourses as a way generating stereotypes which I argue essentializes and naturalizes misogynoir. In other words, resilience discourse naturalizes misogynoir. Black women are juxtaposed as resilient and insufficiently resilient; elements of controlling images such as Mammy/bad–bad–girl come back to recuperate the affective labour insufficiently performed. Therefore, Black/Brown women exemplars are placed in juxtaposition, which amplifies the 'otherness' of other Black/Brown women when *they* are not performing the affective labour of resilience, which is to perform and broadcast resilience through overcoming social obstacles (e.g., race, gender, class, sexuality and circumstances which these come under scope). In this

chapter, I have presented examples from entertainment media discourse to demonstrate how juxtaposition, as a neoliberal mechanism, reproduces race-gender inequalities (e.g., misogynoir) for the maintenance of white supremacist patriarchy. The development of juxtaposition is a critical analysis of gendering–racialization as a major technique of power in this thesis and is an important contribution for the disciplines of Cultural Studies, Postcolonial studies, and Black feminist theory. Now I will discuss how the harnessing of fan practices by the entertainment industry reproduces the same neoliberal structures (i.e., juxtaposition and competition) which facilitate the conditions that feedback into the misogynoiristic juxtaposition of Black women entertainers.

Part 3: Fan Culture

In Part 3 on Fan Culture, I introduce pop music fan culture as an instance of the social in this research (Lemke, 2019: 257). I will discuss fandom in terms of how fans perform neoliberal forms of labour. The same neoliberal mechanisms discussed in the previous Part 2 (i.e., juxtaposition and competition), harness fan values and practices through hierarchical and competitive discourses. Competitive frameworks in music fan culture, especially for the fan communities of Black women in pop music (i.e., Beyoncé and Rihanna), is actually not so distant from these colonial techniques of juxtaposing Black women. In Part 3, I discuss neoliberal fan culture, where fan practices and forms of fan labour such as advocacy are “marketized under neoliberalism” (Stanfill, 2019). I argue that these already existing forms of fan labour and valuation (as leisure) are harnessed by neoliberal imperatives (i.e., competition as an actively produce organizing principle) to render white supremacist techniques of juxtaposition unintelligible in popular culture discourses and therefore, maintains distance between the individual and the background conditions (neo)colonialism and white supremacist capitalist patriarchy (e.g., digital pop music fandom on social media as a deregulated but socially stratified space). My consideration of the BeyHive (Beyoncé’s fan community) and Rihanna Navy (Rihanna’s fan community) in this thesis is to demonstrate that entertainment media discourses that juxtapose Beyoncé and Rihanna (to generate misogynoir through resilience discourse), also have an impact on fan practices; this is to say that the Beyoncé/Rihanna juxtaposition is reproduced through fan labour practices of advocacy. My contribution to the knowledge to Fan

Studies is the critically analysis of white supremacist patriarchal imperatives within pop music fan culture including how fans read the juxtaposing discourses of their favourite Black women entertainers in entertainment news media.

Neoliberalism, Fandom and Industry

Fans are at the centre popular music culture and media convergence, where they can embody multiple positions of identity both digitally and in person. Fan culture has shifted from being marginalized by media industries to being central focus of marketing for the media and music industry who directly address and market specifically to fan communities (Hellekson and Busse, 2014: 16). It is important for media industries to have fans create “self-referential microcosms of support” such as the ‘BeyHive’ (or Hive) and the ‘Rihanna Navy’ (or Navy), to “assert their distinctive character and affirm that they are not anonymous members of an undifferentiated mass” as they become ideal representations of *how* to consume in favour of the industry’s corporate and capitalist interests (Hills, 2002: 80; Thornton, 2005: 185). On the other hand, as fan communities assert their “distinctive character”, media industries in turn optimize and harness already existing fan practices as fan communities are centralized within media industry discourse.

According to Jenkins in *Textual Poachers* (1992) however, fandom naturally challenges dominant cultural hierarchies suggesting that fans choose to position themselves as outsiders where they practice resistance to media hegemony. Since then, there have been arguments (Busse, 2015) that fandom has become a part of the

media mainstream where complicit fandom, which involves consuming hegemonic media texts uncritically, is championed and promoted by media discourses. As Paul Booth (2014: 2.10) describes, there has been a “neoliberal turn in fandom” in which:

“Mainstream media seem to both embrace and distance themselves from fans, while fans both embrace and distance themselves from the media industries. Yet both groups' resistance to and complicity with the other ultimately augments a hybridization of fan identity and fan practice within this neoliberal media ecology”

The augmented hybridization of fan identity and practice, as Booth argues, promotes hierarchical discourses within digital fan culture in the capitalist interests of media corporations. Hierarchical discourses create new sets of values which focus on the right and wrong ways of practicing fandom in the form of establishing a “visibly elite fraction of the fan base”, which is based on fans perceived closeness to their favourite artist (e.g. meeting Beyoncé in person; having a photo ‘liked’ by Rihanna on Instagram) (Duffett, 2013: 239). For instance, in pop music fan culture the term ‘stan’ is used as a term of hierarchal distinction from ‘fan’ because ‘stan’ is a portmanteau of ‘super-fan’ which suggests that they are “more than just a fan” (Booth, 2014: 2.8). These conditions also promote competition between fan bases of pop music artists that exist within the similar music genre or that possess a similar image, for instance, Beyoncé and Rihanna are both black female singers with discographies of largely Pop/R&B music. Beyoncé and Rihanna also share a similar demographic audience (Katz, 2017). Music industry companies such as Billboard and MTV have also started to incorporate voting events like “Battle of The Fans”, “Fan Army Face-Off” and award

show categories such as the “Biggest Fans” award (Billboard, 2018; MTV, 2017), where fans must compete with each other and vote in order to be incentivised with an award as the most dedicated and best fan base.

At both a collective and individual level, music media companies and discourses are changing the ways in which fan bases are “expressing fannish enthusiasm” by framing fan practices within competitive and hierarchical structures. Fans subsequently “police and discipline” other fans in the way they express fannish enthusiasm and, at a collective level, for whom they express this enthusiasm for, thus producing hierarchies (Booth, 2014: 1.3). Hellekson and Busse (2006: 8), although mainly referring to fan fiction communities, confirm this view that digital fandom “is fragmented and fragmentary, just as it is self-perpetuating”. Sandvoss (2005: 105) also argues that because fans see their ‘object of fandom’ as an extension of self and a reflection of their values, they will “adamantly defend” their favourite artist “against other readings”. This reflection of values, extensions of self and the complicit/resistant hybridization of fan identity only intensifies the neoliberal imperatives of hegemonic media, which is contrary to earlier readings of fandom as a challenge to cultural hegemony in which they ‘choose’ to be outsiders, however, it must be noted that this romantic view of fandom originates from a period when fandom was marginalised by the media industries (Jenkins, 1992; 2006a).

Looking at the hybrid complicit-resistant model in relation to music fandom in more depth, I want to imagine how this model would look if we the added representational analysis. First, I want to look at the complicit and resistance separately; the complicit fan is complicit with the mainstream media industry’s definition of how to be a fan. The

complicit fan can be seen as the homogenisation of the fan according to how mainstream media and music industries desire fans to consume, which is uncritically and conspicuously. As Booth (2015: online) argues, “it is a particular type of fandom – one that matches the ideals of the corporation, but not necessarily those within fan communities”. The resistant fan on the other hand, produces and “poaches” textual material and offers critique of mainstream music and media industry, especially as a form of advocacy in defence of their favourite artist (Jenkins, 1992: 36). However, if we hybridise these positions the model can be quite circular for example, you might have a resistant fan of the music media industry who is invested in a text and therefore defends that text as a form of advocacy. But advocacy can also reinforce economic structures such as competition and hierarchies which are economically and ideologically (in terms of informing fan practices) profitable to the music industry and mainstream media industries because competition is generator economic and ideological value. If fan bases practice advocacy to defend their favourite artist against another fan base and the rival fan base do the same, then we have the reinforcement of the same economic structures which the music and media industries find desirable in order to generate competition. For example, music awards introducing award categories targeted at awarding fandom itself upon the *condition* they compete (i.e. voting through hashtags). Therefore, the hybridisation of the fan presents a double bind in which the practices of fandom have been harnessed by neoliberal imperatives. According to Mel Stanfill “Fans have always created value...” through their practices:

“...in terms of loyalty, commitment and promotion. What is new is industry recognition, encouragement and attempts to capture value. Through various means, industry articulates, translates or exchanges fan valuation...as all

nonmarket values are becoming marketized under neoliberalism” (Stanfill, 2019: 133)

If fan practices and “fan valuation” are marketized under neoliberalism, and that marketization functions on competition (as a mechanism), then we get a reconfiguring of how fandom is practiced via that mechanism in various deregulated spaces (e.g. Twitter and Instagram). Fans are ‘free’ to create individual profiles, dwell in these spaces as heterotopic (think of looking at yourself in the mirror) reflections of their individual fandom and the extended fan community (Foucault, 1984: 4; Sandvoss, 2005). Furthermore, these spaces impact fan bases in that nicknames such ‘StanTwitter’ and ‘IGNavy’ exist; factions of fan bases attached to their spaces as portmanteaus. Fan bases attaching to these spaces (which can change over time, for example, fan community migration from fan website forums to social media) reconfigures the frame in which they practice fandom. This is to say that deregulation feeds on competition and inequality which in turn produces hierarchical conditions. Regardless of whether the fan is complicit/resistant, the “industry’s invitation to fans seek to make them both useful and more controllable thus making fans a resource to exploit”; the double-bind is that if fans invest in the space, they invest in the neoliberal conditions of that space (Stanfill, 2019: 11).

Forms of Fan Labour

Putting fan investment to one side for a moment, when fans invest in their object of fandom they also perform forms of labour in doing so. Stanfill (2019) identifies three

main forms of fan labour; promotional labour, content labour and love labour (“lovebor”). Promotional labour is akin to sharing and free advertisement by fans. Nowadays we mainly see such labour on various social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram. This is word-of-mouth labour in which fans convince others to invest in and love their object of fandom that they have invested in their own fandom. Stanfill argues that this investment and labour is a form of evangelism by which fans perform advocacy and promote the artist and their cultural productions. Fans will do promotional labour for free replacing paid work within the entertainment industries. What this does however, is increase the likelihood of fans being exploited by the entertainment industry and their own object of fandom. Content labour includes the creation of content that is related to advocating or promotional labour through, for example, fancams (used mainly in K-Pop fandoms), memes, gif images or physical material items such as clothing (e.g. a Rihanna stan designing tour merchandise). All forms of fan labour rest heavily on the fans’ love for the object of fandom, however, the love extended (and not always reciprocated) is also a form of labour in itself. Like the affective labour I introduce in Part 2, fans “showing” love requires performing the “showing” (Hardt and Negri, 2005; Stanfill, 2019: 151).

However, the concept of affective labour in the context of fandom does not account the reciprocity between love and labour. There are two perspectives on fandom practices that can account for this reciprocity. The first is the assertion that fandom and fan practices “remains a search for community” (Hellekson, 2015: 125). More than anything fandom is about, first and foremost, loving someone or something. It is about the adoration for the quality and/or characteristics of a thing or a person (whether fiction or non-fiction); this is what we invest in or ‘buy’ into. In Latin etymology, *intention*

means *stretching out* towards. Applying it to Stanfill's 'Lovebor'; to love a thing is the *intentionality*, meaning that love is to *stretch out* towards that thing (Bourdieu, 1991). This also includes the "search for community to unabashedly love something"; it is about love and the *desire* to love (Hellekson, 2015: 125, my emphasis). Simultaneously, that is also our initial stake and investment in the economics of fan culture; it is something we do not want to lose as we would lose everything that we had initially invested.

The *intentionality* of the fan is what connects it to the second perspective. Busse (2015: 113 – 114), understands fan labour in its *intentionality* as "particularly vulnerable to being co-opted [...] because by its very nature, it is based on and driven by love and passion". Busse's perspective brings together the reciprocal nature of fan love and labour (i.e. 'Lovebor') while also considering how fan *intentionality* can be co-opted and exploited. As stated recently, when fans invest in said space, they invest in the conditions of that space. Fans invest their love into an operation that extracts surplus value from their investment (Marx, 1978). Therefore, when fans invest in fan culture (e.g. their *intentionality* being that they love Beyoncé), their "leisure and pleasure are fully integrated into the means of production" because they have entered and invested in the space and the neoliberal conditions of that space (James, 2015: 182). That space has been deregulated – i.e. a condition and mechanism of neoliberal capitalism (See Part 2) – the fan invests in the space of Twitter, Instagram, Forums and AO3 arguably to be who they want to be and say what they want to say. In other words, the space offers 'choice' and an individual profile. The space also offers an "intermediary instance': the social", which is where fans communicate and exchange (Lemke, 2019: 257). Exchange between fans, in an economic sense, is about the

exchange of and *for* capital; which could encompass social, cultural and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). In order to increase the value of that capital you must do the work; Lovebor, Content and Promotional labour. This also means that when the fan performs these forms of labour, they reinvest capital while producing surplus value which, through their love for the object of fandom, can be co-opted and utilized to generate economic and ideological profit (Multi-Racial White Supremacist Patriarchy – MRWaSP) for the entertainment industry. It is important to note that exchange for fans does not equate to equivalence; certainly not in neoliberal capitalism and the cultures neoliberal mechanisms encompass (Foucault, 2008: 118). Competition is the principle and rationale. The fans intentionality is integrated into the space and therefore principle. Fans compete for love, pleasure and capital in an ecology which is ensured by constant and continuous inequalities in many forms, especially the belief in something or someone (perceived) *above* them, whom they *follow* (“efangelism”).

Homeostasis: Harnessing Fan Practices to generate Surplus Value for MRWaSP-Neoliberal Capitalism

Surplus value is generated and reinvested through fan practices. To put this another way James (2015: 182) notes that “leisure is labour, in the sense that it produces surplus value, and thus profits, for capital. For example, when I stream or share music online, I generate data that streaming and social media companies then re-sell at a profit” – Fan practices in this way generate surplus value but neoliberal mechanisms harness practices that already existed within fan culture such as advocacy, for

example. Another form of fan advocacy in practice are called ‘Stan Wars’. The initially satirical website entitled *Stan-Wars.com* (2021) defines Stan Wars as:

“Stan Wars are an internet conflict in which groups of overzealous fans (stans) argue with other groups of stans. This is done hour after hour, day after day as if they are getting paid for it. Although stan wars exist in all facets of entertainment (sports, television, movies, etc.) this site deals specifically with the most brutal and bloodiest stan wars ever... female pop star stan wars.”

If we think about this definition backwards, we would start with the women (the female pop star). The competition between the women is present in “all facets of entertainment”; it is entertainment, as in, it is entertaining for a *patriarchal* society to watch everywhere (*Patriarchy*). The stans do the work of keeping this conflict going “hour after hour, day after day as if they are getting paid for it”, an insinuation that they usually do not – i.e. free labour/cheap labour to uphold *Capitalist* economy/entertainment industry at a profit. Where fans can trade the product (the woman/ the image of/ the sound of / the labour of, for instance), potentially acquiring capital for themselves (social and cultural capital – trade off).

Now imagine the women are Black. Juxtaposition is an enduring and adaptable technique of power. In Part 1, we discuss how early (c. 1650-1838) white constructions of enslaved Black women are organized around juxtapositions; dichotomies such as virgin/whore, victim/villain and Mammy/bad-black-girl (Lorde, 1980: 114; Collins, 2000; Gilkes, 1983). Subsequently, Part 2 discusses juxtaposition as a neoliberal mechanism and organizing principle in spaces that have been

deregulated – i.e. labour of the formerly enslaved is *replaced* and *recuperated* through indentured servitude – juxtaposition is used to generate economic competition between the two, keeping the *White Supremacist* monopoly over Black/Brown labour intact. Black women in “all facets of entertainment” are juxtaposed in entertainment discourse; *as entertainment*. Stan Wars (competition and conflict between fan bases) also facilitates the above juxtaposition as well as the competition between fan bases, which is necessary to keep fans invested in fan culture; invested in the space and the neoliberal conditions of said space. Each fan base advocates on behalf of the Black female entertainer because that is a practice that ‘makes sense’ in fandom but it is also the practice that has been harnessed to facilitate all of the above (White Supremacist Capitalist Patriarchy). This facilitation works like a feedback loop keeping the equilibrium and maintaining White Supremacist Capitalist Patriarchy – i.e. *homeostasis* (Foucault, 2008: 249; Sheth, 2011). As Stanfill asserts “exploitation is not the whole picture” (2019: 11). Fans gain capital through their practices by being included “onto the music industry ranch”. Most importantly, in order for fans to keep investing in fan culture, fans must have ‘choice’ as they are also investing in deregulated space (free of supervision and direction).

Re-pathologizing Fandom through Blackness: Media discourses on
the BeyHive, the Rihanna Navy and other fan communities of
Black artists/celebrities

Now we have an idea of how fan culture can facilitate white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, I want to put forward that fan culture has been re-pathologized through anti-blackness within the media discourses including entertainment and pop music

discourse. I want turn to a specific example from the New York Post which is entitled “The 10 most rabid celebrity fan groups online” (Miller and Seim, 2014). The list contains celebrities such as Ke\$ha, Beyoncé, Britney Spears, Chris Brown, Lady Gaga, Katy Perry, Rihanna, Justin Bieber, One Direction and Nicki Minaj. Each artist has a demographics section underneath it. The demographics detail what each of these artists fans looks like and behave like. In other words, their fan communities are type casted and stereotyped based on the artists’ image, brand, music and personae. This includes the race-gender identity of the artist. I would also like to point out how media discourses stereotype communities of fans based on the race-gender identity of the celebrity. The white male and female authors stereotype communities using race-gender and misogynoir-istic coders of language. Within the article, this stands out when the demographic information underneath the celebrities within the article that are Black (i.e. Beyoncé, Rihanna, Chris Brown and Nicki Minaj).

Beyoncé comes first; demographic information states that the BeyHive are “Sassy single ladies who want to move the world”. Firstly, we had the stereotypical word of sassy. Sassy is a way that refers to the stereotype of Sapphire and Jezebel, for example and is a racially coded word used to connote a Black woman (Cooper, 2018: online). We can refer it back to you Part 1 where I describe the Jezebel stereotype (Jordan-Zachery, 2009; Collins 2000: 81). Sassy is used to describe the bad-black-girl first and then it is adapted for the use to describe the SBW. SBW is assimilated into post-feminist discourse and neoliberal resilience discourse because as the quote goes the “sassy single ladies” want to “rule the world” indicating the BeyHive are also ambitious feminists like Beyoncé. The next artist is Chris Brown; his demographic information states “people who still think OJ didn’t do it”. The demographic information

for Chris Brown refers to you the high-profile murder case of OJ Simpson and Nicole Simpson (1994). In other words, it refers Team Breezy (Chris Brown fan base) as domestic violence apologists. But this is also racially coded. The connotation of this is that the demography (according to Miller and Seim) is that Chris Brown fans are Black people (“people who...”) and have stood by him despite his own domestic violence case with Rihanna (“...still think OJ didn’t do it”). The next Black celebrity on the list is Rihanna; the demography says “Angry girls who like weed and gun tattoos”. Rihanna is at this time (2011-) is bad-black-girl juxtaposed Beyoncé (SBW). Bad-black-girl/Tragic-Mulatta is angry therefore her fans are the same. The next Black celebrity is Nicki Minaj; the demographic information states “Badass ladies who spend their rent money on hair pieces”. This statement is in reference to longstanding stereotypes such as the Welfare Queen and Sapphire. Becoming the prominent black female stereotype during the Reagan-era, the ‘welfare queen’ was a mythical image of a black woman who misused welfare money to spend on herself including hair extensions (Collins, 2000: 80). Again, this is a statement within an article about fandom which is racially coded and stereotypes the fan communities of black celebrities. When it comes to Black female celebrities in particular, their fan communities are stereotyped in terms of specific misogynoir-istic language. Therefore, the re-pathologizing of fan culture is done through anti-blackness and specifically misogynoir as “the most brutal and bloodiest stan wars ever [are] female pop star stan wars” (StanWars, 2021). This is just one way that entertainment discourses on fan culture helps facilitate the maintenance of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. Another way in which entertainment discourse on fan culture facilitates the current MRWaSP is by amplifying Black female entertainers and the conflict between their fan bases.

Fan Scholarship and Whiteness

There have been other recent claims of fan ‘otherness’, with a particular focus on gender and sexuality for instance, that implicitly refer to the ‘otherness’ of white fans (Duffett, 191-207: 2013) and claims that the fan identity itself is a chosen “improper identity”, again with the assumption of implicit whiteness (Hills, 2002: xii). Discussions of this nature, especially of gender and sexuality, problematically assume that “all the women are white” (Hull et al, 1982) and we must take into account, as Wanzo (2015: 2.16) does of African-American fans, that female fans, aca-fans and objects of fandom of colour “are always already improper subjects”. I argue that this issue is also reflected in fan scholarship itself, in that there is disproportionate lack of studies on the fan communities of black women in contemporary popular music (Bereznak, 2016; Alessandrini, 2017 - studies specifically on Beyoncé fandom), in comparison to the range of studies on fan communities of their white female counterparts, such as Lady Gaga and Miley Cyrus for example (Click et al, 2013; Bennett, 2014; Dilling-Hansen, 2015; Qiu, 2012; Vares and Jackson, 2015; Carter, 2018). What is evident in this significant gap in fan studies is that white bodies and whiteness are made core of the discipline, while other groups such as Black women, are written out and erased from the discipline.

Wanzo (2015: 5.1) argues that the analysis of race in fan studies complicates the paradigm in which she uses the example of a roundtable discussion of comics aca-fans where:

“Scott Bukatman argued that analyses of “representation” can “rob” the scholars’ objects of study “of whatever pleasures they may have contained for the very scholars producing the work” (Smith et al. 2011, 211, 138).”

Wanzo interprets Bukatman’s argument as a suggestion that there is less pleasure in engaging with representational analyses which centres around “these other kinds of bodies, as opposed to...idealized bodies that produce pleasure for many scholars” (2015: 5.1). If we take Wanzo’s interpretation into account; we have to question whose pleasure is being ‘robbed’, how is pleasure being ‘robbed’ from them and why these scholars view it as a theft to analyse objects of fandom/study using “representational” analyses. The view by Bukatman suggests that reading ‘other’ objects of study are not as pleasurable for scholars when they have to apply representational analyses and it also suggests that certain objects of study that prompt questions around such analyses disturb the utopic production of pleasure for aca-fans. The erasure of such analyses cannot take into account the different ways in which fans read their object of fandom, for example, the way white male fans may ascribe meanings of blackness and gender in relation to their black female object of fandom (or object of anti-fandom) differently to the way black female fans ascribe meanings of blackness and gender in relation to their black female object of fandom (or object of anti-fandom). The erasure of representational analyses, also fails to take into account different critical genealogies, for instance, the way black aca-fans read black characters in science fiction (Carrington, 2016) or the ambivalence and anxieties of black aca-fans surrounding the racialized and gendered representations of their object of fandom (Early, 1988; hooks, 1992). Considering representational analyses of race within the

fan studies paradigm, also complicates the complicity/resistance model in that some fans and aca-fans can find pleasure in an object of fandom of colour that not only reflects a sense of self but that also reflects their own resistance to gender and sexuality norms and “the normativity of whiteness even as they claim their own normativity” (Wanzo, 2015: 2.16). Therefore, their economic consumption of such texts, which Duffet (2013: 23) claims fans are “rarely enthusiastic advocates of”, may constitute part of their subjective resistance but which may ultimately reproduce the neoliberal ideals of consumption, race, gender and sexual politics that they attempt to resist. These absent aspects of fan studies scholarship are central to my research in that it considers the racialized and gendered representations of the object of fandom in relation to the “neoliberal turn in fandom” and complicit/resistant models of the paradigm.

In addition to imagining fans as “white people, particularly white men”, fan scholars have also been imagined as white people (Stanfill, 2011: online). Considering the term ‘aca-fan’ means a fan who utilizes their fandom as a base for their academic research, what we see then is a blending of object and subject positions in the sense that the aca-fan is studying their own fandoms as well as the self. However, there is a fundamental problem in fan studies research when aca-fans are imagined as “white people, particularly white men”. When you see representational analyses as ‘theft’ of pleasure from the object of study (i.e. the text and the community in which you are part), it also means that you see your own whiteness as universal and default. It means white aca-fans focus on analyses they can whitewash as whiteness is “exnominated” from such analyses, for instance, gender and sexuality (Martin Jr, 2019: 738; Gatson and Reid, 2011: 4.1; Barthes, 1972: 138). When we think about how racial analyses

can “rob” the aca-fan (defaulted as white) of pleasure, it is the pleasures of exnomination that is taken away. Furthermore, racial analysis ‘steals’ away privileges of the exnominated group such as power over the object and the ability to “spread” universalistic ideologies over the paradigm unchecked; white aca-fans can no longer “lose” their “name without risk” to their power. With racial analysis, white aca-fans “names can be thrown back at them”, as in naming race and white supremacist patriarchy within the Fan Studies paradigm uproots white protection from being called out on their complicity in white supremacist patriarchy and the colonialization of the paradigm (Barthes, 1972: 138). White aca-fan pleasure also entails the resources it can extract from the object of study/fandom and the capital which comes with spreading universalistic ideology across the paradigm; much like how white feminism (the contemporary mainstream and second-wave) promotes a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach while exnominating their whiteness as default to womanhood. As Wanzo (2015) does, we can refer to Ahmed’s work on citational practices and which names in a paradigm are repeatedly cited as an example of the “spread” of white universalistic knowledge – i.e. colonization.

Colonization goes further in Fan Studies with the co-option and operationalisation of language in which we have already discussed. We see language which suggests that fans are ‘resistant’, ‘challenge to hegemony’, ‘outsiders’, “improper identity” and “culture of self-selected fraction of people” (Fiske, 1992: 30). The language used in a way that represents fans/aca-fans (defaulted as white) as marginalised from the mainstream; to be on the fringes, to be a “challenge” to “hegemony” and to be an “improper” subject within hegemony. If we take exnomination into account (white aca-fans/ fan-scholars leaving whiteness out of analyses), it allows the exnominated group

to claim “white injury” and white victimhood narratives through operationalisation of language linked to non-white marginalised and oppressed people (Bloch, 2019). It normalises the exnominated group as the benchmark in which fans/aca-fans are “improper” and “resistant”. What this actually promotes according to Taylor (1994: 72) is “the inauthentic and homogenizing demand for recognition of equal worth, on the one hand, and the self-immurement within ethnocentric standards, on the other”.

We can see that exnominating whiteness from aca-fan scholarship is two-pronged; it homogenizes the experiences of non-white fans/aca-fans in that the co-option of language and pedagogy (as fans/aca-fans defaulted as white) holds power over everyone who the exnominated group wishes to cover and include under its umbrella. This is also why ‘Equality’, ‘Diversity’ and ‘Inclusivity’ are three terms which are highly problematic but are constantly put forward by the exnominated group because these terms do not require a relinquishment of power and monopoly over a paradigm (not just Fan Studies but in most subjects trying to ‘decolonize’). As a Black woman, I want to speak as if I am myself in this particular scenario where I am ‘Included’, where I am ‘Equal’ to and where I ‘Diversify’: if I am ‘Included’, what am I ‘Included’ in? If I am ‘Equal’, what am I ‘Equal’ to? If my presence ‘Diversifies’, what am I ‘Diversifying’? What is it that is held up as ‘standard’ that my presence alters?

Conclusion

Part 3 sets out to link juxtaposition as racialized–gendered technique of power to the neoliberal process of fan culture and scholarship. Fan labour practices such as Lovebor, Content and Promotional labour, are harnessed in competitive conditions in

which fans compete against other fan bases (i.e., Stan Wars). As leisure is flattened as labour, these practices generate surplus value and therefore profits for capital (social, cultural, economic) (Bourdieu, 1986). Social, cultural, and economic capital are convertible and utilized between fan rivalries such as the BeyHive and Rihanna Navy where they engage in “the most brutal and bloodiest stan wars ever...female pop stan wars” and perform free labour of advocacy in defence of their favourite artist (Stan Wars, 2021: online). Taking juxtaposition as a racialized–gendered technique of power, however, we see that investing in fan cultural practices such as advocating on behalf of the Black woman entertainer is harnessed to facilitate juxtaposition. Fan labour practices of advocacy and rivalry then reproduce the effects of juxtaposition; it reproduces the juxtaposition of Black women entertainers in pop music culture. As we know, the effects of juxtaposition regenerate the essentializing and naturalisation of misogynoir and controlling images. My original contribution to Fan Studies and Cultural Studies is the critical analysis of how the facilitation of juxtaposition works like a feedback loop in pop music fan culture, keeping the equilibrium and maintaining White Supremacist Capitalist Patriarchy – i.e. *homeostasis* (Foucault, 2008: 249; Sheth, 2011).

Chapter 3: Analysis of the Beyoncé/Rihanna Juxtaposition and Fan Interviews

Introduction

The objective of *Fandom, Pop Music and the Reproduction of Race-Gender Inequalities* is to critically decode white supremacist patriarchal ideology and identify (neo)colonial techniques of power which juxtapose Beyoncé and Rihanna in entertainment news discourses. Through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), I analysed a total of 117 entertainment/celebrity/music articles dated from the year 2005 – columns were collected from anglophone media outlets (US, UK and Ireland) in NVivo. Further to this, I have conducted six interviews with members of Beyoncé and Rihanna’s fan communities to explore how entertainment news discourses which juxtapose Beyoncé and Rihanna effect fans as readers. Within interviews with fan participants, I introduce an entertainment news article from the NVivo sample as a form of elicitation to open up new ways knowing how fans read entertainment media texts and the juxtaposing of Beyoncé and Rihanna. In this Chapter (the analysis of the Beyoncé/Rihanna Juxtaposition and Fan Interview), I analyse data from entertainment news media and fan elicitation interviews that have been coded and organised into themes in NVivo. As indicated in Chapter 1 (Methodology), CDA uncovers the how the structure and organization of entertainment news discourses through juxtaposition

reproduce the racist–sexist ideologies of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. The focus for this research is on the technique of power embedded within the discourse: juxtaposition with contrasting effects such as competition. The analysis of juxtaposition through entertainment media discourses will analyse the visual semiosis of these articles (where applicable to an article that has images and/or widgets) so I am not just analysing the language but the language, the images and widgets (e.g., interactive polls that encourage the reader to participate in juxtaposing discourse). For the codes used in this analysis, please refer to Appendix 4 ([Appendix 4](#)).

Juxtaposition (Analysis)

The reproduction of race-gender inequalities in this thesis is demonstrated through the technique of juxtaposition where Beyoncé and Rihanna become *affective amplifiers* for one another in interchangeable ways where their public–private personas are “put to work” to generate “every controlling image of black women Patricia Hill Collins taught you about” (Lewis, 2013; James, 2015). As Collins states in her seminal work *Black Feminist Thought* (2000), that controlling images are dynamic and changing; through this analysis, they will change, they will switch and move around because juxtaposition is an adaptable technique of power – it is the structuring of controlling images and misogynoir. There is a lot of overlap between these images because throughout centuries, these images are juxtaposed to recuperate and manage Black women’s labour, and amalgamated to reflect the changing white supremacist capitalist patriarchal imperatives and desire to regulate Black women. The images listed below

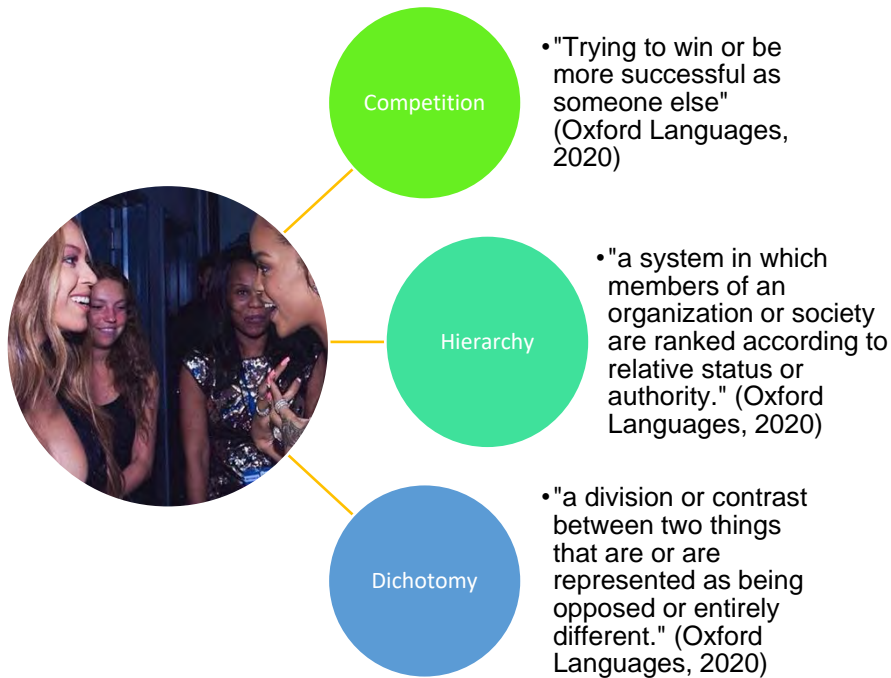
are controlling images that you will repeatedly see in the data analysis to come. The most important factor is these controlling images are juxtaposed to amplify racialized–gendered colonial–derived dichotomies to give the illusion of ethnic rivalry and to employ a strategy of “splitting” that naturalizes misogynoir (Hall, 1997; Young, 1996; Bailey, 2015; JanMohamed, 1986; Van Dijk, 1991). I will list the controlling images of Black women in the order I have mentioned them within this thesis so far:

She Devil;
Drudge;
Sable-Saffron Venus/ Black Venus;
Mammy;
Bad-black-girl;
Jezebel;
Tragic-Mulatta;
Sapphire;
Villain-seductress-perpetrator
Victim-in-need-of-rescue;
Servants, slaves or ‘loose’ women;
Diva;
Angry Black Woman;
“out-of-control”-“crazy”-“dangerous” Afro-Caribbean Women
The Devil’s Daughter
Strong-Black-Woman
Aspirational Black ‘top girls’ (with potential)
Can Do
At Risk

Juxtaposition definition:

“the fact of two things being seen or placed close together with contrasting effect”

(Oxford Languages, 2018) – “contrasting effect” – i.e., competition, hierarchy, dichotomy



Juxtaposition - 1

Is Rih Rih bigger than Bey?

Source: The Sun (UK)

Author: Toni Jones

Date originally published: 9th May 2011

Context: Toni Jones, The Sun's former executive fashion editor, writes about the annual Met Gala which had taken place a week prior in New York City (2nd May 2011). Beyoncé, accompanied by Jay-Z, and Rihanna were both present at the event (among many other celebrity guests). Beyoncé had released her first single 'Run The World (Girls)' on 21st April 2011 from her upcoming '4'. Rihanna had released two singles in 2011 by May; 'S&M' (21st January) and 'Man Down' (3rd May). In this article, Jones juxtaposes Beyoncé and Rihanna using the Met Gala as a starting point.

Headline:

The juxtaposition here is phrased as a question. This draws in the reader by having them question if "Rih Rih" is "bigger than Bey". The use of their nicknames within this question (Rih Rih and Bey), is also for the audience as means of social interaction - for the fans to discuss as these nicknames are used by their fans. Competition and hierarchy are produced by the question as the contrasting effects of Beyoncé and Rihanna's juxtaposition. Is Rih Rih "bigger than" Bey produces a hierarchical structure to the question because we're being asked is one more successful than the other. The reader is being asked to rank Rihanna and Beyonce's positions within the music entertainment social sphere hierarchically.

Subheading:

POP's fiercest divas came head to head on the red carpet at New York's Met ball this week.

In this scenario Rihanna and Beyonce are going "head to head" with each other, therefore placed in juxtaposition with contrasting effects (i.e. competition, hierarchy "on the red carpet"). The connotation of "fiercest" points towards the 'angry black woman' stereotypes (i.e., Jezebel, Sapphire, Tragic-Mulatta, SBW – inordinate strength). "Divas" has a similar connotation - "the diva label would appear to be a dubious homage. Today's divas are unreasonable, unpredictable and likely unhinged" (Springer, 2007: 257). The arena in which this competition (head to head) is "the red carpet at the New York's Met ball" and suggests it is a public arena - for an audience and to be captured as a form of entertainment.

Main Body of Article:

But as 23-year old Rihanna beamed for the cameras in her risque Stella McCartney gown, Texan Beyonce was booed for refusing to cooperate with photographers.

The author constructs a contrast in how Rihanna and Beyoncé interact with the paparazzi (individual conduct), in which they highlight Rihanna age - she's young ("23-year-old") and "beamed for the camera". It suggests that Jones favours Rihanna's youth as a successful 'Girl with potential' (Resilience Discourse) whereas Beyoncé is displaying "diva" behaviour as she is "booed for *refusing to cooperate* with photographers". The wording is crucial because it confirms the above racialised connotation of "diva" - "unreasonable, unpredictable and likely unhinged" - The suggestion is that Beyoncé's refusal to pose is a problem. Therefore, she is chastised ("booed") for this refusal – when SBW is transformed into/masculinized into Diva/Sapphire for rejecting the surveillance and the performance of affective labour –

like a smile) unlike Rihanna who "beamed" for the camera - this is where the juxtaposition is.

In recent months Rihanna has had **THREE** singles in our top ten simultaneously and seen such phenomenal demand for tickets for her Loud tour she had to boost the number of UK dates to 27.

Meanwhile 29-year-old Beyoncé is staying under the radar. She is facing a £60million lawsuit over a video game deal that went sour and a few weeks ago fired her dad as her manager.

Juxtaposition is seen through "diva" stereotype of Beyoncé above and Rihanna's 'beaming' "for the cameras" (*of service* to the gaze of the photographers). The Juxtaposition then gets quantified through Jones comparing Rihanna's music chart positions and tour sales to Beyoncé's current lawsuit of "£60million"; so we are literally talking about *profit* and *losses*. Quantification can be used to hide racism and, specifically misogynoir, under the guise economic competition and meritocratic language (the language of accolades). Beyoncé and Rihanna are placed (by Toni Jones) in competitive economics against each other to boost the profits and readership of the *owner* (The Sun). The author highlights Beyoncé age within the Juxtaposition in order to signify that Beyoncé is older than Rihanna. This narrative is a juxtaposition of a young 'Girl with potential' and an aging (according to entertainment industry standards) Beyoncé, no longer managed by her father/patriarch (Matthew Knowles) and in legal trouble. This intensifies the juxtaposition and its contrasting effects because it suggests that Rihanna is being placed to take over Beyoncé's position atop of the imaginary music industry monarchy as we will see next:

This year looks set to be Rhi Rhi's best year yet. But will it also be the year she steals Bey's crown as the queen of pop?

The above is confirmed in the following sentences - "will it also be the year she steals Bey's crown as the queen of pop?" Rihanna is positioned as Beyoncé's successor and "she steals"; there are connotations of aggression (angry-black-women – "fiercest divas" – in competition – "head-to-head"), as in forcibly taking someone's property without their permission. The "Queen of Pop" is an imagined title in the entertainment/music industry to signify success but also that pop music/entertainment is hierarchical and competitive in its social ecology, with the author wanting the reader to know of these conditions through the following discourse.

Image 1:



Figure 25: Rihanna (Left) - taken on 25th November 2009, Rated R album launch, Juliette Supperclub, NYC. Beyoncé's image taken at the 2010 Grammy Awards (Jones, 2011)

The most interesting aspect about these two images being spliced together is that Beyoncé's image was taken at the Grammy Awards 2010, where Beyoncé and Rihanna had taken multiple photographs together. This signifies that these images were strategically not used. Instead, the two images are spliced for the purpose of contrasting effects; "head to head" competition, dichotomy and hierarchy. Throughout the article, images are deliberately spliced together to create a "head to head" comparisons, of outfits in particular. There are eight images spliced together in this

“head to head” style in total. All the outfits are similar or have similar features when placed in juxtaposition (e.g.; colour of outfit, style of outfit, hairstyle).

Image 2:



Superstar producer – and Mr Beyonce Knowles – Jay-Z has played a huge part in success of the singer from Barbados , signing her to his Def Jam label when she was just 16, and now managing her under his Roc Nation label.

He was also the mastermind behind Beyoncé’s transformation from Destiny’s Child member to fully fledged solo megastar.

The information about Jay-Z is inaccurate (i.e.; “now managing her under his Roc Nation label” – Roc Nation (Jay Brown) manage Rihanna at this time, not Jay-Z), nevertheless, this is used to juxtapose Beyoncé and Rihanna through their attachment to Jay-Z. The author calls him "Mr Beyonce Knowles" which establishes that he is Beyoncé's husband - followed by how he has played a part in Rihanna's success. More telling is the inaccurate information in the following paragraph - "He was also the

mastermind behind Beyonce's transformation from Destiny's Child member to fully fledged solo megastar" - This puts Jay-Z in a position of control of both women - as a Black capitalistic patriarchal figure (the narrative of overseeing career at a profit) overseeing their careers. In both cases this is an unequal relationship as Jay-Z "played a huge part in the success" and is "now managing" Rihanna; Jay-Z was also the "mastermind behind Beyonce's transformation". This suggests that the women lacked agency in their careers without Jay-Z's help.

Image 3:



SIXTEEN Grammy wins later, Beyonce is now one of two female solo artists with the most No1 singles of the past decade. The other is Rihanna.

Despite enjoying similar success, the girls' family lives couldn't be more different.

Rihanna grew up in Bridgetown, Barbados. Aged nine, she walked in on her junkie dad Ronald taking crack. When she was 14 her parents divorced.

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Meanwhile Beyonce comes from a religious family devoted to carving her career as a star: before their spat this year dad Matthew had managed the singer's career from childhood and mum Tina created costumes throughout Bey's time in Destiny's Child.

Quantifiable juxtapositions are made such as “No.1 singles” and “Grammy wins”. The author then goes into biographical details about Beyoncé and Rihanna: "Despite enjoying similar success...". We see their initial juxtaposition quantified earlier in the article, however, this changes to juxtaposing the women on a biographical basis. Preceded by quantification, Rihanna and Beyoncé are then juxtaposed based on their “family lives...” that "couldn't be more different." The author sets up a clear contrast between their childhoods. Except what we are really comparing, in hierarchical terms, is what they have had to *overcome* in order to achieve success (Resilience Discourse). This is used to answer the initial competitive and hierarchical question – "Is Rih Rih bigger than Bey?" – as we are measuring their ability to *overcome*, we are also reviewing how much patriarchal 'damage' they have had to endure throughout their lives (issues with their fathers), particularly in Rihanna's case. The author tells Rihanna's story first for this reason which points towards the initial question "Is Rih Rih bigger than Bey?" because the question is an assessment of Rihanna's success/ability to *overcome* juxtaposed Beyoncé's success/ability to *overcome*. Rihanna's nationality and city of birth (“Bridgetown, Barbados”) are highlighted to signify that she had/has to *overcome* being born there (not the US or UK), in the same paragraph which goes through how Rihanna has/had to *overcome* her father's crack addiction (Ronald Fenty) and her parent's divorce. "Meanwhile" adds to the contrast with Beyoncé's upbringing. Beyoncé "religious family devoted" to making her a star suggests that Beyoncé has not had to *overcome* as much as Rihanna has but does highlight a “spat” with her dad, Matthew. A juxtaposition of their upbringing, in this case, generates hierarchy and competition - the measuring of Resilience on biographical features.

Beyoncé's sexy on-stage persona – who she has named Sasha Fierce – has seen her morph from glitzy frocks designed by mum to edgy fashionista, sporting designs by cutting-edge labels like Balmain, Preen, Isabel Marant and French designer Jean Paul Gaultier.

Since the release of her Good Girl Gone Bad album Rihanna's image has become more and more provocative. On last year's X Factor she stripped off to a tribal bikini.

Beyoncé's "persona" is compartmentalized between Sasha Fierce - who is "sexy" "edgy" "glitzy" - There is a clear distinction between Beyoncé the daughter of religious/conservative parents and wife and Sasha Fierce. She is given credit for this by the author listing the designers she has worn. It casts Beyoncé as having an attachment to (high fashion) social status. In juxtaposition, there is a focus on Rihanna's "Good Girl Gone Bad" image, her "provocative" image, and where she has "stripped off to a tribal bikini" on X Factor. The key words are "stripped off" and "tribal" - this exoticizes and racializes Rihanna's fashion choice. Rihanna as "provocative", "tribal" and "stripped off" taken alone can be traced back to 17-18th century European racial ethnocentrism, to say African "tribal" dances were an indication of sexual lewdness and uncontrolled sexuality (white supremacist justification of their sexual exploitation and violence). The Sasha Fierce compartmentalization distances Beyoncé from her "on-stage persona" affording her "multivocality" within the above discourse here (Collins, 2000: 145; Lieb, in Trier-Bieniek, 2016: 76).

Fierce heels, mega shoulders, micro minis, underwear as outerwear, OTT accessories and piles of bling are all trends both ladies have both tried. Here we pit Pop's reigning Princesses against each other – but who **REALLY** wears it best?

"Fierce", "mega", "micro minis", "underwear as outerwear", "OTT", "piles of bling" - These words all point towards excess and sexualization (lack of clothing, indication of small clothing); and connotes that both Black women are seen by the author as excessive (in their fashion choices). The author restates the competitive purpose of the article for the reader directly asking them – "Here we pit Pop's reigning Princesses against each other - who REALLY wears it best?" – Beyoncé and Rihanna are juxtaposed through the archetypal stereotypes of Black women (in particular SBW and bad-black-girl/Tragic-Mulatta as "fiercest divas" coming "head to head"). Resilience discourse, however, reconfigures these controlling images because it also restructures the way we see 'ideal' feminine and racial conduct in terms of the virgin/whore dichotomy. Rihanna and Beyoncé in competition (as an organizing principle and contrasting effect) seems like a *natural* way to measure their Black woman their mediated to gain readership, as entertainment. As we saw with the juxtaposition of Beyoncé and Rihanna's childhoods, the author measuring who is resilient enough to *overcome* patriarchal damage ("spat" with dad and dad with "crack addiction") – this is where we see juxtaposition as neoliberal technique of power because the social (i.e., mediated conduct and the biographical features of their lives) is deciphered through economic organizing principles (i.e., competition) (Lemke, 2019: 253-254; James, 2015: 97; Marshall, 2010: 37; Fairclough, 1995).

Juxtaposition - 2

Digital Diary: Rihanna and Beyonce Define the Social Web Spectrum

Source: The New York Times (US) - Bits (Business, Innovation, Technology, Society)

Author: Jenna Wortham

Date originally published: 30th April 2012

Context:

By April 2012, Beyoncé had been releasing songs from her '4' album such as 'I Care' (23rd March) and 'End of Time' (23rd April). Rihanna had released another album 'Talk a Piss' (2011) with the singles 'Where Have You Been' (released 8th May 2012) and 'Birthday Cake' (featuring Chris Brown) earlier in 2012. Both Rihanna and Beyoncé were active on social media; Rihanna was mainly active on Twitter and Instagram, while Beyoncé chose Tumblr and her own website to connect with fans. Writer Jenna Wortham, writes about this social media activity by juxtaposing Beyoncé and Rihanna's mediated conduct online, hence a "Digital Diary".

This New York Times article is an article of two halves and the author (Wortham) has structured it as such even though the headline itself does not suggest the two will be placed in competitive/dichotomous/hierarchical discourse. The two images are integral curating the article's discourse on both women's personas and the Beyoncé/Rihanna

Juxtaposition. As Wortham expresses her fandom for both Beyoncé and Rihanna, she also makes her intention to juxtapose them clear with:

The first thing to know, however, is that they each sit on opposite sides of the spectrum in terms of how one can use the Web to give their followers, friends and audience a peephole in the lives they lead and the worlds they inhabit.

Wortham wants the audience to know “they each sit on opposite side of the spectrum” and it is about their individual mediated conduct and behaviour online. So as the reader we are led to focus on “how one can use the Web” and through “a peephole [...] the lives they lead and the worlds they inhabit”. It is a process of surveillance analysing their mediated conduct in order to juxtapose.

Image 1 (including Caption):

FANDOM, POP MUSIC AND THE REPRODUCTION OF RACE-GENDER INEQUALITIES



Rihanna posts dozens of updates and photos on Instagram and Twitter, **chronicling her round-the-clock antics with a raw, unfiltered quality that feels borderline unhinged.**

The above image is a screenshot. At the top of the image it reads, “***** FIVE STAR REVIEWS*****...Download the *free* App...iPhone...Android”, and the caption and comments section being on the right-hand side of the screen suggests that this screenshot was made on a laptop. The image is also an edited selfie (*Layout* app) documenting Rihanna saying goodnight to Los Angeles under her Instagram moniker ‘badgalriri’. Rihanna’s *Trapstar* hat covers her eyes as she holds her drink in a plastic cup. She is pictured alone and not smiling. The picture is pixelated (screenshots can make this worse) and there is no clear facial expression from Rihanna as the hat takes up the three selfies. With no eye contact and a partially hidden face there is no visual direct address with the reader/viewer which make it easier to apply stereotypes; a process of dehumanisation (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 122–3).

The accompanying caption Wortham writes paints another picture of this image in the context of Rihanna's social media activity: "Rihanna posts dozens of updates and photo on Instagram and Twitter *chronicling her round-the-clock antics with a raw, unfiltered quality that feels borderline unhinged*" (Wortham, 2012: my emphasis). The emphasised text in this caption is a phrase grabbed from the main text of the article and this specific phrase is repeated again as we will see soon. We get negative connotations with "*round-the-clock antics*" as it suggests that her behaviour is outrageous and "round-the-clock" as in frequently or all the time. Additionally, these "antics" are framed through "raw, unfiltered" posts in which we get the connotations of wildness and coarseness. This phrase, "raw, unfiltered", is significant because the author has chosen an image that accompanies the text and/or has written the text around that specific image/screenshot. Next, Wortham "feels" these posts (the frequency and timing of posts as set up before) "feels borderline unhinged" connoting mental instability and uncontrollability. The use of "unhinged" casts an archetypal stereotype within the article's juxtaposition with Beyoncé; that stereotype is 'badgaliriri' as bad-black-girl/Tragic-Mulatta. From this caption alone we get the forecasting of Rihanna as mentally unstable, uncontrollable, coarse and "unhinged"; even the image itself in which she is holding a drink in a plastic cup are all impressions which curate the Tragic Mulatta narrative (Pilgrim, 2012).

First, Rihanna. The seasoned pop singer, as one of my friends described it, is “completely nuts.”

To say that Rihanna, whose breezy, electro-synth dance tracks have been unofficial dance club anthems for the past six months, is prolific on her media of choice, Instagram and Twitter, would be an understatement. On any given day, she posts dozens of updates and photos on both sites, chronicling her round-the-clock antics with a raw, unfiltered quality that feels borderline unhinged.

Again, there is an assertion that Rihanna is “completely nuts”. This assertion however, is mixed with praise for Rihanna as a “seasoned pop singer” and “whose breezy, electro-synth dance tracks have been unofficial dance club anthems for the past six months”. The paragraph ends with the repeated caption above but we also get additional words/phrases which suggest that Rihanna is frequently and uncontrollably posting on social media (“unhinged” on social media). This is emphasised by words/phrases such as “prolific” which is an “understatement” as she posts “dozens of updates on both sites [...] round-the-clock”, which all relate to quantity and frequency; the more Rihanna posts “unfiltered” on her social media, the more “unhinged” Rihanna *appears* to be.

Many of her photos have a grainy, pixelated quality, the result of taking photographs of herself with the front-facing iPhone camera. Sometimes these self-portraits present Rihanna in full glamor. She likes to show off her lean, shapely figure, mostly through MySpace-style cam shots, scantily clad and pouting in a bathroom or full-length mirror, and she's especially fond of uploading pictures of herself with thick curls of smoke snaking from either her nose, her mouth or a combination of both. She seems to be completely uncensored by anyone sensible in her camp – she often curses and is not above lashing out at anyone who takes a jab at her on Twitter, even MTV, which plays her videos for her fans. She once posted nothing but song lyrics from her latest album, sometimes juxtaposed with photographs, for 24 hours.

The "grainy, pixelated quality" of her photos comes in conjunction with "raw, unfiltered...", pointing to roughness/coarseness. Wortham also positions Rihanna alone - "the result of taking photographs of herself with the front-facing iPhone camera". There is then a variation in the Tragic-Mulatta stereotype (as "worldly seductress" – see Jewell, 1993: 46) which constructs Rihanna as "Sometimes" in "full glamour" - indicating that these "raw, unfiltered"/"grainy, pixelated" "self-portraits" present Rihanna as desirable despite her roughness (Jewell, 1993: 46; Pilgrim, 2012). Rihanna as attractive and desired is emphasized by the following detailed description of her body and the way she poses in her photos. The author focuses on her body shape first - "She likes to show off her lean, shapely figure" which indicates that her body/curves are what make her desirable to her audience/author. Rihanna 'showing off' is emphasized by her being "scantily clad and pouting in a bathroom or full-mirror" - "scantily clad" indicates that Rihanna is wearing little clothing. The descriptors "scantily clad and pouting" also connotes and casts Rihanna as hypersexual within article (bad-black-girl/Tragic Mulatta).

We also get the image that Rihanna is toxic and/or unhealthy. Again, we have "she's especially fond", similar to "she likes" which cast her mediated conduct as purposeful to the reader. The photos contain her smoking (marijuana), described as "thick curls of smoke snaking from either her, her mouth or a combination of both". The alliterative "smoke snaking" puts together smoke as toxic and snakes as slippery and poisonous, and the author amalgamates that toxicity with Rihanna's online mediated conduct (e.g., smoking marijuana, taking selfies, pouting, posing etc.). Again, Rihanna's body is uncontrolled (alluding to "unhinged" and "completely nuts") – "from either her nose, her mouth or combination of both".

Next, Rihanna is "completely uncensored" which goes in conjunction with "raw"/"unfiltered"/"borderline unhinged" and uncontrolled body. Her censoring however is the responsibility of her camp - "by anyone sensible in her camp" - this suggests that Rihanna is not sensible, unable to control herself and lacks agency. In other words, Rihanna is unable to control her behaviour and her body without the "sensible" supervision of her "camp". Then, the above is emphasised by "she often curses and is not above *lashing out at anyone* who takes a jab at her on Twitter". She "often" (a focus on frequency) "curses" and is not above "lashing out" are the action phrases in this sentence, which again constructs Rihanna's behaviour as erratic and "completely nuts". Rihanna's *uncontrollable anger* "at anyone who takes a jab", indicates that Rihanna is unable to control her anger when slighted. These are all indicators of the bad-black-girl/Tragic Mulatta and depictions of "Afro-Caribbean women as *out of control*", *"crazy" and "dangerous"...*" which "manufactures justification for racialized, gendered violence and encourages patriarchal dominance over Black women from the West Indies" (Bierria, 2012: 105). Rihanna *"even"* 'lashes out' at MTV – "*...even MTV, which plays her videos for her fans*", indicating that Rihanna should be *grateful*

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to MTV for playing her music videos for her fans. This emphasizes her supposed anger/erratic behaviour as MTV is constructed as doing her a favour and it naturalises the stereotypes that have come before. The naturalisation of such stereotypes will continue and be reconfigured again through the upcoming juxtaposition with Beyoncé. Finally, we have a focus on frequency of her posts and time "24 hours" - all of this points to excess; excess posts, excess use of social media, cursing (voice), drugs (marijuana), anger and sexuality.

Beyonce, on the other hand, a pop icon, maintains a cool, poised presence on the Web. Her preferred outlets are Tumblr and Twitter, kind of. (Her last — and only — tweet is from the fifth of April, announcing her Tumblr to her four million followers.) She (or the New York-based development firm that manages her site) frequently posts gorgeous, glossy photographs of



Beyonce's Tumblr page conveys the sense of flipping through the vacation photos of your wealthier, more attractive and popular college roommate.

When it comes to Beyoncé's half of the article, there is a clear distinction and juxtaposition (with contrasting effects). We first see the image of Beyoncé and her husband, Jay-Z smiling and holding hands. Smiling towards the viewer gives direct

address. There is a background and it is outside with the sun shining in a garden (contrast to Rihanna with lack of background/indoors). This is onset by "Beyoncé, *on the other hand*" which is way of demonstrating contrast (dichotomy). Beyoncé is a "pop icon, maintains a cool, poised presence", key words are "cool" and "poised" which contrasts Rihanna as "completely nuts", "borderline unhinged". Beyoncé is constructed as having other people manage her social media accounts "or the New York-based development firm..." which connotes professionalism in her career (as juxtaposed to Rihanna's "camp" who leave her "completely uncensored"). Beyoncé is cast as an Aspirational Figure as she is the Black woman (juxtaposed Rihanna) that is '*handling her business*' under "racialized postfeminism" where she is "everything for everyone *and* maintaining a sense of self", for instance, she is a wife *and* a career woman (Springer, 2007: 252; McRobbie, 2015). Beyoncé's posts are also "gorgeous, glossy" (as opposed to "grainy, pixelated").

Ms. Knowles and her family that convey the sense of flipping through the vacation photos of your wealthier, more attractive and popular college roommate. She's often shown barefoot on white sand beaches, curled up in lounge wear, thumbing through magazines on a boat, holding hands and gazing wistfully at her husband, the rapper Jay-Z. Sometimes, the site features handwritten notes from Beyonce, written in beautiful swirling swoops that someone has scanned and uploaded to her site.

Beyoncé is also not alone, she is with "her family" (as opposed to Rihanna being positioned alone - "taking photos of herself", "self-portraits"). The author sees Beyoncé's family life (in pictures) as aspirational - "vacation photos of your wealthier, more attractive and popular college roommate" - This constructs Beyoncé as having-it-all "wealthier"/"attractive"/"popular" but also that she made the right (controlled)

choices. Beyoncé being compared to “popular college roommate” also casts Beyoncé as college (US) educated; as intelligent and respectable. Whereas Rihanna is “likes to show off”, Beyoncé is “often shown” which suggests Beyoncé is more conservative. The author's description of Beyoncé's life is picturesque: “white sand beaches, curled up in lounge wear, thumbing through magazines on a boat, holding hands and gazing wistfully” and “curled up in lounge wear” depicts Beyoncé as being dressed comfortably (as opposed to Rihanna as “scantily clad”). Juxtaposed Rihanna’s “antics” (connotations of outrageous behaviour), the author describes Beyoncé's mediated conduct in more detail using adjectives with positive connotations, “barefoot on white sand”, “thumbing through magazines”, “holding hands”, “gazing wistfully”. There is no description of Beyoncé body shape, the way she ‘shows it off’ or poses (juxtaposed Rihanna). Part of this is because the author attaches her to her husband, Jay-Z which casts her as a wife as she is “gazing wistfully at her husband”. It shows that Beyoncé has made “sensible” choices and has the support of her management, family and her husband (a “sensible” “camp”).

We also have the use of alliteration with “beautiful swirling swoops” as juxtaposed to “thick curls of smoke snaking”. The “swirling swoops”, “curls of smoke snaking” convey similar images of shapes but these are cast in different conducts/past times (Rihanna smoking/Beyoncé writing). These past times are significant in that they present Beyoncé as making the ‘right’ choices (Conservative, healthy, marriage) and Rihanna making ‘wrong’ choices (Criminalized/drug-taking, anger, uncontrollable).

Each of their touches couldn't be more personal or more aligned with their brand. Beyoncé, already a mirage of shimmering sequins and flowing hair, carefully maintains that distance from her fans, while still feeding their appetites for more personal insight and access to her personal life. But you'd never see a lock or a curl out of place, none of the unfettered messiness that Rihanna, a wild child known for racy lyrics and even racier videos, enthusiastically embraces through her online presence.

The author describes Beyoncé as a "mirage" which connotes someone that divine/perfect. We get Beyoncé with "shimmering sequins and flowing hair" which is like a stage outfit as she "carefully maintains...distance from her fans" (Diva image). This casts Beyoncé as a controlled Aspirational Figure and a model of perfection (Strong-Black-Woman) as she "carefully maintains" and "you'd never see a lock or a curl out of place". There is then stark contrast to "none of the unfettered messiness" which, again, casts Rihanna as "unhinged" and uncontrolled. Rihanna is an *unruly* "wild child" and the author once again focusses on hypersexuality by adding "known for racy lyrics and even racier videos". Rihanna "enthusiastically embraces" the above (in tandem with "she likes to show off", "she's especially fond of").

As others have noted, Beyoncé is cleverly controlling the conversation about herself and steering it in a way that is charming, palatable and easily digestible – something that other celebrities, like Lindsay Lohan and Miley Cyrus, have struggled to do. But in a sense, Rihanna is too – albeit conveying the message that she's earned the right to do as she pleases; like her music, it speaks volumes about her success and who she is.

Beyoncé is in control of the conversation about herself and she is "cleverly controlling" and "steering it" (Strong-Black-Woman). Beyoncé is in control but in a "charming, palatable and easily digestible" way which indicates that Beyoncé's "controlling" is non-threatening/pleasant and easy to consume online; as in it is not too hard to 'digest' and it is tidy - "not a curl out of place".

It is interestingly contrasted with white women Miley Cyrus and Lindsay Lohan (white celebrity women as "Hot Messes" - Leib, 2016). Beyoncé is also an aspirational figure for these white women who can easily appropriate and consume Beyoncé's self-control through the Strong-Black-Woman archetype – she is more "palatable" to a white audience (i.e., symbolic proximity to whiteness). Rihanna is valued on her autonomy despite earlier construction as being out-of-control in juxtaposition with Beyoncé (Resilience Discourse). She not a villain per se but she is constructed as seductress-perpetrator as her actions are purposeful and framed within the context of her body and (hyper) sexuality within the article (e.g., "show off"). Up until this point Rihanna's "controlling the conversation" about herself has been hypersexualised "albeit" earning "the right to do as she pleases". Rihanna's success, merit and autonomy are her saving graces for the author because like Beyoncé (Can Do), Rihanna is also a post-feminist subject (At Risk) with the *potential to overcome* through "earned" "success" (i.e. through success at work, autonomous self-determination, capital, consumption) (McRobbie, 2001: 20-1; Harris, 2004: 16-24).

But the deeper takeaway that relates to you and me is this:

The author then directly addresses the reader after the juxtaposing Rihanna and Beyoncé as both of their personas (including the ones constructed in the article) “relates to you and me” – are we Rihanna or Beyoncé online? Wortham (as we will see next) poses this as a choice between Beyoncé’s and Rihanna’s mediated conduct.

Will you be a Beyonce, and present a carefully groomed version of yourself to the Web? One carefully designed and maintained by yourself, or a third party, to ensure that you don't screw up your career, your relationship or your education with one misfired photograph or tweet? It sounds extreme, but it happens – more frequently than most of us would like to think about. Or will you take Rihanna's road and throw caution to the wind, baring your life, your friends and occasionally, your unmentionables?

Directly addressing the reader again, the author constructs Beyoncé as "carefully groomed" (SBW). The question is shaped so that the reader can imagine themselves as Beyonce as a personification of "carefully groomed", as above "carefully designed and maintained". As a caution, the author lists how the reader could ruin their career if they do not "be a Beyonce" on social media. Serious life consequences such as 'screwing up' your "career", "relationship" and "education" are conjunction with the description of Beyonce as an aspirational figure above - "wealthier", "attractive", "popular". It also serves as cautionary tale as to what happens if you do not make the *right choices* as a Black woman on social media. The author then lets us know that

the cautionary tale “sounds extreme” - this is in conjunction with Beyoncé and Rihanna being on “opposite sides of the spectrum” as next we get the other end of the spectrum. Beyoncé’s social media conduct is then juxtaposed with “Or will you take Rihanna's road”. The other end of the spectrum is “throw caution to the wind, baring your life, your friends” – again it casts Rihanna as not in control of herself, her life or the people around her. In other words, Rihanna cast as Tragic-Mulatta lacks agency but is also ‘a girl with potential ‘to be resilient through autonomous self-realization (Rodier and Meagher, 2014: 186-187). Rihanna is then hypersexualized by “occasionally, your unmentionables?” - “Unmentionables” is used instead of underwear/undergarments and the connotations are that “baring” your life (and your body) and ‘throwing caution to the wind’ leaves you vulnerable to making the *'wrong' choices* (At Risk) where you can “screw up your career, your relationship or your education”. Rihanna is a cautionary (tale) bad-bad-girl on social media juxtaposed a “poised” and “carefully groomed” Beyoncé who makes “controlled” choices with her mediated content.

Juxtaposition – 3

February 20, 2016

**Beyoncé Vs. Rihanna: The Queen Of Pop
Vs. The Queen Of Flop**

Source: Inquisitr (Inquisitr.com)

Author: Daryl Deino

Date: 20th February 2016

Context:

Beyoncé and Rihanna had released new albums and both released new music in 2016. Beyoncé had released the first single from Lemonade, 'Formation' (6th February) and performed it at Superbowl 50 with Coldplay and Bruno Mars (7th February). Rihanna had released her album ANTI (28th January) and its debut single 'Work' (27th January). In light of these simultaneous events, writer Daryl Deino, places Beyoncé and Rihanna in competition as "The Queen Of Pop Vs. The Queen Of Flop". Though the recent release of music is compared, Deino also chooses to pick up on Rihanna's 2015 release 'Bitch Better Have My Money' (BBHMM) which was released almost a year earlier to juxtapose Rihanna with Beyoncé.

The headline, "Beyonce vs. Rihanna: The Queen of Pop Vs. The Queen of Flop", suggests there is a hierarchy and competition within amongst women within pop music

with the use of "Queen": this competition – “Vs.” – is a *spectacle*. It sets out the juxtaposition of Beyonce and Rihanna, with the former being "The Queen of Pop" and the latter "The Queen of Flop". "Flop" has been used as a negative colloquial term within online stan culture for an artist/artist's music that has not done well (e.g., failed to chart highly/seen as a failure). The term “Flop” is also meritocratic; if you “flop” it is because you failed to acquire adequate merit.

Both Beyoncé and Rihanna have released new music, thrusting themselves back in the spotlight over the past month. However, their approaches have been completely different, with Beyoncé expanding her legacy while Rihanna becomes a part of history (and not in the way she expected).

We then see the introduction to the topic (set out by the headline) which indicates that this is about Beyonce and Rihanna's approaches to how they have *bounced back* with new music (i.e., Resilience Discourse). This is also about their "legacy" and being "a part of history". Interestingly, Beyonce is "expanding her legacy" while Rihanna "becomes a part of history (and not in the way she expected)". This suggests that there is an approval of Beyonce's approach and an unease with Rihanna's approach. We will see later that this is about how they highlight race-gender issues through their music videos and performances.

First, let's talk about Beyoncé. Many think she is overrated and there are also many who think she overstepped her bounds with her Super Bowl performance, which promoted the Black Panthers. According to the *New York Post*, former NYC Mayor Rudy Giuliani blasted Beyoncé the day after the Super Bowl.

"I thought that she used it as a platform to attack police officers, who are the people who protect her and protect us and keep us alive. And what we should be doing, in the African-American community and in all communities, is build up respect for police officers and focus on the fact that when something does go wrong, OK, we'll work on that," Giuliani angrily said.

The author asserts that "many" (the audience) thought the Beyoncé "overstepped her bounds" (what are these bounds?) during her performance at Superbowl 50 Half-Time show (2016) which addressed through attire, choreography and music race-gender politics in America (wearing outfits similar to the Black Panthers, Black Power salutes in choreography and all dancers were Black women). The use of "promoted the Black Panthers" here is used to emphasize how Beyoncé "overstepped her bounds" for it confines her message to a political organisation that has already criminalized for their critique of police brutality against Black people and promotion of social justice for Black people (Green, 2019). This suggests that there is an unease with addressing this political issue, especially at a sports event like the Superbowl. The author quotes Republican politician, former New York City Mayor, and member of the Trump Administration's legal team, Rudy Giuliani. The author is showing where Beyoncé "overstepped her bounds" by using Giuliani's words.

However, many people have come out and supported Beyoncé. Rihanna can learn from Beyoncé: When you are involved in a controversy and attract just as many supporters as haters, you are the winner. This certainly wasn't the case when Rihanna released the video for "Bitch Better Have My Money" after the song bombed on *Billboard's* charts.

Instead of releasing a controversial video that at least had a message like Beyoncé's "Formation," Rihanna released a "revenge" video that many considered not only racist, but unnecessarily violent. Rihanna could have had many people in her court over the "race" thing, but those same people were turned off by the misogyny in the video. Even the *Guardian* condemned the video.

"The main issue here is surely: misogyny, who's allowed to do it? And the only answer can be: nobody. It's even difficult to excuse it on the grounds of artistic expression, given how crude is the video."

The reviewer, Barbara Ellen, believes that just because there are misogynistic male artists out there, it doesn't give Rihanna the privilege of making a video in where she kills men. She believes that reversing gender roles is tired and Rihanna's video doesn't even follow through on the concept properly.

Nevertheless, the author then switches to highlight that "people have come out and supported Beyoncé". However, this point is used to juxtapose in the next sentence: "Rihanna can learn from Beyoncé" (Beyoncé as Aspirational Figure). Again, we have pointers towards meritocracy ("winner") attached to "controversy" and the equilibrium of having "supporters" and "haters". When you have this social equilibrium (i.e., homeostasis), in controversy (e.g., up for public/audience debate), "you are the winner". While Beyoncé "overstepped her bounds", she did so in a way that was 'acceptable' for public debate. Beyoncé's symbolism used in her performances are more "palatable" (Wortham, 2012: Juxtaposition - 2). The next sentence reveals who and what Beyoncé is more "palatable" than: "*This certainly wasn't the case when Rihanna released the video for "Bitch Better Have My Money" after the song bombed on Billboard's charts*" (my emphasis). In this instance, "the case" is about how Rihanna

and Beyoncé perform political topics (in this case “the “race” thing”) through their cultural productions (e.g., live performance/staging and music videos).

Deino constructs a juxtaposition between these performances by making a distinction between "controversial video" and ""revenge" video". The author juxtaposes Beyoncé's approach to addressing "the "race" thing" to Rihanna's 'Bitch Better Have My Money' (BBHMM) music video. Furthermore, it suggests Rihanna's music video addresses a “race thing” to begin with. Deino calls racial politics a “thing” which suggests the flippancy of the actual topic itself. The connotation here is that while Beyoncé's approach "overstepped her bounds", Rihanna's approach is even more out of “bounds” of what controversial material to address "the "race" thing" is *tolerated*. When Rihanna steps over what is 'tolerated', using Beyoncé as the yardstick of Black female performance (like white women as 'moralised' in the virgin/whore dichotomy) (Carby, 1987; Collins, 2000: 266). Juxtaposition measures, manages and recuperates what it lost (labour, value lost through insufficiency to perform within the “bounds” and keep social equilibrium). An interesting factor about this juxtaposition that Beyoncé's Superbowl performance was on 7th February 2016; Rihanna's 'BBHMM' music video was released on 2nd July 2015 and so peculiarly, there is a seven-month gap between both events. The common denominators under this juxtaposition are race, meritocracy and “bounds” that should not be crossed during Black female performance, especially when it displays white women as complicit in white supremacist capitalist patriarchy in the exploitation of Black women's labour (i.e., 'Bitch Better Have My Money' takes away the power of white women's exnomination in white supremacist capitalist patriarchy).

Deino references the Guardian article '*Rihanna's self-indulgent video is not clever. It's pure misogyny*' (Ellen, 2015) published three days after the music video's release, when noting how the video "many considered not only racist, but unnecessarily violent". This then paired with a quote from Ellen's article casting Rihanna as a misogynist. Rihanna goes from learner, to meritocratic loser (i.e., "bombed on the Billboard's charts", "flop") to villain-seductress-perpetrator of the very topics and issues she is addressing in the 'Bitch Better Have My Money' music video. This is because Beyoncé and Rihanna's (and by extension of other contemporary Black women Pop/R&B performers) approaches to address race-gender based violence, although different, "are produced by white feminism as both responsible for perpetrating gender-based violence, and as victims in need of rescue" on path to resilience and overcoming (SBW-Aspirational figure) (Harris-Perry, 2011a, Jordan-Zachary, 2009: 40; James, 215; Ferreday, 2015; Davis, 1981; hooks, 1989). Beyoncé 'oversteps' but not in the same way, she is redeemed on merit and by her "controversial" approach rather than "revenge" approach; a suggestion that this is how to "follow through on the concept properly". That "concept" and their approach to address it/performance of it, has "bounds" (i.e., white supremacist capitalist exploitation and its violence).

The video certainly didn't help Rihanna's career, which was why her album — eventually titled *Anti* — is a huge disappointment. It has sold a lot less than her previous album, *Unapologetic*, during its first month of release. The duet "Work" with Drake may be a hit on *Billboard's Hot 100*, but that has to do with the fact that Drake is involved more than it has to do with Rihanna.

A true measure of an artist's popularity is how well they are selling concert tickets. According to *Billboard*, Rihanna has postponed several U.S. dates on her *Anti* tour.

Rihanna's insufficient ability to "follow through on the concept properly" when addressing race-gender politics is directly linked to her album and tour sales (Quantification of juxtaposition). Rihanna's failure to "follow through on the concept properly" gets quantified into "A true measure of an artist's popularity is how well they are selling concert tickets" and "Anti- is a huge disappointment. It has sold a lot less..." which is directly linked to the 'BBHMM' video's "revenge" narrative - "The video certainly didn't help Rihanna's career...". Furthermore, the author attributes all the success of Rihanna's single, "Work" to Drake (rapper). The suggestion here is that Drake carries Rihanna's labour (performance) in the song. It constructs Rihanna as insufficiently performing labour and this is also in parallel with Caribbean stereotypes of idleness.

"Following her Grammy performance cancellation from a bout with bronchitis, several dates of Rihanna's Anti tour, initially scheduled to begin at the end of February, have been postponed."

Billboard says the reasons for the postponements are because of production delays. People in the industry say it has more to do with poor ticket sales. Things aren't much better on the other side of the Ocean, where, according to the Sun, Rihanna has cancelled two of her UK dates due to awful ticket sales. On the other hand, Beyoncé has been selling her shows out in minutes.

At the beginning of the decade, both Beyoncé and Rihanna were the biggest names in the music industry. Six years later, it appears that only Beyoncé has survived. Do you think Rihanna can make a comeback? Let us know in the comments section.

Rihanna's insufficient resilience of *overcoming* race-gender exploitation through ticket sales (meritocratic/economic capital), even "bronchitis" (illness as weakness and insufficiently resilient) is crunched into "sales", into 'free' market terms (statistics and profits), therefore the tropes which frame Rihanna and Beyoncé in this article become deregulated because everything 'crunched' into market terms is 'free' of direction.

Therefore, anything constructed does not appear to be constructed (deregulation), including race-gender tropes originating from colonialism. Rihanna's postponements are highlighted as there is an emphasis on insufficiency (inability to sell, inability to stay healthy - Unhealthy equates to unprofitable). The author repeats "poor tickets sales" and "awful ticket sales". Then this inability to sell/profit is finally juxtaposed with "On the other hand, Beyoncé has been selling her shows out in minutes" with Beyoncé's ability to sell (to *overcome* race-gender based violence through merit, profit and sales/capital).

In the last paragraph, Deino starts with "At the beginning of the decade..." – this time period is significant as 2009-2010 was a year which coincidentally saw Rihanna going through the fallout and aftermath of her abuse from Chris Brown which was significant in how her mediated social positioning through media discourse shifted afterwards (Wade, 2013: 133). Beyoncé and Rihanna (with resilient potential) "were the biggest names in the industry" but "it appears that only Beyoncé has survived". The other side of Beyoncé surviving is that Rihanna did not survive. The author finishes by leaving the discussion open by asking if Rihanna can *bounce back*. This is left open for comment by the reader to keep Beyoncé and Rihanna competitive as this is profitable (drawing in readers/consumers) and recuperates the value lost through 'overstepping' the "bounds".

Juxtaposition – 4

Rihanna v Beyonce: Hot or not?

Comment



Emily Hewett

Wednesday 8 Feb 2012 10:42 am

Source: Metro (UK)

Author: Emily Hewett

Date published: 8th February 2012

Context:

Beyoncé had been releasing songs from her '4' album. Rihanna had released another album 'Talk That Talk' (November, 2011) with the single 'Birthday Cake' (featuring Chris Brown) being released later in February, 2012. The author, Emily Hewitt, starts the article with the rumour that Rihanna reuniting with Chris Brown (3 years post-domestic abuse incident in 2009) and uses this to juxtapose Beyoncé, the "yummy mummy", who had just giving birth to her first daughter Blue-Ivy Carter that January.

Rihanna is out to prove she doesn't care what people think amid rumours she's getting back with Chris Brown, while yummy mummy Beyonce wowed fans with her post baby figure. But who looked hot and who did not?

The headline – “Rihanna v Beyonce: Hot or Not?” - We have both women placed in direct competition. They are juxtaposed on whether they are "Hot or Not". The headline puts an either/or choice to the reader, in which we are forced to assign Beyoncé and Rihanna to either/or categories. The significance of the date this was posted (8th February) comes to the fore in the subheading/paragraph as there is a mention of rumours (which turned out to be true) of Rihanna reconciling with Chris Brown. Rihanna goes back to her abuser (hence the date) and within the text the focus is on Rihanna as she "is out to prove she doesn't care what people think". Then, Rihanna is juxtaposed with Beyonce being a "yummy mummy" where she has "wowed fans" with her "post baby figure". This is juxtaposition about who has *bounced* back; Rihanna after domestic abuse and Beyoncé after childbirth (Resilience Discourse).

FANDOM, POP MUSIC AND THE REPRODUCTION OF RACE-GENDER INEQUALITIES



Image:

The author has chosen similar black attire in use of juxtaposed images. The caption "worse-for-wear" signals that Rihanna is in poor condition/worn/tired - signifies that she is in an unhealthy condition - "but Beyonce dazzled in hers" which suggests that Beyoncé is glamorous, shiny, bright and in a better condition. The juxtaposition is emphasised through the choice of photographs where Beyoncé is smiling with eye-contact at the camera (direct address) whereas Rihanna is looking away not smiling.

Hot

She gave birth just over a month ago but Beyoncé simply smouldered as she stepped out in New York for the second time since the birth of her baby girl Blue Ivy to support hubby Jay-Z at his charity gig at Carnegie Hall. The Best Thing I Never Had singer oozed sexiness with tousled curls and a figure-hugging Monique Lhuillier sequined dress to match. Covering up in sheer sleeves, the yummy mummy, 30, kept things simple and accessorised with a delicate blue Lorraine Schwartz bracelet and ring and nail polish to match. She topped off the sophisticated outfit with Gucci shoes and a Chanel bag.

Beyoncé *bouncing back* from childbirth is seen as 'Hot'; this includes the *choices* she has made such as having a heteronormative family, getting married and becoming a mother *after* success at work, and then 'getting back to business' (back in the public eye). This is signalled by "she just gave birth over a month ago" and "second time" - this emphasizes a quick *bounce back* from the birth of her child and her being in the public eye ('back to business') for the "second time" in efforts to "support hubby Jay-Z at his charity gig". This emphasises heteronormative postfeminist gender roles - giving birth, supporting her husband (being there for everyone else) *and* getting back to public appearances; the *strong-black-woman* must be there for everyone else *and handle her business* (Springer, 2007: 257). There is also focus on post-baby-body-shape, redefining Beyoncé as post-baby sex-symbol. Beyoncé's affective labour is in *overcoming by managing* her body after childbirth and having children *after* marriage ("hubby") which gives the appearance of 'having it all' (Chatman, 2015; Weidhase, 2015; Alessandrini, 2017 Gill, 2007: 147; McRobbie, 2006).

Beyoncé is also “covering up in sheer sleeves” which suggests she has a more conservative style that is preferred and it is 'hotter' than (as we will see later) Rihanna. This is also because she has just become a mother and as a *mother* she is expected to cover up. Beyoncé is also "delicate" and "simple", again signifying a conservative demeanour. "Nail polish to match" signifies perfection/neatness and tidiness. Again, Beyoncé is "sophisticated" which indicates classiness in her style of dress.

Not

Ever since she finished her Loud tour things have taken a turn for the worse for Rihanna in the style stakes.

She's posted a whole host of trashy photos of herself on Twitter, bleached her brunette locks blonde and now she's stepped out wearing this horrific ensemble.

Then we have Rihanna in juxtaposition as "Not" - "things have taken a turn for the worse" implies misfortune (in a fashion context). Adjectives are oppositional to the adjectives used to describe Beyoncé; we have "trashy" and "horrific" which denotes that Rihanna looks dishevelled and unable to take care of her appearance.

Although Rihanna also opted for sheer black, unfortunately the We Found Love singer didn't manage to pull it off quite like Beyoncé.

The 23-year-old left little to the imagination in the raunchy cutaway number and looked old beyond her years swathed in gold.

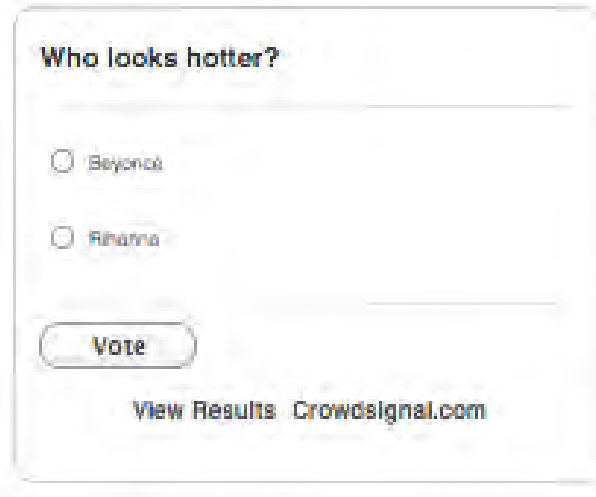
The scraggly hair was only emphasised by the tacky leather cap even Matt Cardle would steer clear of.

Rihanna tried to add a bit of glam with lashings of red lippy but we're sad to say it had little effect on her disheveled look. Better luck next time RiRi.

The language used in both descriptors of Beyoncé and Rihanna relates to the images as they are set side by side in juxtaposition with direct comparisons being made to create the “Vs” competition. Rihanna leaving “little to the imagination” is set in opposition Beyoncé “covering up”; the former is undesirable (“Not”), the latter is “Hot”. Rihanna’s style of dress in “raunchy” and “swathed in gold”, descriptors which imply that Rihanna is hypersexual and materialistic; she is not just wearing gold, she is “swathed” (wrapped in several layers) of gold. It gives the image of excess. There is an implication that Rihanna has not taken care of herself well and that she is unhealthy with “looked old beyond her years” (Tragic-Mulatta/Rihanna as Toxic-Unhealthy). Adjectives such as “scraggly” and “tacky” emphasise that Rihanna cannot take care of herself. She cannot *manage* her own body and has not *overcome* this or Chris Brown through the respectability of resilient self-management (At Risk/Tragic-Mulatta) juxtaposed that of Beyoncé, who can (Can Do/SBW).

A judgment of how she looks is dictated by a white male gaze – “even Matt Cardle would steer clear of”. Rihanna is cast as undesirable according to the white male gaze, and this is to display that Rihanna is the undesirable within the juxtaposition (contrasting effect of dichotomy – good/bad, hot/not). Rihanna “tried” suggests she is aspiring to “glam” but it also suggests she is aspiring to Beyoncé (SBW/Aspirational Figure). We get Rihanna applying “lashings” (copious of something) of red lipstick which implies that Rihanna is excessive (at applying lipstick) and it suggests untidiness (juxtaposed “sophisticated”, “delicate” and “simple” Beyoncé). The authors are “sad” to say that the lipstick did not help Rihanna’s “dishevelled” look which implies again that Rihanna is unable to take care of herself, manage her appearance *and overcome*

an abusive relationship (Tragic-Mulatta/ insufficient resilience/ victim-in-need-of-rescue). Rihanna is unable to *handle her business* (Springer, 2007: 252).



To finish, the question “Who looks hotter?” is put to the reader through poll as a means of social interaction. It redelivers the headline’s either/or question to the reader “Rihanna Vs Beyoncé: Hot or not?” to which the reader can vote and make an either/or decision (juxtaposition – competition, dichotomy, hierarchy). However, these either/or choices are circumscribed through juxtaposition and reinscribed as the reader’s preference; this is The Metro’s “mode of soft coercion” into making your ‘choices’ within the economic frames of competition (as placing Beyoncé and Rihanna side by side through juxtaposition has an either/or contrasting effect). Additionally, the archetypal stereotypes that are juxtaposed, such as SBW and Tragic-Mulatta are intensified by postfeminist resilience discourse. Beyoncé’s motherhood, heteronormative marriage and ability to *bounce back* are used as an “*affective amplifier*” working to recuperate Rihanna’s underperformed resilience – therefore not performing the ‘women’s work’ of overcoming abuse/misogynist damage and insufficiently self-managed which is undesirable to the white gaze (Matt Cardle and the author, Hewitt)

(James, 2015: 97, 154; Appiah 1991). Beyoncé as SBW is juxtaposed Rihanna to recuperate Rihanna's insufficient affective labour of resilience.

Juxtaposition – 5

Beyonce or Rihanna: who is the undisputed Queen of Pop?



Beyonce and Rihanna. Photo: Getty

Ed Power ✉

June 21 2016 02:30 AM

Source: The Independent (Ireland)

Author: Ed Power

Date published: 21st June 2016

Context:

Beyoncé and Rihanna have just started world tours; the *Formation* World Tour and the *ANTI* World Tour for their albums *Lemonade* and *ANTI*, respectively. The UK and Ireland legs of both tours were due to clash at the end of June 2016. Rihanna

performed in Dublin on 21st June 2016 and Beyoncé performed 9th July 2016 (18 days apart). Here on the day Rihanna is due to perform in Dublin, writer Ed Power assesses “who is the undisputed Queen of Pop?”.

In the headline, the author (Ed Power) sets up the article as a competition. Beyoncé and Rihanna are juxtaposed as the author asks "who is the undisputed Queen of Pop?" which suggests that there can only be one woman who takes up this position, again (reoccurring juxtaposition) pointing towards the “Pop” music industry as hierarchy (or more literally, a monarchy).

Forget Ireland v Italy or Conor McGregor v some tattooed guy you've never heard of. This week it's all about RiRi v Bey. The battle of the chart queens is brewing in earnest as Rihanna and Beyonce countdown to their big open-air shows in Dublin. In one corner, the lip-curved high priestess of potty-mouthed pop; in the other, a one-woman feminist manifesto who has already shocked and thrilled this year by apparently airing her smudged personal laundry in public.

Power likens Beyoncé “or” Rihanna to Ireland's Euro 2016 (football) match against Italy and Conor McGregor's boxing match against an unknown boxer, all while asking the reader to forget about them and turn their attention towards the apparent competition between "RiRi v Bey". What this confirms to the reader is that there is definite "battle" in which there will only be one winner like a boxing or football match. The author also uses boxing terminology - "In one corner..." which invites the reader to imagine that Beyoncé and Rihanna are about to fight in a boxing match and it creates an image of two opposing figures in two opposing corners of a boxing ring. Power describes Rihanna as "the lip-curved high priestess of potty-mouthed pop" - "lip-curved" suggests that Rihanna is sneering or looking in disgust/has an 'attitude' - "high priestess" denotes a high social position (as in a female priest). Rihanna is in a high

social position when it comes to being "potty-mouthed" also gives the idea that Rihanna frequently uses foul language (bad-black-girl/Tragic-Mulatta). Next, "In the other..." corner is Beyoncé described as a "one-woman feminist manifesto" which denotes her autonomy as a (post)feminist political figure. The "shock" from Beyoncé is that she talks about Jay-Z's "alleged" infidelity on her album "Lemonade" (2016) therefore "airing her smudged personal laundry in public"- the point of this is to highlight Beyoncé's *overcoming* her 'dirty laundry' with her "feminist manifesto" (Resilience).

First up rude girl Rihanna, bringing high-kicking latest album 'ANTI' to the Aviva Stadium tonight. On July 9 meanwhile, Croke Park welcomes Beyoncé and her Formation Tour, a brain-frying mash-up of song, dance and relationship angst seemingly ripped from the pages of her life.

Rihanna is "rude girl" - Rude girl/Rude boy (Rihanna is from Barbados) are associated with unruliness and discontented youth in the poorer sections of Jamaica in the 1960s and later in the UK. Here, it is used to highlight Rihanna's unruliness/being a bad girl and accompanies "lip-curling high priestess of potty-mouthed pop" to connote the unruliness/toughness/'attitude' of a "rude girl". Power also makes reference to Rihanna's 2010 single 'Rude Boy'. Beyoncé, on the hand, performs her "relationship angst" and this is how she *overcomes* her pain (by performing - "brain-frying mash-up of song, dance").



Rihanna and Beyoncé. Photo: Instagram

But which of these post-modern divas rates as must-see? They have, at first glance, a great deal in common. Both have lived through "interesting" romantic escapades, which they have channeled into their music. Rihanna poured the pain and confusion that followed physical abuse at the hands of then boyfriend Chris Brown into the unnerving 'Rated R' from 2009. Bey's 'Lemonade', meanwhile, is widely seen as a warning across the bows of Bey's husband Jay Z over his (very much alleged and unproven) infidelities. This is grown-up pop - catchy but searing and complicated too.

Tickets for both shows are still available. Ideally you should be up the front for both. But if you can make only one, which should it be? Allow us be your guides.

Power then focuses on their commonalities (another form of juxtaposition) - their "interesting" personal relationships with men and their *overcoming* of them "channelled into their music"; how they deal with, *overcome* and *bounce back* from pain. We have a theme of *overcoming* domestic abuse and cheating; *overcoming* the damage that patriarchy has done to them (Resilience Discourse/affective labour of Resilience). This damage by men is made a prerequisite of their musical outputs/productivity and this makes for "catchy", "searing", "complicated" pop music.

After highlighting how they have been shown Resilience (overcoming male violence through pop music), the author reminds the reader about their upcoming concerts. Power directly addresses the reader "Ideally you should be up the front for both"- suggests that the reader should like both "But" then the author leads reader into making a choice between Beyoncé and Rihanna by asking "which one should it be?". The author wants to be the guide for this choice "Allow us to be your guides", this sets up the article's objective which is to compare Rihanna and Beyoncé in terms of who is *worthy* of the crown "the undisputed Queen of Pop".

3 How much do they like Ireland?



Beyonce and husband Jay-Z enjoying her day off with daughter Blue Ivy in the playground in the Phoenix Park visitors' centre.

Beyonce sent the internet into meltdown hanging out with Jay Z and their daughter ahead of his 2013 show at what was then the O2 arena in Dublin. The couple dined among the punters at Fade Street Social and took Blue Ivy to the Phoenix Park playground, prompting a paparazzi frenzy.



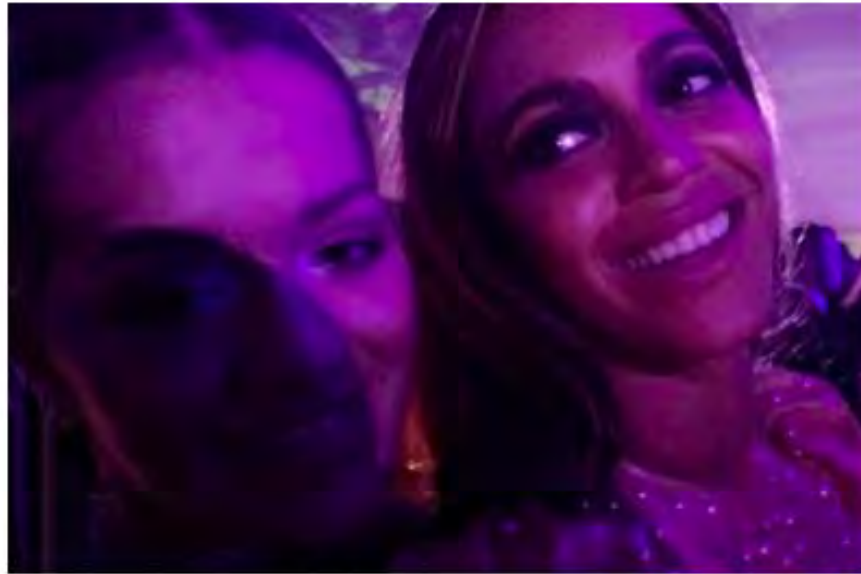
Rihanna is quite the Hibernophile too, popping around to O'Donoghue's in Dublin for a Thanksgiving pint in 2011 and throwing an after-show party at the Wright venue in Swords. Sorry ladies - you are going to have to divide the spoils. Don't fight over us - we love you equally.

Verdict: a draw

As this is the Irish Independent the author bases their value/worthiness on their visits to Ireland and how much they like it but also based on their adherence Irish cultural values and norms. Beyoncé and Rihanna are juxtaposed by image and text here - Beyoncé is pictured and written about in terms of her family life (Beyoncé Marriage), whereas Rihanna is pictured walking out of a bar/restaurant and written about “throwing an after-party”. In fact, the image of Rihanna was taken in LA but the designer of her skirt, Simone Rocha, is Irish (Finn, 2014). Beyoncé is pictured with her family are in Ireland (motherhood, marriage, nuclear family). What we have then is a juxtaposition of lifestyles to connote the Beyoncé adhering to the social norms of SBW (strength, pictured with family, overcoming) juxtaposed Rihanna partying, exiting

a bar/restaurant with a friend. The “Verdict” is a “Draw”, however, the juxtaposition has already been established despite the appearance of neutrality.

4 Tabloid interest



Rita Ora and Beyoncé pose for a selfie backstage at the Met Gala 2016. Photo: Snapchat

Well now. Until this year, Rihanna was clear winner. She had suffered terrible abuse at the hands of Chris Brown en route to the Grammys in 2009, images of her bruised face beamed horrifyingly around the world after the police footage leaked to TMZ. Rihanna would obliquely reference the incident on her 'Rated R' album, and on the follow-up tour, which broiled with anger and confusion. She has gone on to be romantically "linked" with Colin Farrell (uproariously denied on both sides) and Drake.



Yet Beyonce has surely eclipsed RiRi on 'Lemonade', with its teasing references to "Becky with the good hair" (Jay's alleged paramour) and lyrics that read like an angry row between a couple on the brink of calling it quits ("Who the f*** do you think I am/ You ain't married to no average bitch, boy/ Keep your money, I got my own/ Got a better smile on my face, being alone".) Suddenly all eyes are on Bey - and RiRi's recent romantic adventures feel exceedingly "meh" by comparison.

Verdict: Beyonce

Worthiness of the title "Queen" and respectability for that title are measured on how much they have been reported/talked about in the media (attention). The author suggests there is a winner, "Until this year, Rihanna was clear winner" which gives a picture of competition. The competition is how well they perform Resilience (once again) through their personal relationships with men and how they have overcome this through their musical performance. For the second time in the article, we see Rihanna's abuse as a topic that is used to measure Rihanna's resilience. The author goes into more detail than before mentioning "images of her bruised face". The author then talks about the expression of this event through her music ('Rated R', 2009) –

"Rihanna would obliquely reference the incident on her Rated R album" – The issue here is that Rihanna addresses the topic obliquely, rather than overtly or bombastically through the spectacle – Rihanna is insufficiently resilient on Rated R. It is Beyoncé's overcoming of her pain (Jay-Z's infidelity) and capitalizing on that through music, entertainment and spectacle "with teasing references to "Becky with the good hair"". Power's "Verdict" is "Beyoncé". What we see in this article is that, Beyoncé uses her Black woman pain as a resource and has capitalized on it; this is a process of subjectification and instrumentalization of Beyoncé and Rihanna's "public private self"/"transgressive intimate self" in the creation of juxtapositions (with contrasting effects) between good resilient black women and insufficiently resilient, bad-black-girls not overcoming violence as they should be; this instrumentalization "augments white supremacy" (James, 2015: 13; Marshall, 2010: 44-45).

Respectability Politics

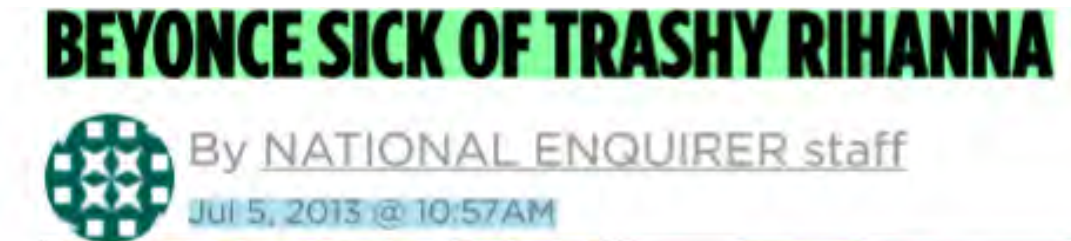
We begin this thesis ([Chapter 2: Part 1](#)) discussing the politics of respectability (Higginbotham, 1994), The first example I talk about is the myth creation of white slavers and pro-abolitionists (c.1650-1838) regarding Black women, our 'emancipation' and what that *should* look like in the eyes white people and white supremacist capitalist/colonialist patriarchal institutions. In order to successfully 'moralise' Black women into Victorian and Christian respectability, there had to be a Juxtaposition to generate such an image: that was the juxtaposition of virgin/whore. Within these imaginary images reflecting white society's desire to dehumanise Black women, Black women were the "whores" and so juxtaposed white women (as symbolic norm of womanhood), this made white women as "virgins" possible (i.e., Jezebel, Tragic-Mulatta, bad-black-girl - justifications of rape, exploitation and violence of all forms committed by white Europeans) (Carby, 1987; Collins, 2000: 266).

Concepts of virgin/whore in this context rests on a colour line (white 'virgin'/Black 'whore'), however, within plantocracies the social ordering of Black and Mulatta women specifically were based on complexion and proximity to whiteness. Mulatta women (Rihanna and Beyoncé) are given higher status within the racial hierarchy of Black women (as resilient, post-feminist subjects). Even so, some styles of Blackness (especially in proximity to whiteness and capitalism) are rewarded by adhering to the respectability (e.g., not being the 'stereotype' – it makes Black women responsible for *overcoming* the 'stereotype'), and others that do not adhere respectability (in proximity whiteness) *are* the stereotypes – "unruly" and "wanton" (Jones, 2013). This is how

virgin/whore is recut across the colour line: the Beyoncé/Rihanna juxtaposition serves to generate the juxtaposition of good, resilient non-white women and insufficiently resilient, bad non-white women (James, 2015: 85). Juxtaposition is adaptable, however, especially within neoliberal (deregulated) capitalism, so positionalities within juxtaposition change depending on individual (mediated) conduct (e.g., what are Rihanna and Beyoncé doing at this particular time?). I propose that there is a kind of new respectability politics at hand (which will be discussed further in [Resilience Discourse](#)) which sees a juxtaposition about how celebrity women (especially of colour) perform female empowerment (for the benefit of neoliberal capitalism and MRWaSP).



Respectability Politics – 1



Source: National Enquirer (US) [Online]

Author: National Enquirer staff

Date: 5th July 2013

Context:

In the summer of 2013, Rihanna is on another world tour; the *Diamonds World Tour*. In July she performs the European leg of the tour. Beyoncé is also on tour at the same time and performs her United States leg of the *Mrs. Carter World Tour*. In the previous months, Rihanna had reunited and then broken-up with Chris Brown (post-2009-domestic abuse incident). The National Enquirer staff report on Beyoncé's 'concern' for Rihanna: in fact, Beyoncé is allegedly "Sick" of "Trashy Rihanna".

The headline presents an upset Beyoncé "sick" of Rihanna for being "trashy". Beyoncé is placed as the respectable figure in supervision of Rihanna. The juxtaposition here is Beyoncé as Respectable-Mentor/ Rihanna as "Trashy" victim-in-need-of-rescue/supervision.

FANDOM, POP MUSIC AND THE REPRODUCTION OF RACE-GENDER INEQUALITIES



The National Enquirer article headlines that Beyoncé is sick of Rihanna's trashy antics, in addition to the article casting their relationship as a mentor-mentee/big sister relationship. The image reflects this relationship but does not reflect the allegations that Beyoncé has a grievance with Rihanna. Both Beyoncé and Rihanna give direct address in the photograph, both smiling and giving eye contact directly to the camera (Roc Nation Brunch, 2013)

BEYONCE has lashed out at Rihanna for her X-rated performances, pot smoking and snubbing her fans.

"Rihanna's always been edgy, but now she's completely out of control," an insider told The ENQUIRER.

"Beyonce has lashed out at Rihanna" - Suggests Beyonce is angry at Rihanna and that there is an antagonistic relationship. Beyoncé and Rihanna's relationship here indicates that Rihanna's behaviour (mediated conduct) reflects on Beyoncé's position (badly). The relationship also hints at the Delilah and Peola narrative, where Delilah "knows her place" in the pop music industry (Beyoncé as SBW) and Peola 'rebels', or rather, does not perform the (resilient) labour and behaviour expected of her. Beyoncé is also being cast as keeping Rihanna's behaviour and labour in-check (surveillance and supervision). Rihanna is cast as hypersexual, drug-taking, and rude "for her X-rated performances, pot smoking and snubbing her fans". The next sentence asserts the same image of Rihanna as "edgy" and "completely out-of-control" (Tragic-Mulatta/Jezebel/bad-bad-girl).

"Beyonce has considered herself one of Rihanna's mentors since (her husband) Jay-Z signed Rihanna to his label in 2004.

And Rihanna has referred to Beyonce as a big sister.

Beyonce is positioned as Rihanna's mentor alongside Jay-Z. There is the mention of "(her husband)" so we know Beyonce is married (Respectability/SBW) and it also Beyonce's responsibility to 'mentor' Rihanna. Additionally, we have Beyoncé positioned as Rihanna's fictive big sister. Rihanna looks up to her - "has referred". Here we are seeing a fictive kinship narrative through the politics of respectability and the SBW archetype (Beyoncé as wife, "mentor" and "big sister"; Delilah) as a pushback (/juxtaposition) to a "trashy", "out-of-control" and "X-rated" Rihanna (Rihanna as Tragic-Mulatta; Peola; bad-black-girl; villain-seductress-perpetrator/victim-in-need-of-rescue) (Harris-Perry, 2011a). Rihanna's alleged behaviour reflects negatively ("lashes out") on Beyoncé's social standing. Rihanna, especially as a Barbadian (not American), in her failure to perform resilient labour as expected (*overcoming the stereotypes* therefore normalizing said stereotype), embodies "failing in terms of the general American...rugged individualism but you're actually failing the race. You're actually generating shame in your neediness" (Harris-Perry, 2011b). Rihanna, in this article, generates shame for Beyoncé (and her husband, Jay-Z). This is emphasized next:

"But Beyonce has worked hard to empower women with her music, and she feels Rihanna is undoing a lot of that work. She's at the point now where seeing Rihanna grabbing her crotch on stage makes her feel sick."

Rihanna is "undoing" Beyoncé's efforts to "empower women". This suggests that Rihanna is not 'feminist' the way Beyonce is 'feminist' and it hierarchizes how they "empower women" because Beyoncé has "worked hard" to do so already (meritocratic). There is now a politics of respectability and hierarchy through how they

"empower women" through their music and performances. Rihanna is "undoing" this "a lot of that work" through being "trashy", "pot smoking", "X-rated" and "out-of-control". Rihanna "grabbing her crotch" further casts Rihanna as hypersexual to which this "makes" Beyoncé "feel sick". The *culture of dissemblance* comes to mind here because the narrative presents Beyoncé's judgement of Rihanna's sexuality and performances (which casts Rihanna as hypersexual) (Hine, 1989: 912). It indicates that Beyoncé and Rihanna are seen through the lens of respectability by the author(s) in which Rihanna is expected to perform the respectability (i.e., affective labour of resilience) of Beyoncé (i.e., hard work, female empowerment, marriage, self-control, self-management). It is Beyoncé's *job* (as SBW-Delilah) to *pushback* (/: juxtaposition) on the stereotype of hypersexuality, if Rihanna inefficiently performs the labour of *overcoming* the stereotype, bad-black-girl/Tragic-Mulatta, seen through the prism of "trashy" and "out-of-control" (because performing the labour *overcoming* subjectifies the stereotype and normalizes the violence of white supremacist patriarchy). Beyoncé is "put to work" to pushback on Rihanna's sexuality; they are juxtaposed to recuperate the labour of respectability and *overcoming* not performed (i.e., dissemblance).

Rihanna further ticked off Beyonce, 31, by showing up two hours late for her show in Birmingham, England, said the source.

"LEAVING fanswairing iks a no-no in Beyonce's world," explained the insider. "Jay's very protective of Ri and doesn't want to rock the boat, but Bey felt she wouldn't be doing her job if she didn't say something."

Rihanna is also unpunctual in juxtaposition to Beyoncé in a “world” that values punctuality. “Beyonce's world” is punctual, respectable and the author(s) are placing Rihanna as a *threat* to that respectability Beyoncé and Jay-Z symbolically embody here (i.e., proximity to middle/upper class, white, ‘American rugged individualism’ respectability) (Wade, 2013: 133). Jay-Z is positioned as the “protective” but passive patriarch (does not “want to rock the boat”) and Beyoncé is positioned as the SBW “doing her job” to *manage the threat and risk* that Rihanna brings to their symbolic proximity through “trashy” and hypersexual conduct – the *strong-Black-woman’s work* is to pushback against that which “*threatens to transport them back in time... to [a] place typically regulated for poor white women and urban ghettoized Black women*” (2013: 131).

“Bey felt she wouldn't be doing her job” – Why is it her job? The National Enquirer author(s) presentation of this Beyoncé/Rihanna narrative lies in the racial imperatives of respectability, dissemblance and strength; so that Black women subjectify stereotypes (justifications of white supremacist patriarchal abuse and surveillance) and take the responsibility of cleaning up the damage afterwards (i.e., the SBW’s job in juxtaposition). Beyoncé is positioned in this way so that Rihanna does not shame her (as racial imperative) and “undo” her feminist work. Rihanna “showing weakness or asking for help becomes traitorous” and a threat to the symbolic proximity to whiteness (Harris-Perry, 2011a, 199).

“Crazy in Love” singer Beyonce has also advised Rihanna, who’s now on a world tour, to clean up her more scandalous antics, said the source.

“Bey thinks Rihanna is making herself look trashy for no good reason.”

Bey has advised Ri to clean up her act

Again, we get Beyoncé positioned as 'adviser' and Rihanna as "scandalous" - Beyoncé is advising Rihanna to "clean up". The advice is to be tidy, respectable, have it all together, self-management (Dissemblance/Respectability). It is not just Beyoncé's job to advise (SBW) but Rihanna's job to "clean up her act" (Tragic-Mulatta/bad-black-girl; villain-seductress-perpetrator/victim-in-need-of-rescue). In order for Rihanna to "clean up her act" she must be resilient and follow in the footsteps of her "big sister", Beyoncé. Racial shame as a political emotion is instrumentalized to juxtapose and augment Black women stereotypes here, as we see Rihanna's mediated conduct (including social media) cast by the National Enquirer as a source of shame for Beyoncé, as if it automatically *should* reflect badly on Beyoncé (because they are both Black women and misogynoir is implicit through their juxtaposition). But it also shows the misogynoir at play as "it means their successes are connected and it means their failures are also connected" through the archetypal stereotypes generated through juxtaposition.

Respectability Politics – 2

How Rihanna has become a victim of her sleazy s-excess



Rihanna

By Jane Graham
September 3 2011

Source: Belfast Telegraph (Digital)

Author: Jane Graham

Date published: 3rd September 2011

Context: On 28th August 2011, the Video Music Awards were broadcast in which Beyoncé performs her single 'Love On Top'. Beyoncé also announces she is pregnant with Blue Ivy Carter on stage by rubbing her pregnant stomach at the end. Rihanna is still releasing singles from the 'LOUD' album (2010) including 'Cheers(Drink to That)' (August, 2011) and debuted her first fragrance, Reb'L Fleur. The picture used by the

Belfast Telegraph is from an earlier performance in May 2011 of the song 'S&M' which featured Britney Spears at the Billboard Music Awards (2011).

The focus of the article is on Rihanna being "victim" (Tragic-Mulatta/victim-in-need-of-rescue). Specifically, she is a "victim of her sleazy s-excess". The play on words "s-excess" connotes success, excess and sex - Rihanna has been successful but due to sleazy (meaning sordid, corrupt, or immoral) excess and sex (Hypersexuality/excess of Tragic-Mulatta/bad-black-girl). There is also the victim-in-need-of-rescue/villain-seductress-perpetrator dichotomy made here (relating to respectability politics and the moralisation of Black women from 'sexual deviancy' in slavery/pro-abolitionist discourse; see Bush, 2000).

I never thought I'd say this but I've grown tired of Rihanna's backside. Another week, another Rihanna sex scandal. This week it's Hustler magazine's claiming they've got hold of a 'leaked' sex tape. As is the norm in leaked sex tape controversies, Rihanna has denied the tape's existence. But the story ensures that when anyone types 'sex' into Google (and I hear a few folk do), the chances of Rihanna's name popping up on page one are even higher than last week.

References to Rihanna's "backside" reveal the European obsession with Black women's bodies (especially buttocks - Sarah Baartman: Tate, 2015). Graham, the author has grown "tired" of Rihanna's "backside" which suggests she is disgusted (equally fascinated and focussed on it since it is mentioned in the first sentence). "Another week, another Rihanna sex scandal" - suggests that every week Rihanna is involved in public ("scandal") "sleazy" sexual activity and this coincides with the hypersexual social construction of the headline and opening sentence.

Again, there is further suggestion that Rihanna is involved in "sleazy" sexual activity [Hypersexuality]. As Rihanna denies the "sex tape" allegations (according to Graham

– no direct quote from Rihanna herself) but the author suggests that the "norm" of women is to deny these sex tapes exist which connotes that the reader is not to believe Rihanna (Tragic-Mulatta/ Hypersexuality). Graham has already set Rihanna up as sexually deviant and hypersexual within the text. In fact, the author states that the story "ensures" that when "anyone types 'sex' into Google" Rihanna's name will pop up – that makes Rihanna's name synonymous with 'sex' – "Hearing" that a few people do this already, the author is enticing the reader to do it themselves - to synonymize Rihanna with 'sex' by typing it in Google.

Last week it was the V Festival in which Rihanna came onstage in fishnets and knickers and crawled along the ground licking her lips. And then there were those pictures from

the Crop Over Festival in Barbados of her simulating sex with some gleeful chap, her modesty protected by a sadly moth-eaten bikini that, judging by its size, she'd borrowed from Barbie.

And there's no denying that |Ri-ri is extremely bootylicious, beautiful and bountiful. But I'm beginning to think she isn't quite the in-control Queen of Pop she keeps telling us she is. More and more, it strikes me this is a troubled, insecure woman who knows no way of communicating other than sexually.

And calling what she does in-your-face feminism is like gift-wrapping your tits and ass and offering them to the first lusty man who walks past. He doesn't have to earn your respect first, he gets the whole package thrown at him and if he feels a nip of guilt, the political jargon of female empowerment lets him entirely off the hook.

As much as the author fears Rihanna (particularly her body and sexuality), she also is fascinated by her (Fear/Fascination - Tate, 2015), especially with reference to her body, specifically her bottom as "bootylicious" (a phrase coined by Beyoncé and Destiny's Child). Rihanna is not "in-control" (i.e., lacks agency) although being physically attractive/desirable as above. Rihanna keeps "telling us" she is "in-control"; which suggests she is not according to Graham (as in Rihanna lacks agency).

Rihanna is a "troubled, insecure woman who knows no way of communicating other than sexually" - "troubled" and "insecure" are again indicators of the Tragic-Mulatta stereotype and "personal pathologies", "self-hatred, depression [...] sexual perversion [...] She evoked pity or scorn, not sympathy" (Pilgrim, 2000). Rihanna has "no way of communicating other than sexually" which casts her as having no agency outside of her sexuality. Rihanna is cast as villain-seductress-perpetrator which used to justify the violent white female gaze of the author, Graham, as she strips Rihanna of agency. Rihanna's "in-your-face feminism" is not feminism according to the white woman gaze of Graham. The visual of "gift wrapping your tits and ass" and "offering them" reduces Rihanna's body parts to commodity and property. It redefines her "feminism" as "objectified victim"; "objectified" by "the first lusty man". It is reminiscent of the rhetoric used to justify sexual exploitation because it is about "what she does" and her "offering" which places blame on Rihanna for the way she is objectified by "the first lusty man".

The above point is hammered home by author, except the centre/subject position becomes a man. It even humanizes the man "if he feels a nip of guilt" against having Rihanna "throw"-ing "the whole package at him" - Rihanna is placed as sexual aggressor. Rihanna is also the perpetrator of letting the man "off the hook" with her brand of "female empowerment" which again is reminiscent rhetoric of the Jezebel/Tragic-Mulatta/bad-black-girl stereotype - her hypersexuality ("s-excess") is the reason why (white) men do not have control over themselves according to Jane Graham, a white woman.

Unlike, say, Beyonce, who has spent her career celebrating women who make demands on their men and drop them like disease-ridden vermin if they don't shape up, Rihanna's songs regularly present her as being trapped by men who treat her badly. Sado-masochism is a favourite theme but she seems particularly drawn to the masochism element, most obviously in her Eminem duet Love The Way You Lie, in which she sings of enjoying 'the way it hurts'.

We then get this juxtaposition with Beyoncé next – "Unlike, say, Beyonce, who has spent her career celebrating women". Beyoncé is used as a yardstick for the measure Rihanna's feminism/womanhood (Postfeminist Resilient Discourse as respectability). The juxtaposition lies in Beyoncé being as Resilient, as in, *overcoming* male objectification and "celebrating women"; in other words, "Girlpower" and "Success at Work" because Beyoncé has "*spent her career celebrating women*" (Harris, 2004: 16-24). Rihanna, on the other hand, is cast as insufficiently resilient – she is being "trapped by men" and wallowing in "Sado-masochism". This also suggests that Rihanna lacks agency or the ability to self-manage; another element of how Resilience discourse casts insufficiently resilient Black/mixed-Black women and reconfigures respectability politics for Black women according to neoliberal imperatives (MRWaSP) (Zaire, 2016: online; James 2015).

This is obviously unsettling in light of her famously abusive relationship with rapper Chris Brown but what's more worrying is the total absence of suggestion that there is any other way to relate to men. There is only sex – and, if that goes wrong, maybe murder (as seen in her Man Down video.)

Again, there is a suggestion of hypersexuality and that Rihanna can only relate to men through sex and violence. The author goes further by positioning her as a criminal capable of murder with reference to the 'Man Down' video (2011) where Rihanna guns down her rapist (Tragic-Mulatta/ threatening/ criminality), along with her association with racialized-gendered violence (Chris Brown). This casts Rihanna in a position of

victimhood but an insufficiently resilient victim, which means that she is therefore, cast as both villain-seductress-perpetrator/victim-in need of rescue who is responsible for her own objectification (which she does not *overcome* sufficiently like Beyoncé does through “Girlpower”). We see in this article how insufficiently overcome racialized-gendered violence “evokes pity and scorn” as “white writers insisted on the “tragic-mulatto's” unhappiness” (Pilgrim: 2012; Lefkowitz, 2017: x).

[Resilience Discourse – Affective Labour of Resilience – Post-feminism](#)

As James puts forward, “resilience discourse is what ties contemporary pop music aesthetics to neoliberal capitalism and racism/sexism” (James, 2015: 6). As we see above with Beyoncé and Rihanna’s juxtaposition, the technique recuperates labour through familiar white supremacist capitalist patriarchal cultural scripts of Black women. Here, the virgin/whore dichotomy is reconfigured to mark out resilient/good non-white women and insufficiently resilient non-white women. It reconfigures Black “women’s work” (labour) and cinematic objectification seen in *Controlling Images* (Collins, 2000) (e.g., mediated conduct – what are Beyoncé and Rihanna doing at this particular time?). In other words, “we liked doing damage to women, we now like to see women overcome that damage” (James, 2014: 120; Ziarek, 2012; Mulvey, 1975). This means that it is the job of Beyoncé and Rihanna (i.e., via affective labour) to perform the affective labour of overcoming controlling images and if they do not perform this labour they become insufficiently resilient Black women – i.e., *they must be said [‘controlling image’] because they have failed to perform the labour of overcoming required by multi-racial white supremacist patriarchy (MRWaSP)* (i.e.,

keeping the 'post-race poker face' of white supremacist patriarchy intact). Resilience discourse therefore reinforces and normalizes all the features of misogynoir which justify violence towards Black women, if they are unable to be 'put to work' by MRWaSP. However, Black women are 'put to work' through juxtaposition, which is adaptable and unfixed because the neoliberal ecology of pop music culture is a deregulated space where individuals appear free of supervision. There is no 'control' or 'rule' over these individuals but their mediated conduct (presentation of the public/private/transgressive self – merit, choices, resilience, capital) are monitored through juxtapositions (surveillance, separation, alignment, serialization). For instance, Beyoncé and Rihanna's positioning changes within entertainment news discourse and it is a revolving door of reinvented archetypal stereotypes originating from slavery and colonialism because their juxtapositions are dependent on their mediated conduct to feed off. This is what makes misogynoir difficult to detect in hyper-visible entertainment media discourse because all subjects *appear free*. Markers of Resilience Discourse include, overcoming (bouncing back), the capacity for reinvention, ability to withstand damage/set backs and adaptability.

Resilience Discourse - 1



6 Reasons Why Rihanna Is Better Than Beyonce

My seemingly unpopular opinion, but RiRi is the real queen

Source: The Odyssey (US)

Author: Cassandra Mantz

Date published: 21st December 2015

This entertainment opinion piece constructs hierarchy within the title with “Better Than” which is presented as the author’s preference (Mantz). After the juxtaposition has been made, the author follows on with “My seemingly unpopular opinion”. This suggests that the popular opinion is that Beyoncé “is the real queen”. The author then goes on to insist that there seems to be a constant battle between Rihanna and Beyoncé that Beyoncé fans refuse to acknowledge (the BeyHive).

You can barely go on social media anymore without seeing something about Beyoncé or Rihanna. There seems to be a constant battle between the two that Beyoncé fans refuse to even acknowledge as a battle. Personally, I am completely infatuated with Rihanna and don't really think Beyoncé is worth all the hype. Here's why, to me, Rihanna is better than Beyoncé:

Rihanna and Beyoncé's relationship are viewed as a "constant battle". Beyoncé fans are brought into the discussion as the author puts forwards her bias towards Rihanna – "I am completely infatuated with Rihanna and don't really think Beyoncé is all worth the hype". It sets up the forthcoming competitive and comparative list explaining why "Rihanna is better than Beyoncé".

1. Her voice

She has such an amazing vocal range and, to be completely honest, I think Beyoncé's gets a little old after a while. I could listen to RiRi all day everyday.

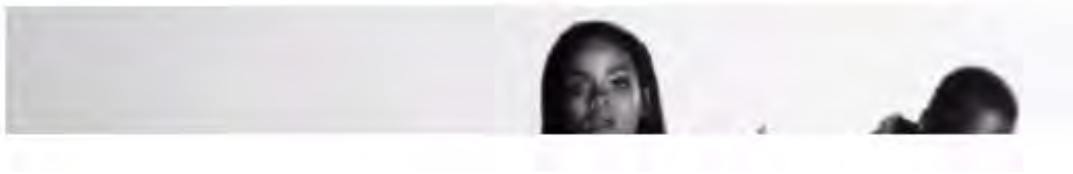


The author, Mantz, juxtaposes Beyoncé and Rihanna on the basis of vocal performance. The yardstick here is age. There is reference to Beyoncé's voice aging

and becoming "old". The connotation that juxtaposes them is that Beyoncé is getting older and Rihanna's voice is younger (Rihanna is younger by age) which is emphasised by "I could listen to RiRi all everyday".

3. Her music

She has such unique and distinct songs. What other artist could make songs from Pon de Replay to Russian Roulette to Take a Bow and then to songs like S&M and B*tch Better Have my Money and make it all work? Her sound is like nothing else, and just like her style, she also really pushes the limits with her music, too. She has 13 no. 1s and We Found Love is the 24th greatest song of all time, not to mention her amazing trio with Kanye and Paul McCartney..PAUL MCCARTNEY. Where you at Bey?



After praising Rihanna for her music, Mantz ends with "Where you at Bey?" and it suggests that Beyoncé is lagging behind Rihanna in some way. The juxtaposition lies in Rihanna's versatility and *the capacity for reinvention* in her style of music and collaborations— "Her sound is like nothing else and, just like her style she really pushes

the limits with her music”. Then this gets quantified into merit – “She has 13 no.1s [...] 24th greatest song of all time”. Quantification is key in using merit within juxtaposition and resilience discourse to the effect that Beyoncé and Rihanna are competing. With the listing of Rihanna’s work endeavours in 2015, we can now see that the suggestion by Mantz is that Beyoncé is not *working as hard* as Rihanna is (and SBWs are always expected to perform labour).

4. She’s always been solo

She didn’t need an all-girl band to jump-start her career. She has been solo from the start and there has not been much of a gap in the Rihanna Reign since Umbrella debuted in 2008. She doesn’t use artists to make her songs more popular, other artists use her.



Rihanna is also rewarded for her autonomy as the fourth reason in why she is “better than Beyoncé” with “always been solo”. Rihanna has quantifiable merits to show for her success: “she has 13 no. 1s and We Found Love is the 24 greatest song of all time [...] Where you at Bey?” – Beyoncé’s ‘comfortability’ and disengagement in competing for these merits is read as laziness and absence. This exemplifies that Beyoncé and Rihanna are valued on what neoliberal capital they can generate by making certain investments. The image emphasises the praise of autonomy with Rihanna wearing a T-Shirt with the acronym “D.I.Y” (Do It Yourself) and image

suggestion of female masturbation. The author casts Rihanna as an autonomous, resilient and successful (meritocratic), overcoming ‘the patriarchy’ through autonomous self-realization (D.I.Y) (Harris, 2004: 16-24; Rodier and Meagher, 2014: 186; McRobbie, 2009: 60). Rihanna is now the bad-black-girl growing into her Resilient ‘potential’ juxtaposed Beyoncé because Black women are juxtaposed other Black women so that one *affectively amplifies* the other’s resilience.

5. Her disputes with Chris Brown

She was abused by her boyfriend, badly and in the limelight, and still came out bigger and badder than she was before. Need I say more?



Rihanna's abusive relationship with Chris Brown (i.e. damaged attachment to Black masculinity) and her *overcoming* and potential utilization of this "damage as a resource" is rewarded (James, 2015: 114; hooks, 1994) - "She was abused by her boyfriend, badly and in the limelight, and still came out bigger and badder than she was before." . This is another example of "we liked doing damage to [Black] women, now we like to see them overcome that damage" (James, 2014: 120; Ziarek, 2012; Mulvey, 1975). Rihanna is also "better than" Beyoncé because of this ability to capitalize on her abuse and trauma as a resource.

6. Her overall being

Look at her. Look at the way she carries herself. She is the definition of poise and confidence with the perfect amount of edginess.



Moral of the story is, while yes Beyonce may have been around longer and have a solid career no matter what anyone's feelings are, Rihanna is the real Queen in my eyes. She is empowering, motivating and a great role model. If you're finding yourself confused in this situation and just can't decide where your feelings lie, ask yourself: "Would I rather be married in a 'comfortable' lifestyle or be an independent bad bitch taking the world by storm?" Answer that question and it should be pretty clear as to which side you choose in this never-ending debate. Anyway, cheers to all my independent bad bitches. "That Rihanna Reign just won't let up."

Beyoncé is immediately positioned against Rihanna according to her age and the longevity of her career, with Rihanna being positioned as the "real Queen" which constructs the hierarchy in the first sentence. The author justifies her opinion with adjectives "empowering, motivating and a great role model". The author invites the

reader into imagining binary lifestyles: the former meant to represent Beyoncé's lifestyle as a married woman and the latter meant to represent Rihanna's autonomous, independent living, go-getting lifestyle. The connotation is that Rihanna is a single unmarried woman and that Beyoncé being a wife and mother is regressive to "independent bad bitches" (Miyake, 2018: 84).

6 Reason Why Rihanna Is Better Than Beyoncé (Mantz, 2015) surveillances Rihanna's individual conduct and resilience (e.g., overcoming an abusive relationship, singing abilities, chart statistics, her autonomy as an artist). However, the article starts and ends by hierarchizing and juxtaposing Rihanna with Beyoncé – i.e. "ask yourself: "Would I rather be married in a 'comfortable' lifestyle or be an independent bad bitch taking the world by storm?"". This final question reveals that Rihanna and Beyoncé's value is attached to their conduct, social relationships and the 'damage' that they have/can potentially overcome as a resource and capitalize on (James, 2015: 80-81). Beyoncé and Rihanna's conduct are set in opposition in which Rihanna is an autonomous, hard-working, successful woman "taking the world by storm" (i.e. "individualism, self-discipline and merit") whereas Beyoncé's 'comfortability' in her lifestyle and marriage to Jay-Z is regressive to [Rihanna's] "independent bad bitch" autonomy and resilience. Being 'comfortable' is not where Beyoncé is expected to be. As an African-American woman, in this instance, she is expected to be an autonomous diva and a Strong-Black-Woman (embodied by her alter-ego Sasha Fierce) or embodying damage in her attachment to Black masculinity (marriage to rapper, Jay-Z) in order for her to use said damage as a resource, but instead, Beyoncé is just 'comfortable' – i.e., not performing the affective labour of resilience expected of her.

Resilience Discourse - 2

Comparing Rihanna's "Bitch Better Have My Money" To Beyoncé's "Flawless"

Source: IXDaily.com (Now DigitalSubculture.com) (US)

Author: Website author(s)

Date: 5th April 2015

Context:

Rihanna's 'Bitch Better Have My Money' was released on 26 March 2015, while Beyoncé's '***Flawless' was released on 13th December 2013. The songs and music videos are released more than a year apart. Nevertheless, the author(s) starts by headlining "comparing" and explicitly sets up the juxtaposition of Beyoncé and Rihanna by "Comparing" Rihanna's BBHMM (Bitch Better Have Money) to Beyoncé's "Flawless". This immediately creates competition.

Rihanna recently stated in an interview with MTV that she wanted to make music that was "timeless." It's hard to tell if "FourFiveSeconds" is "timeless," and yet even her newest single "Bitch Better Have My Money." Now this one sounds more like Riri: an upbeat trap song produced by Deputy and Kanye. Rihanna performed it for the first time during the iHeartRadio Awards, and it was flawless. What is different with "BBHMM" is that Rihanna sounds angry: "Every time I drive by, I'm the only thing you're playing," she sings on the track. You can tell she's sick of being taken for granted.

First two paragraphs are all about Rihanna. There is a musical expectation from the author of what "sounds more like Riri" which is an "upbeat trap song" like BBHMM. Rihanna is performing the music the author expects of Rihanna. The author describes Rihanna as "angry" on BBHMM which is "different" for what usually 'sounds like Riri'. Rihanna is not expected to be "angry" in her usual "upbeat trap" music but is allowed to be because "You can tell she's sick of being taken for granted" – Rihanna is capitalizing on her anger. At this point, the music video for BBHMM had not been made or released yet, so the author is referring to the audio, lyrics and performance (iHeartRadio Awards) here.

"BBHMM" seems to be the singer's version of **Beyoncé's "Flawless,"** yet they are completely different. **Beyoncé** is in fact the superstar everyone is blinded by. The media portrays her as classy, talented, and hard-working, while Rihanna's trashy and should supposedly take notes from **Jay Z's** wife. However, "Flawless" splits the latter's personality in two. She is indeed cocky and demands bitches to bow down to her. She's not the humble pop star giving an interview and talking about how much she loves motherhood. On the contrary, she tries too hard to have the Rihanna attitude. It makes it difficult for us to relate to her, even with the addition of **Chimamanda Adichie's feminist speech.** Beyoncé being a feminist feels fake at some point. She might truly be a feminist, but "Flawless" makes it seem like she's not authentic.

The author points out that BBHMM and "Flawless" are the same (as in genre; trap music) but different. Note that the author points out that this is Rihanna's version of Beyoncé's song, implying that Rihanna has been influenced by Beyoncé. There is also emphasis of Beyoncé's stardom and her relation to the audience. The "is in fact the superstar" suggests that the audience is not "blinded" by Rihanna as much as they are Beyoncé (as the author begins with juxtaposing them).

"Flawless" splits the latter's personality in two" - Flawless is about self-ownership and the rejection of traditional roles of women, for instance, "Don't think I'm just his little wife" and Chimamanda Adichie's feminist speech introducing the song. However, Beyoncé is expected to be "classy" and "humble" about this, not "cocky" or demanding. Beyoncé is expected to embrace her motherhood while displaying self-ownership and autonomy. "Flawless" moves towards 'ratchetness' (association with Black female hypersexuality stereotypes – Houston, Texas' colloquialisms used in lyrics). The "split" that the author speaks of is the move towards ratchetness by Beyoncé. Rihanna as 'bad girl' is expected to function as 'bad girl' in juxtaposition to Beyoncé (humble, classy, hard-working, talented, wife and mother). Therefore, Beyoncé disturbs her positioning; as in Beyoncé's affective labour/ Black 'woman's work' is in *overcoming* "every controlling image of black women Patricia Hill Collins taught you about *all* rolled into one" (Lewis, 2013). The juxtaposition with "the Rihanna attitude" is used to shift Beyoncé back in her place to recuperate the affective labour that was lost through *ratchetness*.

Beyoncé disturbs the proximity to white, middle-class respectability and "classy" audience perception of her. Beyoncé's feminism, therefore "feels fake" and "not authentic" because "Flawless" moves away from the heteronormative (she rejects "wife" label) and 'humble Black girl' (she's cocky) respectability that Beyoncé is expected (classy, talented, hard-working) to embody as a Black woman in order for her to be a 'true' [white/post-] feminist. In this juxtaposition, Strong-Black-Woman is insufficiently resilient so Resilient Tragic-Mulatta is *put to work* as an *affective amplifier* of Beyoncé's insufficiency. In order to understand this paragraph in terms of Resilience Discourse I quote James (2017: online) below:

"As America's post-identity white supremacist patriarchy conditionally and instrumentally includes people of color in privileged spaces, it demands "normal" gender and sexuality performances for the most legibly feminine women of color as the price of admission [Beyoncé]. As long as black women don't express or evoke any ratchetness—any potential for blackness to destabilize cisbinary gender and hetero/homonormativity, to make gender and sexuality transitional—their expressions of sexuality and sexual agency fit with multi-racial white supremacist patriarchy."

However, Beyoncé aligns herself with "ratchetness" with "Flawless" therefore Beyoncé "being a feminist feels fake". This is really the point of the article.

On the other side, Rihanna doesn't affirm to be a feminist, nor does she ask bitches to bow down to her. Even when she claims that she deserves the money she's making. She actually demands respect. She wants to be taken seriously. Just like Queen B. But Rihanna, let me tell you something: calling people by "bitch" won't give you much, neither to you Bey.

"On the other side" - suggests that Rihanna is in opposition to Beyoncé. Rihanna's non-affirmation of feminist identity (suggesting that she is elusive on this topic) is seen as a positive. Rihanna's "demands" are in relation to money. It is related to being taken seriously in relation to business and money (capital); demands for money also becomes demands for respect and a way to *overcome* racism-sexism. Whereas Beyoncé's "demands" is for "bitches to bow down to her"; there are restrictions on what they can "demand" as Black women performers, like there are "bounds" to how they can perform issues regarding race-gender politics (Juxtaposition – 3). The author

criticizes both women for the use of "bitch" which indicates that there are restrictions on who they can "demand" respect from and how.

"BBHMM" and "Flawless" are both catchy songs with poorly written lyrics, but as "Flawless" became popular with its "I woke up like this" lyric, so will "BBHMM" have its own fame with "Like brrap, brrap, brapp!" Beyoncé, please tell me you can beat that. Can you?

The author expects Beyoncé to do better being that she is the "classy", "humble", mother and wife, more evidence that Beyoncé has disturbed her respectable position. Rihanna and BBHMM are used to highlight where Beyoncé has gone awry in her social positioning and expected affective labour. The overall juxtaposition is used to restrict both women on what and from whom they can "demand" respect from but in particular the focus is on Beyoncé acting 'out-of-character' and 'inauthentically' when she does not perform the affective labour expected of her - she is supposed *overcome ratchetness* (Black female stereotypes) *not invest in them as a Strong-Black-Woman* (SBW).

Resilience Discourse - 3

Rihanna: Unapologetic Album Review | Pitchfork

Source: Pitchfork (US)

Author: Jessica Hopper

Date: 26th November 2012

Context: This article, by Jessica Hopper, is an album review for Rihanna's seventh studio album, 'Unapologetic' released on 19th November 2012.

Toward the end of her **turgid** seventh album, *Unapologetic*, **Rihanna** sings a grim rhetorical: "What's love without tragedy?" But the real question that she and her songwriters seem to be posing on *Unapologetic* is, "Who is Rihanna without **Chris Brown**?" **The album is designed to engage our perception of Rihanna the Pop Star and Rihanna the Victim, and the source of its fascination is the dissonance between the two. Its narrative, about a woman's miserable obsession with a man we know to be her abuser, flouts expectation of the traditional survivor's tale; we want to see a woman learn from that pain and leave it, not rut in it.**

Rihanna is dichotomized into the "Pop Star" and "the Victim". There is a lack of harmony for the author which is also a source of "fascination is the dissonance" and this is because the album "flouts expectation of the traditional survivor's tale" in which they want her to *overcome* her pain through her music and "It's narrative" (Resilience Discourse). Instead, she "rut[s] in it". Rihanna creates dissonance when she plays on the dichotomy in a way which does not follow the "expectation" of *overcoming* – Resilience discourse is formulaic for popular Black women entertainers; pop music

culture has the “expectation of the traditional survivor’s tale” (James, 2015; Hopper 2012). We also see the dichotomy Rihanna is placed in as the usually assimilable “alluring...worldly seductress” Pop Star (formulaic/ desirable/ pleasurable/ overcoming) becomes unassimilable (victim/ abuse/ violence/ complex/ unpleasurable/ undesirable) and robs the reviewer of pleasure (Jewell, 1993: 46). Rihanna is also expected to perform labour – the affective labour of “a woman learn[ing] from that pain” - the labour of learning – “and leave it” – the labour of choice (“Pop Star” either/or “Victim”) - These affective labours are to be performed as *spectacle* through performance.

It's difficult to understand why Rihanna expects her fans to hang in this dark space with her (and Chris Brown). The album is unapologetic but it's also airless, nearly hookless, and exudes a deep melancholy. Given these qualities, it's hard not to wonder where else the album might have gone. Would it fare better if the topics were the same, but set to songs as combustible as "Don't Stop the Music"? If her pain and shame and can't-quit-you-babe motif was delivered with some humor? If she kept her personal drama to herself and sang about rolling fat joints on her bodyguard's head and did more duetting with the dude from Coldplay?

On one hand, it's tempting to give Rihanna props for broadcasting her all-too-real shortcomings. She's quite a distance from the tidy narrative we'd like, the one where she's learned from her pain and is back to doing diva triumph club stomp in the shadow of Beyoncé. *Unapologetic* rubs our faces in the inconvenient, messy truth of Rihanna's life which, even if it were done well, would be hard to celebrate as a success. But the measurable failure is the album's music. On a track-by-track basis, the songs make for dull labor, not worth our time and not befitting Rihanna's talent.

The last paragraph is key because it juxtaposes Rihanna's "shortcomings" with Beyoncé. Hopper writes that "She's quite a distance from the tidy narrative we'd like where she's learned from pain" – there is a repetition of *learn from pain* from the earlier paragraph. Rihanna is also far from the tidiness/neatness of a Resilience narrative – this is where Rihanna is expected to *handle her business* by performing and

capitalizing on her trauma for the entertainment and pleasure of *everyone else* as a Black woman “Pop Star” (James, 2015: 143; Springer, 2007: 266; Chatman, 2015). As Rihanna does not perform this labour, the loss of labour is recuperated when Hopper juxtaposes Rihanna with Beyoncé as she wishes that Rihanna was “back to doing diva triumph club stomp in the shadow of Beyoncé”. Note Rihanna is in the “shadow” (Hierarchy, in the dark), however she is expected to follow in the footsteps of Beyoncé (SBW/Aspirational Figure). In other words, ‘badgalriri’ needs to *grow up* as an exemplar of racialized “diva triumph” – the racialized resilience and inordinate strength of the *strong-Black-woman* (Morgan, 1999: 119). Rihanna also “rubs our faces in the inconvenient, messy truth” and so we get the juxtaposition of “tidy”, resilient Beyoncé and “messy” Rihanna. Rihanna does not overcome this mess through “measurable failure” and “dull labor”, robbing the author of the pleasure of Black women’s affective labour which, in this case, cannot be co-opted/assimilated and so this feels like a loss, that must be recuperated through the juxtaposition with other Black women’s labour (Beyoncé) who are performing racialized “diva triumph” (resilience) sufficiently.

Resilience Discourse - 4

Elite DAILY

MENU

LIFESTYLE

Battle Of Celebs Rihanna Vs. Beyoncé: A Report Card On Who's Winning



Source: Elite Daily (BDG group)

Author: Niki McGloster

Date published: 29th July 2015

Context:

In July 2015, Rihanna had released the music video for BBHMM causing controversy and white feminist outrage (Ellen, 2015; H. Lewis, 2015). Beyoncé was working on her sixth studio album *Lemonade* after a successful Grammy Awards that February.

The headline reads "Battle" and "Vs." to signify competition from the outset. We know it's about a "Battle" and "Who's Winning" that battle. The author, McGloster, will score them on a "Report Card" - reference to a grading Beyoncé and Rihanna in the way of a teacher/examiner who reports on students.

The world stops, and you're instantly pitted against a friend you don't even recognize anymore. Wide-eyed, you're appalled by their lack of loyalty to your fav.

I mean, come on, Bey is your phone screensaver and soundtrack to life, but Ri is practically your spirit animal, especially when she mic-drops a selfie on IG. Can't you love them both equally but for separate reasons?

Why are we even comparing them in the first place? They're two sides of the same coin for goodness sake! Rihanna is the woman you are now and Beyoncé is the woman you want to be.

When faced with this challenge, we at Elite Daily did the unthinkable and placed Queen Bey and Princess RiRi in a head-to-head showdown. Though their route to success has been markedly different, they both ended up as BFFs in your mind, whether you admit it or not.

McGloster imagines a scenario where she is with her friend and she is “pitted against” that friend “you don't even recognise anymore” because they are having a conversation about Beyoncé and Rihanna. The juxtaposition (as an organizing principle) is now social and organizing social interactions between friends. The author tells of disagreeing with who is the best out of Rihanna and Beyoncé, questions “Why are we even comparing them in the place?” and asserts that they are “two sides of the same coin” – Beyoncé/Rihanna is an either/or choice. There is a suggestion that Rihanna represents the younger self and Beyoncé represents the mature, grown up self – “Rihanna is the woman you are now” – young, bad-black-girl with resilient ‘potential’ because she *has to eventually grow up*, autonomous, success at work,

capital (entrepreneurship), consumption; and “Beyoncé is the woman you want to be” – strong-Black-woman, married, children, “diva triumph” (Hopper, 2012), inordinate strength, *and* “everything for everyone else *and* maintaining a sense of self” (Springer, 2007; Labennett, 2018: 179). Additionally, it connotes that Rihanna must aspire to Beyoncé (SBW/Aspirational Figure). Though the author praises both as “BFFs in your mind” they are still placed in juxtaposition. This suggests that there can only be one winner/you can only choose one after reading the “Report Card”.

BEST ALBUM

Teacher’s Notes: Picking your favorite artist’s best album is rather subjective.

When it comes to these two, it’s all too possible their corniest record was the soundtrack to your first sex sesh so it’s nestled into a soft crevice of your heart. But numbers don’t lie, no matter public reception, so look no further than Houston-bred music laureate for a one-up.

Again, we get this teacher/student relationship as it is a “Report Card”. The author plays the role of the teacher. The “Best Album” is determined by quantity “no matter public reception” as “numbers don’t lie”. Again, we get the quantification of merit in order to juxtapose.

While RiRi didn't earn her first No. 1 accolade until her seventh LP, "Unapologetic" -- it sold 238,000 copies in its first week according to Nielsen SoundScan, Bey claimed that slot well before her 22nd birthday with her first solo effort, "Dangerously In Love" and also Destiny's Child's "Survivor."

Oh, and did we mention Beyoncé is the first woman to collect five consecutive No. 1's with her first five studio works.

Yeah, we'll leave the L's to RiRi.

Excuse me, Rihanna. We need you to bow down on this one.

Beyoncé: A-

Rihanna: B+

Their success is determined by record sales and how long they took to get there -- "While RiRi didn't earn her first No.1 accolade until her seventh LP, "Unapologetic" -- it sold 238,000 copies in its first week". Then we get Beyoncé juxtaposed with "Bey claimed that slot well before her 22nd birthday" and here is where we see their juxtaposition quantified through sales, pace of sales, and the age at which they had achieved these successes. McGloster also makes a point in "Oh, and did we mention..." to emphasise Beyoncé's achievements (quantifiable). This is juxtaposed Rihanna being left with "L's" (taking losses) due to Beyoncé's success. This determines the winner. Furthermore, competition is presented in grades (quantifiable) and the author (as teacher) determines who gets a higher grade based on quantifiable evidence (sales and accolades).

STYLE STATUS

Teacher's Notes: For 10 years, Ri has climbed from misinformed style rookie to iconic fashion giant.

The 27-year-old Bajan hottie sits atop a throne of fashion royalty that's simply untouchable. You can try scouring Polyvore for her look, but it's no match for the pop queen's wake-up-wear-this-and-go versatility.

Though Beyoncé nails it, (See: Her forthcoming collab with Topshop) her style just isn't as refreshing. Stunning? Yes. But safe and predictable. Now probably isn't a good time to mention House of Deréon, either.

Sorry, Bey. Rihanna takes this cake (cake, cake, cake).

Beyoncé: C-

Rihanna: A+

This excerpt is about Rihanna and Beyoncé's ability for reinvention and "versatility". Rihanna is praised by the author for *growing up* from "rookie to iconic fashion giant" and for her quick "wake-up-wearing-and-go versatility". Beyoncé is set in opposition to this as her style "just isn't as refreshing". The use of "refreshing" is key to the sentence because it suggests reinvention, versatility and adaptability are vital coders of success and desirability (through fashion choices). "Stunning? Yes. But safe and predictable" – Safe and predictable suggest that Beyoncé is less willing to take risks and is more conservative (when it comes to style). Beyoncé's conservativeness is paired with her failures – "probably isn't a good time to mention House of Deréon, either". The House of Deréon was Beyoncé's clothing line, however it was unsuccessful. Therefore,

Rihanna wins based on the risks taken and the ability to reinvent oneself through consumption and entrepreneurship, especially after failure (*bounce back*).

MASTER GLAM CLASS

Both women's resumes runneth over with beauty endorsements, everything from makeup and perfume to shampoo. A quick glance at their multimillion-dollar deals, and you'll realize their styles are clear-cut. Rihanna rebelliously leans toward what's ahead of its time, as Beyoncé dances completely on pulse.

RiRi's Navy may disagree with this tie since the hazel-eyed femme is responsible for an arguably perfect shade of lipstick and several MAC collections. But her glamour wins can't overshadow Bey's longtime relationship with L'Oreal Paris.

It's a matter of preference, TBH: Are you dark and rebellious or soft and seductive?

Breathe deep and don't scoff. They're both putting their name on everything.
Beyoncé: A

Rihanna: A

Next we see the juxtaposition of endorsements and their desirability for branding (with beauty brands L'Oreal and MAC). From the outset Rihanna is "rebellious" while Beyoncé is "on the pulse". McGloster notes Rihanna's "several MAC collections" that "can't overshadow Bey's longtime relationship with L'Oreal Paris" – The author looks at who can overshadow who but does not reach a conclusion, however the juxtaposition has still been made and their endorsements with make-up brands

hierarchized. This is put to the reader as a "preference" – "Are you dark and rebellious or soft and seductive?" – The juxtaposition here suggests that Rihanna is "dark" (something immoral/risqué/taboo), "rebellious" (against rules) and this is juxtaposed Beyoncé as "soft" (gentle, innocent), "seductive" (alluring, temptuous); here, a dichotomy is created by the author but it is posed as a question ("Are you"), therefore it is *your choice and your preference*.

#FITSP0

Sure, Bey took on Michelle Obama's [#GimmeFive challenge](#) and Rihanna's model-esque bod would put Adriana Lima to shame, but which of these baddies is actually putting in work?

As of late, Bey's leading the charge on all things fitness and health.

Her swine-swap to vegan options -- she even has her own vegan meal delivery service, [22 Days Nutrition](#) -- has made her a diet deity. So while we're choking on jealousy at Rihanna's effortless ability to look amazing on a marijuana diet, we know Beyoncé sacrifices and busts her bum to stay slim.

At the end of the day, you want to look half as good as both of them,

don't you?
Beyoncé: A+

Rihanna: A-

This section is about the competition of bodies (fitness) (Survival of the fittest); the aim to grade who self-manages and who regulates their own fitness/bodies the best –

"which of these baddies is actually putting in work?". Beyoncé's ability to self-manage/regulate her body is rewarded - "diet deity", "sacrifices and busts her bum to stay slim" and this is paired with her endorsements (22 Days of Nutrition). This is juxtaposed with Rihanna's "marijuana diet" though she is praised for her "effortless ability to look amazing", she is not self-managing her body in the *proper* way (like Beyoncé is through endorsements). Self-managing/regulating the body 'correctly' determines whether they win or lose/have an A+ or A- which hierarchizes them based on body regulation.

RELATIONSHIP STATUS

Beyoncé has settled quite comfortably into her role as Jay Z's wife and Blue Ivy's mama. Though her life is straight up #relationshipgoals, Rihanna's maneater approach to love is nothing less than empowering -- and this is a woman who suffered an ugly domestic abuse spat.

Never one to be slut-shamed, her phoenix-like rise past her pain and into the

arms of the industry's hottest dudes (Drake, Matt Kemp, Leonardo DiCaprio) is the stuff feminists burned bras for.

Men swoon at the sight of her, and now that same-sex marriage is legal, what woman wouldn't put a ring on it?

Mrs. Knowles status is tempting, but for now, RiRi's unwavering power over men makes us single gals rejoice.

Beyoncé: B+

Rihanna: A

This section is all about juxtaposing the 'woman' and the 'girl' - Beyoncé is an aspirational figure of becoming a woman - "#relationshipgoals" as she has "settled comfortably into her role as Jay-Z's wife and Blue Ivy's mama". This is juxtaposed Rihanna as an autonomous "maneater" (girl) - this is "empowering" which is then tied to Rihanna's *overcoming* of domestic abuse [Resilience Discourse]. It ties Rihanna's sexual liberation to overcoming trauma/pain as a prerequisite and Beyoncé as aspirational figure/as "#relationshipgoals".

"Never one to be slut-shamed, her phoenix-like rise past her pain" is a vision of overcoming [Resilience-Discourse] where pain and slut-shaming are the prerequisite. This overcoming pushes her "into the arms of the industries hottest dudes" - so through pain/trauma (male violence), slut-shaming (patriarchal damage), Rihanna ends up in the arms of men and as sexually desirable to men and women - "men swoon at the sight of her...now that same-sex marriage is legal, what woman wouldn't put a ring on it?". At the end of the day, Rihanna has overcome her pain/trauma/slut-shaming (patriarchal damage) to get married. After sexual freedom comes marriage (Harris, 2004).

Beyoncé as a woman is still the aspirational figure "but for now" and this suggests that eventually it will be time for "Mrs. Knowles" status (as wife and mother) but this is juxtaposed with the *now* of the author as a single woman – "RiRi's unwavering power over men makes us single gals rejoice" - Rihanna is set in *the now* and present day whereas Beyoncé is the future of the author's womanhood.

GRADE POINT AVERAGE

What does all this mean? It's completely not pro-lady to compare women -- after all, both Rihanna and Beyonce are amazing enough to be the blueprints to your life. Choose your adventure wisely.

Beyoncé: 3.45

Rihanna: 3.85

Finally, McGloster gives her “Grade Point Average” (quantification) and acknowledges “It’s completely not pro-lady to compare women”. – the author juxtaposes anyway. The author finishes with “Choose your adventure wisely” which means that this list is also meant to guide the reader and their life choices according to neoliberal imperatives using the juxtaposition of Black women. Overall, this article juxtaposes Beyoncé and Rihanna on the basis of these neoliberal imperatives: Quantifiable merits (sales and accolades); ability to adapt and reinvent; endorsements and entrepreneurship; body self-management/regulation / discipline of the body; personal/social relationships (particularly sexual relationships with men).

[Rihanna as bad-black-girl/Tragic Mulatta](#)

Tragic Mulatta - 1

Beyonce Tells Jay-Z Rihanna Isn't Their Problem

Source: Daily Gossip.org (defunct)

Author: Angel Libby

Date: 9th October 2012

Context: Beyoncé is a new parent having her first child, Blue Ivy, in January 2012 and taking a musical hiatus. Rumours have been circulating year-round that Rihanna has reunited with Chris Brown.

The narrative of the article places Beyoncé as 'concerned' and Rihanna as a danger (to herself). There is the abandonment of Rihanna as Beyoncé and Jay-Z fictitiously 'distance' themselves (symbolic proximity). It suggests that the audience is meant to follow in this distancing based on Rihanna's individual mediated conduct.



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Style

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Following last week's reports that Chris Brown and Rihanna are back together, sources are saying Beyoncé is concerned about RiRi's behavior. Apparently, Beyoncé told Jay-Z Rihanna isn't their problem and he should keep his distance from her.



Last week it's been like a rollercoaster ride for Chris Brown and Rihanna's fans. Starting Monday, media had

them making out in a club, then cuddling at a Jay-Z concert and then Chris Brown dumped his friend and released a video saying he's not a player. Sources say that Beyoncé is concerned about what's going on with Rihanna and apparently told Jay-Z to stay away from RiRi.

The recent reports that Rihanna and Chris Brown are getting back together aren't the only things that seem to be of concern for Beyoncé. Over the past few months, Rihanna seemed to be partying harder and harder. The picture of that stripper between her legs is common news insiders revealed. But it's precisely this kind of news that have Beyoncé thinking RiRi is about to spin out of control.

"She's told Jay that RiRi's beyond hope and just isn't their problem" a source told Now magazine. "This drama has been going on for so long and people get hurt because she won't grow up. Bey wants Jay to keep his distance" the insider added.

There is the inclusion of fans to also join in Beyoncé's 'concern' and implies that fans are going through a "rollercoaster ride" with Rihanna and Chris Brown's relationship. The reason for Beyonce's symbolic proximity (Distancing) is that Rihanna has gone back to an abusive relationship. She has not *overcome* violence and abuse sufficiently (we see this theme repeatedly in Resilience Discourse – Affective Labour of Resilience). The author writes about Rihanna as partying and going to strip clubs (out-of-control and hypersexual/ Tragic-Mulatta). This is opposed to what Beyoncé is "thinking" (as in not things she would do - Respectability Politics). In juxtaposition, Rihanna is "about to spin out of control", and this places Beyoncé as controlled and

having 'concern' about Rihanna because, as quoted from Now Magazine, "*she won't grow up*" (Beyoncé as SBW).

According to Now's insider, Beyoncé has become concerned after all the Rihanna heavy partying reports. "She's been at Spearmint Rhino strip club every night, visiting private booths to get hot and heavy with girls" a source said after Rihanna posted on Twitter a picture of a stripper between her legs.

Then, several days later, people saw Rihanna "vomiting into a napkin" at the 10ak nightclub, after

cutting short her performance at Las Vegas' iHeart Radio festival. Early October had Rihanna partying with Chris Brown in NYC clubs, although he's the one that assaulted her only three years ago.

If the reports are true, then Beyoncé has good reason to tell Jay-Z to stay away from RiRi. In November last year, Rihanna was reported to have a meltdown and called Beyoncé for advice. "It's a mix of exhaustion and stress" one source told The Sun back then.

"She's been partying hard to take her mind off things, but there are days when she wakes up and doesn't even know where she is because of the traveling" the insider added.

Beyoncé's 'concern' is not only with Rihanna partying and the relationship with Chris Brown but with her hypersexuality – strip clubs – "get hot and heavy with girls" (suggests sexual fluidity). Furthermore, we get the image excess with "vomiting into a napkin" which indicates that there is a need to imagine Rihanna as physically sick and unable to function in her work – "cutting short her performance". This connotes that Rihanna is unhealthy, unable to self-manage, and therefore work (insufficient resilience). Her body is a site of uncontrolled partying, toxicity/unhealthiness, hypersexuality, violence and insufficient resilience. Rihanna is victim-in-need-of-rescue while (Tragic-Mulatta) juxtaposed Beyoncé as a mother figure/big sister offering advice and keeping her symbolic distance (SBW). In fictive kinship (Harris-

Perry, 2011a), Beyoncé as SBW [aspirational figure] casts her as being able to manage her life and body better in order to work, and Rihanna brings Beyoncé (and Jay-Z) shame for not being insufficiently resilient (overcoming the stereotype of bad-black-girl/tragic-mulatta).

[Beyoncé as SBW-Aspirational Figure](#)

Aspirational Figure - 1

Big respect for the only diva who keeps it real

The Times (London)

June 29, 2011 Wednesday, Edition 1, National Edition

Source: The Times (UK)

Author: Sarah Vine (British columnist; political allegiance, Conservative Party)

Date published: 29th June 2011

Context:

Both Rihanna and Beyoncé had released music around this time in 2011. Beyoncé had released her fourth studio album '4' three days prior to this article (29th June). Rihanna was on her world tour, the *LOUD Tour* and had released the controversial music videos 'S&M' and 'Man Down' back to back in the previous months.

Sarah Vine's shoutout to "the only diva who keeps it real" refers to Beyoncé. Beyoncé is "diva" and garners "respect" from Vine. The use of the word "diva", paying dubious homage, is a stereotypical word used to refer to Black female singers (Springer, 2007: 257). We see this use of "diva" in right-wing, Conservative aligned, *The Sun* (Jones, 2011; Juxtaposition – 1) above.

Any parent who has ever done a double-take at the sight of their young daughter performing disturbingly adult dance moves picked up in the playground, or singing along to suggestive pop lyrics that she can't (surely) understand, knows what I mean by the pornification of pop. It's a subject that has been much raked over in recent months, mainly thanks to Rihanna's chart-topping portrayal of sado-masochistic sex, S&M. To be honest, it's too muggy to get all steamed up over an issue that has been around since Madonna first discovered the financial advantages of performing in her bra and pants. Suffice to say that supporters of porno-pop say it's all about female empowerment, while those, like me, who don't understand why all dance routines have to involve women prising their legs open in a suggestive manner, or offering up their rear ends to gyrating male dance partners, aren't so sure any more.

Enter Beyoncé Knowles, whose barnstorming all-woman performance at Glastonbury has put her firmly back on pop's leader board. I, for one, am delighted. Not just because I love her music and admire her ability to sing and dance at breakneck speed in stilettos, but because she is exactly what turbo-charged, super-powered lady-pop is all about.

Vine starts by situating herself and those like herself as a parent expressing 'concern' for their young daughters - "performing disturbingly adult dance moves" - Vine associates her 'concern' with sexuality that is 'disturbing'. The "pornification of pop" which refers to Vine's view of explicit sexual content being normalized in pop music. Vine places the responsibility of this "pornification of pop" with Rihanna *first and foremost* - "...many thanks to Rihanna's chart-topping portrayal of sado-masochistic sex, S&M". Imagery in the 'S&M' video is taken literally by Vine. It is seen as a "disturbingly adult", "pornification" rather than a political critique of the media and how they restrict/police Rihanna's behaviour as a Black woman in the public eye. Rihanna's 'hypersexuality' is deemed a 'moral panic' and unhealthy for young girls (Vine has white female 'concern' in order to police and juxtapose Black women). Rihanna's 'At

Risk' behaviour makes other young women 'At Risk' - a toxic role model and unhealthy for society (Harris, 2004; Foucault, 2003: 255-256). A Black woman pointing out the policing of her body by society and the media is reconceptualized and pathologized as hypersexual and disturbing to young girls and society (reconceptualized, as a Black woman, liking the bondage placed on her by society and the media).

Then we get "Enter Beyoncé Knowles..." – Beyoncé set in juxtaposition to Rihanna cast as a hypersexual moral panic (Tragic-Mulatta). The previous paragraph sets up Rihanna as the 'disturbing' and hypersexualized, toxic role model for young girls (At Risk). Rihanna is redefined as an object of titillation "prising their legs open" and "offering up their rear ends to gyrating male dance partners". Beyoncé on the other hand (juxtaposed) is a "barnstorming all-woman". She is humanised as a woman. However, we have this Black superwoman trope (SBW) set against the hypersexual Tragic-Mulatta/Jezebel "offering up" and "prising their legs open" which has connotations in the justifications of rape of enslaved Black women. There is further indication that there is a hierarchy and meritocracy in pop music – "...put her firmly back on pop's leader board". References to Beyoncé's physicality/athleticism - "dance at breakneck speed in stilettos", "exactly what turbo-charged, super-powered lady-pop is all about" - again evoke the SBW trope - being a superwoman/superhuman with excess physicality.

She is sexy without being slutty, suggestive without being submissive; her voice combines the sweetness of Aretha with the growl of Tina; she has thighs that could crack walnuts and nostrils that flare like a raging bull. In short, insofar as I would want my daughter to aspire to be like any pop star, it would be Beyoncé.

Before her, other divas pale into insignificance. As Gaga staggers under the weight of a "monster" world tour and Rihanna falls foul (literally: last week she fell off her heels on stage) of her trademark hooker chic, Beyoncé is back with a healthier image of female empowerment.

Vine describes Beyoncé as "sexy without being slutty" – sexuality under-wraps but at risk of being excessive as a Black woman and "suggestive without being submissive" which is similar to the above phrase and alliterative, however this is instrumentalized. Beyoncé can be sexually suggestive but not too much as a Black woman; she must be reserved about sexuality so as to not be sexually threatening like Rihanna – Tragic-Mulatta (juxtaposition). The juxtaposition is based on the politics of respectability and overcoming racist stereotypes, which Rihanna has not done sufficiently. Beyoncé cannot be "submissive" because "diva" SBW is strong. Beyoncé as SBW being submissive is not a voice that the whiteness and middle-class respectability in post-feminist "female empowerment" can co-opt; it is not a voice that Vine (a right-wing white female columnist) can co-opt either. Post-feminist white female ideology wants to appear out of proximity to "submissiveness" because white women are already assumed to be that, unlike Black women who are assumed and cast as strong (if showing 'weakness' are cast villain-seductress-perpetrator/victims-in-need-of-rescue). Ultimately SBW performs the affective labour of "all-woman" so white women don't have to suffer in the process (including their "daughter[s]" who aspires to Beyoncé). Black women's labour (through SBW) turns into and gets co-opted into white woman 'empowerment' (without having to perform the labour). In the next section, I will analyse interviews with Beyoncé and Rihanna fans.

Fan Interviews

As a part of this research, I interviewed seven Beyoncé and Rihanna stans who are currently participating or have participated within the BeyHive or Rihanna Navy (in the UK and US). All participants were ages 18–25 years-old and have/have had an online presence identifying as a Beyoncé or Rihanna stan. Under confidentiality, I have omitted details of their identities such as their real names (e.g., pseudonyms are used such as 'HIVE 1') and location/where they currently reside, as some stans have an online alias that they use specifically for their Rihanna or Beyoncé fandom and wish to remain anonymous. Other stans that the participants have mentioned in these interviews have also been given pseudonyms (e.g., 'Susan'). All participants have been a Beyoncé or Rihanna stans more than five years.

Article Interpretations

Prior to interviewing the following fans I had provided an article that was accessible online (via a link) and printed this article for face to face interviews if participants wanted to read it again during the interview. The article was introduced in towards the middle-end of each interview and discussed thereafter with the participant. The article chosen were the Sun's *Is Rih Rih bigger than Bey?* (Jones, 2011) for the Navy and The Inquisitr's (Deino, 2016) *Beyoncé vs. Rihanna: The Queen of Pop vs, The Queen*

of *Flop* for the BeyHive. The reason for this choice is that both articles display clear juxtapositions and contrasting effects (competition, hierarchy, dichotomy), and they show a slight bias towards Rihanna (*The Sun for the Navy*) and Beyoncé (*The Inquisitr for the BeyHive*). My rationale and question was that if fans interpreted a positively biased article towards their *fave* (favourite artist) would they reproduce the structure of the article in their answers (the juxtaposition itself) and/or would the fans recognise this structure and be critical of it.

HIVE 1 (Interpreting Juxtaposition 3 – Beyoncé vs. Rihanna: The Queen of Pop vs. The Queen of Flop)

“Beyoncé's been relevant and I know that the end of this article says that you know [quotes article] "at the beginning of the decade Beyonce and Rihanna were the biggest names in the music industry but 6 years later it appears that Beyoncé has been the only one to survive" --but that's why I think they shouldn't be put in the same bracket because I feel like our like...icon--legendary status and I always say this because I tell people she's had a solo career since 2003 but now its 2019 and she's still as relevant as she was then--like she could release a tour tomorrow with no promotion and sell it out whereas Rihanna on the other hand, if Rihanna's not big in the charts at the time she struggles to sell her tickets erm...which is fine but thats why I don't know why people compare them 'cause I feel like Beyoncé earned her title. She's been around for a lot longer, she got more experience. She's come from like a different era as such”

Hive 1 interprets the article through the lens of last paragraph of the article in which she quotes "at the beginning of the decade Beyonce and Rihanna were the biggest names in the music industry but 6 years later it appears that Beyoncé has been the only one to survive" – in interpreting the article through this lens we get the reproduction of the juxtaposition itself (the structure of the article). Hive 1 points out Beyoncé's relevancy, as in, how successful Beyoncé has been and still is and these points are used to assert that Beyoncé and Rihanna are different because of "icon–legendary status". There is a reproduction of hierarchy and it is based on the view of the pop music industry being a hierarchical and competitive space where you reach a certain "status". Then, this hierarchical status gets quantified into tour tickets sales; how the article itself is structured and quantifies successes and failures into numbers, for instance, "A true measure of an artist's popularity is how well they're are selling concert tickets" (Deino, 2016). The reproduction of the juxtaposition comes through ticket sales and "whereas Rihanna on the hand". Even though Hive 1 does not understand why there is a comparison between Beyoncé and Rihanna, the comparison is still made by Hive 1 in line with article. She sees Beyoncé as having "earned her title" and "been around a lot longer"; in other words Beyoncé should be in a league of her own and not compared Rihanna because she has had a longer career and more "experience" in the industry. The juxtaposition and its contrasting effects (hierarchy, competition, dichotomy) are still there.

HIVE 2 (Interpreting Juxtaposition 3- Beyoncé vs. Rihanna: The Queen of Pop vs. The Queen of Flop))

“Looks like a white man trying to pit two black women against each other but...yeah I just think this doesn't really need to be wrote. There's no relevancy--I don't think it even needs to be said, like the relevancy...and like the two topics they don't even go together. They're talking about Beyoncé with Black Panthers and Rihanna killing men [laughs]. How are we comparing that?

The thing that stands out the most was obviously they both went on stadium tours [laughs]. Beyoncé sold out, Rihanna didn't--I went to both. I think maybe it was a competition--competitive but I think it was more to do with the tours and not so much the music because I think the albums were totally different. Everyone enjoyed ANTI and everyone enjoyed Lemonade so I don't think it had much to do with the music because they was totally different projects, like you couldn't compare them if you tried. But definitely, the fact they were on tour together and like like I said before it's got a lot to do with numbers so if one's selling out and the other one's not selling out then they're gonna be... compared.”

HIVE 2 (a 22-year-old Black woman) recognises the technique of power used by the white male writer Deino. She says:

“a white man trying to pit two Black women against other {Juxtaposition} but...yeah I just think this doesn't really need to be wrote. There's no relevancy—I don't think it even needs to be said, like the relevancy...and like the two topics they don't even go together {topics can be irrelevant or unrelated}. They're talking about Beyoncé with Black Panthers and Rihanna killing men [laughs]. How are we comparing that?”

We both laughed. HIVE 2 questions the power dynamic of race-gender and how it is produced – “How are we comparing that?” – but the answer is within the discourse of the Black Panthers and killing men (Rihanna’s “revenge” on her former ‘Accountant’ Mads Mikkelsen in BBHMM). These are the topics which cause white anxiety – “reflecting the anxieties of powerful groups” (Bush, 2000: 762) – and this coincides with a pattern from the period of rebellion in the Caribbean during slavery (e.g., Sam Sharpe Rebellion 1831). The juxtaposition is undermined by HIVE 2 because the relevance from a white male author is within the discourse put together side by side and juxtaposed. HIVE 2 also describes the Beyoncé and Rihanna concert tours in the summer of 2016 and says “Beyoncé sold out, Rihanna didn't--I went to both. I think maybe it was a *competition – competitive*”. This competition gets quantified as “it’s got a lot to do with *numbers so if one's selling out and the other one's not selling out* then they're gonna be... compared “. HIVE 2 expects this comparison as the inevitable outcome of two Black women going on tour, especially when one is not performing as expected by merit (sales at a profit) or ideologically through music videos (BBHMM). The result of lost labour– Rihanna not “selling” and making a “revenge” music video when it

comes to addressing the “the ‘race’ thing” (Deino, 2016) – is to be compared because the labour lost must be recuperated.

NAVY 1 (*Interpreting Juxtaposition 1 – Is Rih Rih Bigger Than Bey?*

The Sun, 2011)

“When I first saw the headline I thought yeah, Rihanna is bigger than Beyoncé. Like personally I think Rihanna is. I just feel like in the media Beyoncé is always like portrayed as like—especially nowadays—she's portrayed as like a massive superstar but if you actually look at like the stats and actually like the numbers, like who's sold more music, who's got the more awards and stuff like that, then you'll actually see that Rihanna's more successful in like a number of ways but obviously there are ways that Beyoncé is more successful. Beyoncé's got more Grammy's or whatever. Like personally, I think Rihanna's more successful [...] Rihanna's achieved what Beyoncé achieved in a shorter amount of time so...

I already thought that the media portrayed Beyoncé as this like perfect person whereas they always like they always try and see the bad side of Rihanna. The article kind of like confirmed that.

I do think that sometimes these sorts of articles I feel like the fans do take them like seriously sometimes and like they just use this as evidence as like why someone's better than the other or someone's copying the other person.”

NAVY 1 interprets the headlined question by answering it – “When I first saw the headline I thought yeah, Rihanna is bigger than Beyoncé. Like personally I think Rihanna is”. NAVY 1 repeats “bigger than” from the title which reproduces the

hierarchical headlined question (juxtaposition). There is also an observation about the way Beyoncé is usually portrayed in within media discourses with:

“I just feel like in the media Beyoncé is always like portrayed as like—especially nowadays—she's portrayed as like a massive superstar {Aspirational Figure} but if you actually look at like the stats and actually like the numbers, like who's sold more music, who's got the more awards and stuff like that {Quantification/Merit}, then you'll actually see that Rihanna's more successful {Juxtaposition} [...]”

What NAVY 1 has observed from media discourses is Beyoncé portrayed as a “massive superstar” and this is paired with “I already thought that the media portrayed Beyoncé as this like perfect person”. Although NAVY 1 is a Rihanna stan, he acknowledges Beyoncé’s success such her career length and Grammy award wins. The issue is with the way Beyoncé is portrayed as “perfect person” against Rihanna’s “bad side” (Juxtaposition) – “I already thought that the media portrayed *Beyoncé* as *this like perfect person whereas they always like they always try and see the bad side of Rihanna*. The article kind of like confirmed that.” (my emphasis). Furthermore, the article confirms this “perfect person”/“bad side” juxtaposition for the participant, the way that other media discourses/articles have “already” and “always” conveyed this juxtaposition for NAVY 1 before.

While NAVY 1 acknowledges that this is something that media discourses “already” and “always” do, the reproduction of this juxtaposition still exists within the quantifiable merits mentioned – “*the numbers, like who's sold more music, who's got the more*

awards” – this is how NAVY 1 measures Beyoncé and Rihanna’s success and how juxtaposition (hierarchy, competition and dichotomy) is reproduced to determine “I think Rihanna is more successful.” However, NAVY 1 also recognises that fans will use these articles as evidence to defend/advocate for their favourite artist; juxtaposing media discourses are weaponised between fan bases. The trajectory of these media discourses such as The Sun, then transforms into evidence in an exchange between fans (Stan Wars).

NAVY 2 (Interpreting Juxtaposition 1)

“I think they're fuelling the two fan bases just by that title–“Is Rih Rih Bigger Than Beyoncé?”–The BeyHive is gonna take that and they're going to run with it and attack the Rihanna Navy.

I definitely think that they try to take anything and run with it to find something to make an article about. Definitely I think the smallest thing can blown up into a big proportion like–if someone's liking a picture like–I go on Instagram and I like a picture, I don't read captions. It's an easy mistake but they've took "Oooh look! She's shading Beyoncé" but she probably didn't even read the caption

I feel like the smallest things, they take it and they run with it and they try and get away with the best article that they can to then, obviously, get money, get news and most of the time it's not true. I feel that's a lot of the time in media. I know there's like restrictions, they can't just make up a lie but if there's something there they can fuel it. They definitely take it and run with it. Definitely.

I just feel like they're trying to say they're copying each other. But there again how can you say that they're copying each when one is supposed be bigger than the other? [laughs]– So they've basically typed into Google Rihanna in a red dress and Beyoncé in a red dress, that's how it feels. But this is something that fans do get fuelled about– Oh, they copied Rihanna because Rihanna's seen as a fashion icon and Beyoncé wears a dress that's the same colour as Rihanna–Oh why she doing that, she's copying–So I do see why they've done it because it is something that fans do argue about and obviously fans will do the most reading this”

NAVY 2 identifies that Jones (The Sun author) is “fuelling the two fan bases just by the title” and that this type of headline would lead to “The BeyHive is gonna take that and they're going to run with it and attack the Rihanna Navy”. What this indicates is that juxtaposition (specifically competition) is generated at on multiple social levels; it is generated between Beyoncé and Rihanna, *and both* sets of their fans (or at least there is an attempt to do so). Competition is an organizing principle in social spheres that generates a profit, economically and ideologically for neoliberal white supremacist capitalist patriarchy/MRWaSP (i.e., entertainment industries). There is also the view that NAVY 2 *expects* there to be an “attack” from the Hive, and so indicating that the competition generated by entertainment media discourses has the inevitable result of war (stan war). NAVY 2 is also aware that the authors (The Sun and Tom Jones) take snippets of Beyoncé and Rihanna’s life or individual conduct to “make a story” in order to juxtapose them:

“I definitely think that they try to take anything and run with it to find something to make an article about. Definitely I think the smallest thing can be blown up into a big proportion [...]

[...] I feel like the smallest things, they take it and they run with it and they try and get away with the best article that they can to then, obviously, get money, get news and most of the time it's not true. I feel that's a lot of the time in media.”

This observation is similar to HIVE 2 who spots as a reader the lack of “relevancy” of topics being written about in entertainment/celebrity discourses when they juxtapose Rihanna and Beyoncé. These topics get “blow up” meaning the Rihanna and Beyoncé’s individual conduct, such as their social media activity, are magnified under surveillance and so, we have on display “their separation, their alignment, [*juxtaposition*] their serialization [*quantification*], and their surveillance”; juxtaposition with contrasting effects (e.g., hierarchy, dichotomy and/or competition) and the functions of racism (Foucault, 2003: 242). However, as NAVY 2 describes, this is to have the “best article”, “get money” and “get news”; the juxtaposition of Beyoncé and Rihanna is profitable for entertainment news outlets (and more importantly right-wing news outlets like the Sun). The juxtaposition of Black women is a spectacle, it *is* the entertainment at a profit (“get money”) and it works under the functions of racism and misogyny.

“there again how can you say that they're copying each when one is supposed be bigger than the other? [laughs]– So they've

basically typed into Google Rihanna in a red dress and Beyoncé in a red dress, that's how it feels. But this is something that fans do get fuelled about– Oh, they copied Rihanna because Rihanna's seen as a fashion icon and Beyoncé wears a dress that's the same colour as Rihanna–Oh why she doing that, she's copying–So I do see why they've done it because it is something that fans do argue about and obviously fans will do the most reading this”

Once again, this inevitably trickles down to how fans advocate for the favourite artist, whether Beyoncé or Rihanna. NAVY 2 questions the article and specifically how different images, where Rihanna and Beyoncé appear to have similar outfits, are deliberately spliced together but knows that this is what fans get upset and fight about: they get “fuelled”. These articles fuel competition between fan communities (competition generates profit) because “fans do argue” about and “do the most reading this”. When fan/stan bases argue it is called Stan Wars.

[Stan Wars](#)

For this theme, Beyoncé and Rihanna fans give their observations on competition created between the Hive and the Navy. As *Stan-Wars.com* (2021) puts it stan wars are an “internet conflict in which groups of overzealous fan (stans) argue with other groups of stans. This is done hour after hour, day after day as if they are getting paid for it”. In other words, stanning and, specifically stan wars are the free labour of

advocacy and defence. Stans defend their favourite artist “against other readings” but also it is a defence of a set of values, extensions of self through the object of fandom (Rihanna and Beyoncé); these investments in stanning and stan wars intensifies neoliberal imperatives because, as we have established, the organizing principle is competition (Sandvoss, 2005: 105). HIVE 1, who have been a lifelong Beyoncé stan, tells us how “bad” it was when the stan war between the Hive and the Navy first started:

HIVE 1

Yeah it was very bad then. [...] And it was more so like—when people would like put Beyoncé and Rihanna—like pin them together, that used to annoy me and I really disliked all of the Rihanna fans [...] I didn't mind the ones who were Rihanna and Beyoncé fans but the ones who were like Rihanna's the Queen and Beyoncé is not—I was like "no, no, no". But that was definitely because of Twitter as well but also the media would always put them together as well...so it did cause a lot of rivalry—like I didn't even really like Rihanna then and—I did like Rihanna but because of Twitter I didn't like Rihanna if that makes sense. When Rihanna first came out I loved her and then I was this big Beyoncé fan on Twitter and everyone made out like Rihanna and Beyoncé were on the same level, I disliked Rihanna mainly because of her fans rather than 'cause of her.

HIVE 1 states that when people would “pin them [Beyoncé and Rihanna] together” (juxtaposition), this would annoy her. This was one of the reasons why she disliked all

of the Rihanna fans that would be “like Rihanna’s the Queen and Beyoncé is not”. The assertion of Rihanna’s music industry status (“Queen”) also promoted hierarchy and reproduced their juxtaposition. In defense of Beyoncé, HIVE 1 “was like “no, no, no”” while participating in stan wars, further adding that these stan wars started because “of Twitter as well but also the media would always put them together as well...so it did cause a lot of rivalry”. Here we can see that the juxtaposition of Beyoncé and Rihanna in entertainment/celebrity media discourses “cause a lot of rivalry” because one of the contrasting effects of that juxtaposition is competition between their fan bases. We see that HIVE 1 actually likes Rihanna in 2005 (“When Rihanna first came out”) but this changes with the HIVE 1 joining social media to practice stanning on Twitter. There are two media interventions: entertainment/celebrity media discourses and Twitter, deregulated spaces where a fan appears “free of direction” and has a ‘choice’. In spaces like these, competition is universalized as a regulator through discourse:

“then I was this big Beyoncé fan on Twitter and everyone made out like Rihanna and Beyoncé were on the same level, I disliked Rihanna mainly because of her fans rather than 'cause of her”

When HIVE 1 becomes an influential and popular Beyoncé stan/member of the Hive on Twitter (competitive deregulated space), the problem for her was that “everyone made out like Rihanna and Beyoncé were on the same level”. The issue here is that there is competition on Twitter (Beyoncé juxtaposed Rihanna) which (re)produces hierarchy. If there is competition and “everyone” is making out that Beyoncé is *not above* Rihanna (that they are on the same level), stans *then* feel compelled to defend

and advocate on behalf of Beyoncé or Rihanna in order to protect Beyoncé or Rihanna's social status because this also protects the stans' social status and the social status of the fan base (as the most successful and hard-working fan base – this is stan meritocracy in itself). In fact, this competition and rivalry with the Rihanna Navy is the *only* reason why HIVE 1 “dislike Rihanna mainly because of her fans rather than ‘cause of her”. What we can pinpoint from HIVE 1's answer is that it is the interposition of media discourses (entertainment/celebrity and social media) which (re)produce dislike, rivalry and hierarchy between fan bases (which in turn reproduces the Beyoncé/Rihanna Juxtaposition).

NAVY 2

“I feel like the real two fan bases—the Rihanna Navy and the BeyHive—I feel like they're the ones that clash the most. I do see it get retweeted a lot onto my timeline—The BeyHive has said one thing, saying Rihanna is this, that and the other—Beyoncé's better—whatever the tweet. And then some fans do take it to the next level and you call it dragging— stan term —so obviously they get dragged and arguments happen. [...] I guess that's what some fans get entertainment out of but more so I feel like we do get on with other ones. Like I know a lot stans are fans of Cardi B. Nicki Minaj we used to be but maybe not so now. I just feel like it depends on who you follow [...] the Rihanna Navy and the BeyHive, I definitely do think there's a rivalry there. I think it's because they're the two most powerful women that people know of...it's oh Beyoncé, it's oh Rihanna. I feel like some people find it more of a competition [...]

[...] I seen it for a good 5 years now. It's just crazy – sometimes I just feel like people do it to gain more followers and I feel like that's definitely an incentive for people to do it other than that. It's not necessary. We're supposed to support each other, it's powerful women, not turn them against each other. And the funny thing is Beyoncé and Rihanna are friends aren't they so...

I feel like Beyoncé—I do feel like she is somewhat overrated but that's my personal opinion. Like people—like an ordinary person, if Beyoncé goes on tour it's like "Oh! I need to go, it's Beyoncé!" I do feel like that and I've always felt that way, that she is overrated but it might just my view because personally I don't feel that way."

Similarly, NAVY 2 sees this rivalry on Twitter as the stan war gets “retweeted on a lot on my timeline—The BeyHive has said one thing, saying Rihanna is this, that and the other—Beyoncé's better—whatever the tweet”. Again, we have the interposition of social media (Twitter) in facilitating competitive and hierarchical fan practices. One of these practices involve in stan wars is called “dragging”. Dragging (to drag or be dragged) is the practice of public attack and disrespect on specifically on social media with the use of words, images, memes and the weaponization of merits/accolades (of the stans' favourite artist); it is a practice of one-upmanship.

Furthermore, NAVY 2 implies that stans find stan wars and dragging are forms of entertainment; dragging happens on behalf of the women being juxtaposed (Beyoncé and Rihanna) which is also the free labour of advocacy and defence. NAVY 2 also mentions that the Navy “get on with” other fan bases such as Cardi B's *Bardi Gang*, interestingly another Black Caribbean woman's fan base like Rihanna and the Rihanna Navy. However, the Bardi Gang have a fan base rivalry with Nicki Minaj's

Barbz (also a Black Caribbean woman). Due to this stan war, Rihanna fans that used to be Nicki Minaj fans (due to Rihanna and Minaj's past musical collaboration) but "maybe not so now". What we can take from is that the juxtaposition of Black women in the entertainment industry does not stop at Rihanna and Beyoncé; it is a common spectacle which is facilitated and kept alive (homeostasis) through the competitive conditions of stanning. As NAVY 2 points out "I seen it for a good 5 years now" which indicates that these stan wars happen periodically over a long period of time. One of the incentives for stans participating in stan wars is "to gain more followers and I feel like that's definitely an incentive for people to do it"; so, the stan performs in front of "the eyes of the relevant beholder", their followers, who can "confer status" on the stan as a fan who displays social and cultural capital to acquire social status within fan base (Thornton, 1995: 11). Social status and capital are key incentives on Twitter, and it is also where fans propagate their practices to other fans.

NAVY 2 does stress that Beyoncé and Rihanna are "powerful women" that we should not "turn against each other". However, later in the interview when talking about Ariana Grande and questioning whether she has ever been compared to another female artist (NAVY 2 could not pinpoint who Grande has ever been compared to), Beyoncé comes up again to which she says:

"I feel like Beyoncé—I do feel like she is somewhat overrated but that's my personal opinion. Like people—like an ordinary person, if Beyoncé goes on tour it's like "Oh! I need to go, it's Beyoncé!" I do feel like that and I've always felt that way, that she is overrated but it might just my view because personally I don't feel that way."

Thinking back to Toni Jones' *Is Rih Rih Bigger Than Bey?* In The Sun (2011), NAVY 2 first reaction was to question the article's purpose but here, we get the reminder of that discourse through NAVY 2's defence when thinking about Pop music and the juxtaposition of women. NAVY 2 does not like that Beyoncé and Rihanna are compared and reverts this back to Beyoncé being "overrated". Although Beyoncé is not placed in competition with Rihanna, it is implied as a Rihanna stan, that Beyoncé is not as good as "an ordinary person" (general public, not in the fan base) would say she is. Therefore, inadvertently NAVY 2 reproduces *Is Rih Rih Bigger Than Bey?* from her social position as a Rihanna stan.

HIVE 2

"that's what started off the beef between the Hive and Navy, I think that whole thing because obviously – I think when I was younger and I was a Beyoncé fan and I heard that rumour I like instantly was like "OK. I don't like Rihanna." Because she cheated, like she did this. Then obviously you get older then you're like "that didn't happen" [laughs]. But I think that definitely had something to do with the pitting them against each other from the jump because there was that rumour going around. Even though she [Rihanna] was hella young, that is so weird"

"I feel like back in the day when the media – it was more the media, they made it out that they didn't like each other so obviously the fan bases are not gonna like each other because every little thing is gonna seem like shade. If Rihanna does this

its gonna seem--"Oh she's shading Beyoncé" so obviously it's a power thing. Like, they're are top of the game, Rihanna and Beyoncé so it's gonna be like – someone's gotta be better. Like no, they can't be on the same level, they can't just be like two black women winning, like someone's gotta be better, someone's gotta be the Queen. So obviously there's gonna be tension and also the public – the general public will pit them together as well. They'll be like "Oh no. Rihanna's better". I feel like the general public do see a lot of Rihanna more because she's more mainstream so in that case it does seem like Rihanna is better than Beyoncé but then the Hive is still on the "No! Never! Beyoncé's better" [laughs] so obviously...it's gonna make the two fan bases not like each other 'cause they'll always be played against each other"

HIVE 2 observes the origins of how Beyoncé and Rihanna came to be placed in competition with each other and acknowledges that “when I was younger and I was a Beyoncé fan and I heard that rumour I like instantly was like "OK. I don't like Rihanna."” The rumour that Jonathan Hay (former publicist) had started in a press release to promote a 17-year-old Rihanna in 2005, made HIVE 2 dislike Rihanna because in defence of Beyoncé the view was that Rihanna was ‘the other woman’ in the Beyoncé/Jay-Z relationship. We see this type of discourse in InTouch Weekly’s *Did Rihanna Come Between Jay Z and Beyoncé?* (2015). Therefore, the trajectory of this rumour travelling from a press release to the reason that HIVE 2 initially disliked Rihanna, shows once again the interposition of media discourses in socially constructing Beyoncé and Rihanna’s juxtaposition (competition, hierarchy, dichotomy). HIVE 2 talks about getting older and realising that “that didn’t happen” and why she thinks this rumour came about – “I think that definitely had something to do with the pitting them against each other from the jump” – it was about juxtaposing two

Black women from the start. This is how MRWaSP/neoliberal capitalistic social systems gain monopoly over Black/Brown labour and fan labour (because it is free) too. What we have is free labourers (fans) doing the work and performing the labour of the juxtaposition (advocacy, fan base rivalries) with the incentive of social capital. The interposition of entertainment/celebrity media discourses is further expanded upon by HIVE 2:

“...it was more the media, they made it out that they didn't like each other so obviously the fan bases are not gonna like each other because every little thing is gonna seem like shade”

We see that in HIVE 2's experience she saw that the media initially “made out that they didn't like each other” and as an ‘obvious’ result “the fan bases are not gonna like each other”.

NAVY 3

A lot of Beyoncé's fans obviously don't along with Rihanna fans and like vice versa [...] With the Beyhive and the Navy I just see people arguing constantly like oh "Rihanna's copying Beyoncé, Beyoncé's copying Rihanna. Rihanna's better, Beyoncé's better" They just argue, argue all the time about like who's better [...] I just see it all the time.

NAVY 3 confirms the Hive/Navy fan consensus that the Hive and the Navy do not get along because Beyoncé and Rihanna are juxtaposed which leads to “people arguing” – “Rihanna's copying Beyoncé, Beyoncé's copying Rihanna. Rihanna's better, Beyoncé's better”. This observation points towards fans reproducing this juxtaposition (“copying”) and the contrasting effects of hierarchy, competition and dichotomy. Advocacy in this way is also a form of labour along with promotional, content and

love(bor); in fact, advocacy and defence of one's favourite artist can encompass all of these forms of labour, and more importantly it is free labour.

Forms of Fan Labour: Promotional, Content and Love(bor)

Free labour, in which fans replace paid work such as promotional work (advertising, advocacy), the work of publicists (e.g., 'damage control') and content creators (e.g., via Instagram, TikTok, fancams), are incentivised by proximity to the object of fandom (Beyoncé or Rihanna). This proximity transfers into social and cultural capital and enhances the stans' social status within the fan base. In terms of Love(bor), fans initially invest their love in the object of fandom, their cultural productions and products in order to gain this proximity, however the surplus value from their investment is extracted into the means of production. As James puts it – "leisure and pleasure are fully integrated into the means of production" because stans have entered and invested in the space and the neoliberal conditions of that space, for example, the neoliberal ecology of pop culture (entertainment industry, entertainment/celebrity news, social media, digital fan communities, advertising etc.) (2015: 182; Marx, 1978). NAVY 1 demonstrates all forms of this fan labour; how one has invested in gaining proximity to Rihanna, how that get integrated into the means of production and how that is exploited as free labour by Rihanna's team:

NAVY 1 – PROMOTIONAL/CONTENT/LOVEBOR

*“The first time I actually met her was at the Fenty Beauty launch—like I actually didn't meet until like quite late. Like a lot of people were surprised I hadn't met her by that point but I think it's because I was like younger than like some—some of you guys like you{SB} and like {Laura}, you're like 5 years older or something compared to me so obviously like—like Rihanna's career—like a 5 year age gap, **you can like go and like Stan for her and stuff like that, whereas like at the time when it was the LOUD era and stuff like that, I was way too young to like go and travel and wait outside her hotel. My parents would not let me do that. When I got older, when I turned like 16-17, that's when I started going to travel to see her and stuff but...**”*

My own role participating in the Navy allows NAVY 1 to recall memories of when he was younger watching us participate and practice stanning. As a younger fan wanting to invest love(bor) into stanning for Rihanna, we were his examples of *how* to socially practice stanning and love(bor). Our own love(bor) investments manifested into the stanning practices of, for example, making sure we were at the front row of concerts (this is *hard work* in itself as we will see later with HIVE 1), waiting outside of concert venues and hotels to meet Rihanna and following Rihanna to events such as interviews with BBC Radio. At times we would be in the background of Rihanna's paparazzi photographs after we had greeted her. Other younger fans saw this and wanted to adopt and follow on from that practice; this is not something I realised until I conducted this interview. NAVY 1 notes, comparing his own stanning to ours, how “a lot of people were surprised I hadn't met her by that point” because of the labour he

had perform online – i.e., having social media pages solely dedicated to promoting and capturing anything Rihanna and where Rihanna had followed him, liked his pictures, sent private messages, for instance. He had already been conferred status by stanning online and being visibly in online proximity to Rihanna, however the goal of this proximity is to meet their favourite artist in person, to be pictured with them in person and to physically interact with them in person. We know this when NAVY 1 says, “you can like go and like Stan for her and stuff like that, whereas like at the time when it was the LOUD era and stuff like that, I was way too young to like go and travel and wait outside her hotel”. As we see below however, NAVY 1’s love(bor), promotional and content labour pays off (incentive):

“...the first time I actually met [Rihanna] was in 2017 at the Fenty Launch in [redacted] at [redacted]. I got like invited to that event because my Instagram page, Fenty Beauty had seen it and they were "Oh, he's got a lot of followers" so obviously I'd be like good for promotion and stuff like that so they like messaged me and Fenty Beauty messaged me and asked me for like a list of all the biggest Rihanna fans in the UK and I sent them like a massive list with like loads of Rihanna fans names on. They must have gone through all them, like just picked ones that they thought would be good for that event. Obviously because I was like the person that they asked to like get that list and like sort it all out they like wanted me to be there obviously. So the first time that I met her at the Fenty Beauty launch, it was like so surreal, honestly like seeing her so close to you—when it's on stage it's like obviously amazing which it's like far away from you but like when she's stood directly next to you—like literally you can

touch her arm and talk to her [laughs] it's just like crazy, honestly. She was like— she was like walking round where the Fenty Beauty stuff was, like all downstairs, and I was doing a livestream on my Instagram and that's when she first noticed me like in the area. She like pointed at my like "Oh, oh shit!"—she was like "Oh shit!" And I was like oh yeah "It's me {NAVYUK1}" and she was like "Oh shit!" And like blowing kisses to me, like pointing at me and stuff. And like that was just like the best feeling ever because like even though like I knew that she recognised me from like—like I knew that she knew who I was from Twitter and Instagram but for her to like definitely know who I was in person was like a big—like it was a good feeling for her to actually be able to recognise me in [...]"

Here is where stans and the surplus value produced from their stanning gets fully integrated into the means of production; where stans are integrated as free labourers for large corporations like Fenty Beauty (Fenty Corp. and LVMH – luxury conglomerate). To keep fans invested in stanning, these corporations must invite fans “onto the music industry ranch”; fans must be given incentives and the feeling that they are a part of their favourite artists’ team (except they are working for free). For NAVY 1 the incentive for all of his online work is “I got like invited to that event because my Instagram page”; getting invited to be in close proximity to Rihanna is an incentive, a conferring of stan status and can be transferred into a form of capital. It is because of the labour he has performed (on Instagram) that gets NAVY 1 an invite in his view; this is free labour to go from a fan as a part of an “undifferentiated mass” on the “ranch” to getting invited to the Fenty party on the industry “ranch” (Thornton, 2005; Stanfill, 2019: 11). NAVY 1 is also very aware of why he was invited – “Fenty Beauty had seen it and they were "Oh, he's got a lot of followers" so obviously I'd be like good for

promotion” – they chose him because of how many followers he had on Instagram and would post about the event and, therefore the product itself (promotional/content labour). NAVY 1 becomes an unpaid promoter at his own economic expense (e.g., travel to the event, providing his own accommodation, food etc.) but the close proximity to Rihanna and the chance to meet her has all to do with the initial investment of love(bor) so it is an honour to be invited; there is proximity, capital, social status and the chance to meet someone you admire to be gained (part of efangelism). NAVY 1 is asked by Fenty Corp. to gather a list names of Rihanna fans to which, “They must have gone through all them, like just picked ones that they thought would be good for that event. Obviously because I was like the person that they asked to like get that list and like sort it all out they like wanted me to be there obviously”. What this shows is that Fenty Corp. curates which stans get to be invited into the party on the industry “ranch” (conferred status) and it is those stans who perform and display promotional, content labour and love(bor) complicitly (with capitalistic neoliberal values), and most frequently, attracting other fans (followers) to perform in the same way. This is how fandom practices that ‘make sense’ are being “co-opted and optimized for industry ends”, for neoliberal capitalism (Stanfill, 2019: 146).

*“[...] it was a good feeling for her to actually be able to recognise me in person like outside of pictures, even though she'd seen me at concerts and stuff she's like pointed at me in the crowd and like waved, sometimes it's like what if she wasn't waving at me. She could've been waving at someone around me even though I know she was waving at me like that thought is still in my head. But like **when she saw me there she like definitely knew who I was, I was like Oh thank God! It's all like paid***

off. She does know who I am 'cause I always worry like what if she doesn't recognise me. Do you get that feeling?"

I did. The above describes NAVY 1's in-person interaction with Rihanna and his double-takes at the front row of concerts wondering if Rihanna was actually waving to him. The memory of this proximity is a thought that "is still in my head"; the recognition is a reward for the love(bor) initially invested in fandom. When NAVY 1 realises that Rihanna does know who he is, "I was like 'Oh Thank God!' It's all like paid off." – "it's" is all the love(bor) and fan labour through practices such as advocacy and promotion that has been invested throughout their fandom. The payoff is recognition (perceived as 'love' back), capital (social, cultural) and social status (especially within the fan base).

During HIVE 1's interview we watch content (labour) that she had created with other members of the Hive, documenting their days at Beyoncé concerts. We talked about the events in the video and HIVE 1 describes the planning involved in queuing up to ensure they all were the closest member of the audience to Beyoncé (proximity). Front row is an important space in music fandom. The occupation of this space is of utmost importance because this where space can reflect a "visibly elite fraction" of the fan base; the stans who occupy this space want to be the most visible and in closest proximity to Beyoncé and/or Rihanna, as to set themselves apart from the general audience (Sandvoss, 2005: 61; Duffet, 2013: 239). Going to concerts, knowing and singing all of the lyrics and wanting proximity to Beyoncé is a part of the love(bor) involved in the practices it takes to 'stan' (as a verb).

HIVE 1 – LOVE/CONTENT LABOUR

[both of us watch HIVE 1's Vlog on YouTube during the interview]

"...so we got up and we wanted to be the first ones in line so we wanted to get there for like 7am so as you can see from the video it was cold, it was dark, it was everything what's not very pleasant and we made our way to – think it was the NEC or the LG arena in [redacted] and we basically just queued up outside all day[...]

[...] we didn't want to be queueing so early because we had early entry tickets where we paid money to get an upgrade–let in the venue earlier but because we seen on Twitter that other fans were gettin' there at X time then we were like "Ok well we're gonna have to get there at that time too" because we wanted to be at the front so then it became a thing where we would be there from like 6-7am. It was tiring though because sometimes it was like we'd have a show in Manchester the next day or London...so it's like you'd leave that show and then one of the girls she would drive down–get in our hotel–we'd be back up in 4 hours...to go and do it all over again. I think the worst one was Chime For Change...in London because we camped overnight in a tent because we booked a hotel by Twickenham stadium but we seen on Twitter once again that people were camping so we were like "well...we don't wanna risk not being front row" so we set up camp and camped as well...and that was one thing I said I would never ever do"

HIVE 1 and others in the Hive fan base put a great deal of hard work into making sure they occupy the front row space – “we got up and we wanted to be the first ones in line so we wanted to get there for like 7am so as you can see from the video it was cold, it was dark, it was everything what's not very pleasant [...] we basically just queued up outside all day”. The concert, as in the time Beyoncé would start performing, was not until around 8/9pm; the practice of queuing, the thought, timing and planning lasts as long as the tour does (according to which leg of the tour it is), which could be an entire week of concerts. As HIVE 1 notes, these love(bor) practices cost money; travelling by car across the country, buying early entry tickets (more expensive than general admission), booking hotels (sometimes not stayed in if it means missing out on a front row space) and going to multiple concerts on a single leg of a tour. In order to practice stanning you must have economic capital but also the social and cultural capital to acquire information about how to, for instance, occupy front row, being in close proximity to Beyoncé and her team as demonstrated when HIVE 1 says, “we paid money to get an upgrade–let in the venue earlier but because *we seen on Twitter that other fans were gettin' there at X time then we were like "Ok well we're gonna have to get there at that time too"* because we wanted to be at the front so then it became a thing where we would be there from like 6-7am (my emphasis). There is also an element of competition because “other fans” were getting to the concert venue earlier to occupy front row. In order to save this space, the Hive has to be there before everyone else. The Hive essentially go on tour with Beyoncé and it is a time where they bond over Beyoncé because love(bor) is about the “*search for community to unabashedly love something*” and “*remains a search for community*” (Hellekson, 2015: 125). But it is also hard work that is “vulnerable to being co-opted”,

commodified and exploited as we saw with NAVY 1's story. Love(bor) is transferred to other forms of labour such as content labour (e.g., vlogs), promotional labour (e.g., promoting an event and/or product) and efangelism (e.g., "Do you get that feeling?").

Beyoncé and Rihanna's Juxtaposition

Towards the end of the interviews, we talk about what their general thoughts on the Beyoncé/Rihanna comparisons in the media (entertainment/celebrity/pop music media discourses). These are the responses that stood out when conducting my analysis because the fans talk about a range of topics such as other women in pop music, how Beyoncé and Rihanna should not be compared, and also the reproduction Beyoncé and Rihanna's juxtaposition. In this first response NAVY 2, compares Beyoncé and Rihanna's juxtaposition to other women in pop music as she tries to recall if they have been compared to one another as much as Beyoncé and Rihanna have:

NAVY 2

I mean you could take someone like Ariana Grande [...] You don't see Ariana getting compared to anyone. I don't see anyone anyway. [...] Definitely not. I don't see anyone else getting compared other than, obviously, Nicki Minaj and Cardi B but they fuel that to then be compared. I feel like maybe they're rappers...they're separate 'cause I feel a lot of the women

rappers do get compared to each but in terms of pop, I don't think anyone gets compared [...]

NAVY 2 makes an interesting distinction between Ariana Grande, pop music, Nicki Minaj and Cardi B as rappers. What she feels is that “a lot of the women rappers do get compared to each [other] but in terms of pop, I don't think anyone gets compared”. The women rappers in this scenario are two Black Caribbean women (Dominican and both Trinidadian) who grew in New York City (boroughs of the Bronx and Queens). Although the dispute between Minaj and Cardi did have some truth to it (Hunt, 2018; Montrose et al, 2018), the distinction made with Ariana Grande (of Italian descent) suggests that race-gender does play a factor in these juxtapositions. This is expanded upon in the next two quotes:

if you think of Dua Lipa, people like that. Katy Perry? Lady Gaga? You don't see them get compared at all, not that I see. And they do similar things. Like Lady Gaga, she's very successful, she doesn't get compared but – honestly I wish I knew an answer as to why they do get compared. But I do just think it's because they're known so widely and I think it's because they're so successful, that's why they get compared and it's almost like a competition.

Taylor Swift does get a lot of hate. I don't like her personally. I don't like her at all. But they don't. They don't at all like...If you think–say you ask someone, like an ordinary person, who does Rihanna get compared to I'm pretty sure they'd say Beyoncé whereas–who's does Ariana Grande get compared to...don't know.

Dua Lipa, Katy Perry, Lady Gaga, Taylor Swift along with Ariana Grande are all white women. The only four women that NAVY 2 mentions that are in juxtaposition are Black women and descendants of enslaved Black people of the colonial era (i.e., Nicki Minaj, Cardi B, Beyoncé, and Rihanna). These juxtapositions are so ordinary, such the social *norm* in British and American society, that “say you ask someone, like an ordinary person, who does Rihanna get compared to I’m pretty sure they’d say Beyoncé”. NAVY 2 cannot pinpoint who the other women (the white women) are compared to, as a white woman pop music stan. But there is an omission of race and a concentration on popularity and success. Still, we are seeing Black women (not just Rihanna and Beyoncé) all over the entertainment industry (including sports) – e.g., Serena Williams/Naomi Osaka – being juxtaposed *as spectacle* when “they’re so successful, that’s why they get compared and it’s almost like a competition.”. Competition is generated to keep monopoly over Black women’s labour, especially affective labour (resilience discourse – overcoming based on success and merit) to put them back to *work* (Black women’s work of affective labour of resilience). Juxtaposition maintains monopoly over Black/Brown women’s labour for the ideological and economic profit of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy.

HIVE 1 finds Beyoncé being juxtaposed with Rihanna frustrating and does not want Rihanna being put “next to Beyoncé”:

HIVE 1

“I like Rihanna being kept in her lane [...] Just don’t put her next to Beyoncé. I think for me just take Rihanna for what she is – I

don't mind people's preference but don't try and like tell me Rihanna is better than Beyoncé...like you can prefer her but she is not better than her."

HIVE 1 is particularly unsettled by the hierarchies that media discourses and Rihanna fans who hierarchize Beyoncé and Rihanna as she says "I don't mind people's preference but don't try and like tell me Rihanna is better than Beyoncé...like you can prefer her but she is not better than her". This statement is also a part of defense and advocacy when faced with a potential threat to Beyoncé's social status within pop music as a result of juxtaposition (e.g., competition) (music industry as an imaginary monarchy and/or meritocracy). HIVE 1 wants Rihanna to be "kept in her lane" away from Beyoncé (in her own lane). HIVE 2 shares a similar view and also expands on her appreciation for both women in the space that they hold as successful Black women in the music industry and popular culture:

HIVE 2

"I feel like Beyoncé's more sensible. Rihanna is more wild. Like she is more like--she encourages you more to be like sexy, like to own your sexiness, to know that you're attractive. I feel like Rihanna has more to do with confidence so I would look up to Rihanna for you know – her Instagram's called BadGalRiRi like c'mon now [laughs]...

*I don't think they have anything in common other than **the fact that they're both black women so I feel like they are always***

compared but I feel like every time I know a black woman comes into the industry they're being compared to Beyoncé or to Rihanna. Like if they make popping music it's like "Oh she's tryna be the new Rihanna. She makes R&B music so trying to be the new Beyoncé"

And like I said they've got nothing in comparison other than the fact that they're both black women so I don't know why they can't just let these two black women be great like...? There's room for both them. There's only two of them. Only two of them!

While predominantly stanning for Beyoncé, HIVE 2 does like Rihanna and along with other Black female artists who she admires. HIVE 2 makes an interesting distinction with, “I feel like Beyoncé's more sensible. Rihanna is more wild”. In the critical discourse analysis above we see that that this juxtaposition is one that is socially constructed repeatedly as spectacle and entertainment in celebrity/entertainment media discourses (via the articles under analysis). Beyoncé is “sensible”, “classy” and “dignified”: Rihanna is “wild” and “out of control” (Lieb, 2018: 75; Wortham, 2012; Bierra, 2012: 105). Nonetheless, we see that Rihanna’s persona has an impact on HIVE 2’s Black-mixed woman identity which also reflects a part of herself in which Rihanna “encourages you more to be like sexy, like to own your sexiness, to know that you're attractive. I feel like Rihanna has more to do with confidence so I would look up to Rihanna for you know...”. For HIVE 2, she finds freedom and encouragement to be “sexy, like your own sexiness” and “confidence” as a Black woman vicariously through Rihanna; this is also a form of fictive kinship. However, the juxtaposition still exists and

this where our embodied insight become “haunted by specters of stereotypical, grotesque representation and performances” (hooks, 1992). We see this HIVE 2’s next response where she says:

“the fact that they're both Black women so I feel like they are always compared but I feel like every time I know a Black woman comes into the industry they're being compared to Beyoncé or to Rihanna. Like if they make popping music it's like "Oh she's tryna be the new Rihanna. She makes R&B music so trying to be the new Beyoncé”

HIVE 2 feels that the reason for pop music culture’s comparison of Beyoncé and Rihanna’s is because “they’re both Black women”. She goes further to say that “every time” a Black women comes “into the industry”, as in come into the music industry and hyper-visibility within the neoliberal ecology of pop cultural discourses like in the spaces Beyoncé and Rihanna are visible in, “they’re being compared to Beyoncé or to Rihanna”. Akin to this statement by HIVE 2, the R&B singer, Tinashe, told the Guardian in 2017 that “There are hundreds of [male] rappers that all look the same, that sound the same, but if you’re a black woman, you’re either Beyoncé or Rihanna. It’s very, very strange” (Cragg, 2017) – and it is this which also coincides with how NAVY 2 cannot pinpoint or imagine the comparison of white women pop stars such as Ariana Grande, Dua Lipa and Taylor Swift but can only name other pairs of Black women who she has seen being juxtaposed. Black women are juxtaposed (placed in competition, hierarchy, dichotomy) as they enter popular music culture and we see that in recent examples in reality-TV based competition music shows such as the VH1 series *Signed* (2017), and older cinematic examples such as *Carmen Jones* (1954), *Imitation of Life* (1934) and *The Devil’s Daughter* (1934). In each of these examples, the juxtaposition of Black women is present. The aim of MRWaSP (multi-racial white

supremacist patriarchy) is to essentialize Black women as *spectacle* into categories – “if they make popping music it's like "Oh she's tryna be the new Rihanna. She makes R&B music so trying to be the new Beyoncé” – other Black women (the participant, Black women entertainers) are inserted into an operation of *either/or* Beyoncé/Rihanna, Naomi Campbell/Tyra Banks, Serena Williams/Naomi Osaka, Nicki Minaj/Cardi B, Lil' Kim/Foxy Brown, just to name some Black women who have been juxtaposed through entertainment, as entertainment. HIVE 2 then goes onto determine that:

“they've got nothing in comparison other than the fact that they're both Black women so I don't know why they can't just let these two Black women be great like...? There's room for both them. There's only two of them. Only two of them!”

In other words, there is a circumscription – “There’s only two of them” – on how Black women can perform in entertainment because “if you’re a black woman, you’re either Beyoncé or Rihanna” when entering a hyper-visible space (i.e., entertainment industry). HIVE 2 questions why Beyoncé and Rihanna cannot occupy the same space without being placed in competition – “I don’t know why they can’t just let these two Black women be great”. Beyoncé and Rihanna are Black post-feminist subjects; they are light-complexioned (socially and economically profitable in complexion lore due their proximity to whiteness), and because of colourism and complexion lore, which sees them as more desirable, they are more likely to be the *only* Black women to occupy the pop music space in popular consciousness and any other Black women who enters that space is then essentialized and categorized into the Beyonce/Rihanna Juxtaposition.

Conclusion: Analysis of the Beyoncé/Rihanna Juxtaposition and Fan Interviews

There are multiple themes these research findings discuss; Juxtaposition, Respectability Politics, Resilience Discourse, the archetypal stereotypes of the bad-black-girl/tragic-mulatta and SBW/Aspirational Figure – and the interposition of entertainment media discourses on the social practices of fans – and how fan practices such as Stan Wars and other forms of fan labour are in negotiation and maintain the Beyoncé/Rihanna juxtaposition through consumption and love(bor). Through the Critical Discourse Analysis of entertainment media discourses, we find that juxtaposition is a technique of power that places Rihanna and Beyoncé side by side (i.e. via text production, the manipulation of images, social practices of fans) that has contrasting effects (i.e., competition, dichotomy, hierarchy). Throughout the analysis, we see that aspects of Beyoncé and Rihanna’s mediated conduct, as in, their public private selves (i.e. what the celebrity presents to the public of their private lives) and transgressive intimate selves (i.e. an exposure of the celebrity’s ‘true’ personality), which are used to socially construct narratives and, specifically, archetypal stereotypes of Black women.

Beyoncé and Rihanna become *affective amplifiers* for one another in interchangeable ways where they are “put to work”, or rather, their public/private/transgressive selves are put to work through (controlling) discourse and images in popular culture including

entertainment, celebrity and pop music discourses on the culture in these findings. I chose to analyse articles because they are written *for* entertainment and *about* entertainment. They are written to reflect the culture such as the social relationships of celebrities and the surveillance and measurement of music, performance and popularity. These articles tell us what is going on in the market place (i.e. popular culture) so “*Is Rih Rih Bigger Than Bey?*” is actively incited to generate competition through juxtaposition; this is what regulates and organizes the racialised-gendered affective labour in neoliberal capitalism and, furthermore, it is an economic rationale that is a “formal game between inequalities”. Beyoncé and Rihanna’s juxtaposition “will only appear and produce its effects under certain conditions which have to be carefully and artificially constructed. This means that pure competition is not a primitive given” – such an economic rationale has to be incited and socially constructed in view of an audience as entertainment and for the subjectification of the rationale; not just social ideologies but the actual economic rationale itself (Foucault, 2008: 115-120). Juxtaposition is not natural, it is a hands-off form of social management; it is no longer ‘divide and rule’ but juxtapose, incite competition, and watch and consume for leisure as if it was a given. There are social intermediaries – journalists, pop culture writers and music reviewers – writing within the frames of competition, hierarchy and dichotomy (as contrasting effects of juxtaposition) as we see in these findings.

Generated through juxtaposition, there are cultural tropes of Rihanna and Beyoncé that are reminiscent of the virgin/whore dichotomy within the politics of respectability. However, we also see Resilience Discourse and the affective labour of resilience come into play. Through their mediated conduct: music, performance, products, public/private and transgressive intimate selves in entertainment/celebrity discourse,

Beyoncé and Rihanna are expected to perform the affective labour of resilience – they are expected to *overcome* the archetypal stereotypes which already cast them in “a room made crooked by the stereotypes about Black women as a group” (Harris-Perry, 2011a: 35). This is how Beyoncé and Rihanna’s positionalities change within discourse; the controlling images of them are flexible like neoliberal processes are deregulatory and so we see archetypal stereotypes dressed up as competition, ‘choice’, ‘preference’ or ‘concern’ between individuals. We also see that within juxtaposition Black women are produced as toxic so that another Black woman can be resilient through archetypal stereotypes such as the Tragic-Mulatta/bad-black-girl and the *Strong-Black-Woman*. The juxtaposition of Black women in entertainment media discourses (including Beyoncé/Rihanna, Serena Williams/Naomi Osaka, Tyra Banks/Naomi Campbell, Nicki Minaj/Cardi B etc.) also generates racial shame as a race-gender imperative. There is evidence that the reporting on Rihanna and Beyoncé’s public/private/transgressive selves (whether true or not), places them in these social positions. In the National Enquirer’s *Beyoncé Sick of Trashy Rihanna* (National Enquirer, 2013), as explained by an “insider” according to the authors, we find that Beyoncé “doing her job” also includes supervising Rihanna, who is simultaneously “undoing” Beyoncé’s work to “empower women” with her “trashy”, “out-of-control” and “X-Rated” behaviour; Rihanna’s mediated conduct must be “held down” by a socially constructed Beyoncé to manage the shame Rihanna brings upon her and Jay-Z (Wade, 2013; Harris-Perry, 2011). Beyoncé is constructed as feeling shame and to be ashamed while Rihanna is constructed as embodying that shame; their social construction (juxtaposed archetypal stereotypes through discourse) generates “otherness” to recuperate Black women’s insufficient labour of *overcoming*, as in cleaning up MRWaSP’s misogynoir. This is a form of subjectification and disguised

through representational politics, 'inclusivity' and neoliberal mechanisms (i.e., competition).

For instance, Beyoncé and Rihanna are emblems of neoliberal success (i.e., celebrity) and this should say to the audience that because of that success; because they are present and hypervisible within a white supremacist capitalist patriarchal social system (i.e., the entertainment industry, popular culture and its media discourses), this should signify that misogynoir can be *overcome* through capitalism and resilience. Beyoncé and Rihanna are instrumentalized in a way that optimizes the archetypal stereotypes constructed of them in entertainment media discourses (i.e., surveillance instead of objectification and deduction). When we see writer Deino (2016) in "*Beyoncé Vs. Rihanna: The Queen Of Pop Vs. The Queen Of Flop*" ([Juxtaposition – 3](#)) make the distinction between "controversial video" and "revenge video" using Beyoncé's 2016 Superbowl performance and Rihanna's BBHMM music video as examples (performances which address race-gender politics) and supported by quotations from Rudy Guiliani (2016) and Barbara Ellen (2015), it reveals that these entertainment discourses (*for* and *about* entertainment and profit) are *reactionary* to Beyoncé and Rihanna's performances. These particular reactions focus on "their approaches" (performances), keeping the social equilibrium between "just as many supporters as haters" and their success (i.e., record and ticket sales, music charts). The reactions are not necessarily about the direct race-gender-sexuality based subjugation and objectification of Rihanna and Beyoncé, it is about harnessing and instrumentalizing their practices (which they are 'free' to do) through juxtaposition – a technique of power that has been actively incited to maintain monopoly over Black women's labour since (at least) the 17th century and as a wider colonial mechanism of social control (e.g.,

'divide and rule', "to create caesura") and leverage over the labour of colonised subjects *after* deregulation (e.g., emancipation from slavery, indentured labour). However, this technique is upgraded in a number of ways that I have found in the Beyoncé/Rihanna juxtaposition. Although the virgin/whore and Mammy/bad-black-girl dichotomies permeate the Beyoncé/Rihanna juxtaposition, there is the new respectability politics of *overcoming* that operates at a post-cinematic and deregulatory level; at the level of capitalism through Resilience discourse (James, 2015: 96-97).

One of these ways is by breaking the fourth wall. The article "*Beyoncé Vs. Rihanna: The Queen Of Pop Vs. The Queen Of Flop*" (Deino, 2016: Juxtaposition – 3) ends with a question: "At the beginning of the decade, both Beyoncé and Rihanna were the biggest names in the music industry. Six years later, it appears that only Beyoncé has survived Do you think Rihanna can make a comeback? Let us know comments section". Other articles under analysis such as "*Digital Diary: Rihanna and Beyoncé Define the Social Web Spectrum*" (Wortham, 2012: [Juxtaposition – 2](#)) also ask multiple questions of the reader: "Will you be a Beyoncé, and present a carefully groomed version of yourself to the Web? [...] Or will you take Rihanna's road and throw caution to the wind, baring your life, your friends and occasionally, your unmentionables?". Headlines such as "*Is Rih Rih bigger than Bey?*" (Jones, 2011: [Juxtaposition – 1](#)) asks the audience the question. The fourth wall is broken as the audience is invited to participate in the discourse by the author and asked for their *reaction* to the discourse put before them. It is asking the audience to participate in the means of production (juxtaposition) of the discourse. If we think about cinematic processes which James (2015: 98) discusses at length, in terms of early Hollywood cinema such as Carmen

Jones (Carmen/Cindy Lou), the Imitation of Life (Delilah/Peola) and the Devil's Daughter (Sylvia/Isabelle), the juxtaposition of Black women (used to generate and embedded with archetypal stereotypes) is about the audience 'gazing' but here the audience is addressed as "you", "yourself", "your friends", "your life", "Do you think" and they are provided digital polls to answer to measure their opinion (Hewett, 2012: [Juxtaposition – 4](#)) – the audience has been 'freed' up from behind the fourth wall with a 'choice'. However, that choice is circumscribed through "Hot or Not?", "Beyoncé or Rihanna: who is the undisputed Queen of Pop?", and "ask yourself: "Would I rather be married in a 'comfortable' lifestyle or be an independent bad bitch taking the world by storm?" (Hewett, 2012; Power, 2016: [Juxtaposition – 5](#); Mantz, 2015: [Resilience Discourse – 1](#)). The audience reaction and consumption are optimized and put to work in reproducing the juxtaposition of Black women. The race-gender-sexuality based tropes embedded and generated through juxtaposition are superimposed by the visible artifice of juxtaposition and the invite to participate in it through social interaction. This undermines the constructed-ness of misogynoir and the technique of power used to produce it (juxtaposition) because then we also are asked to focus and measure how, for instance, Rihanna and Beyoncé are *overcoming* violence and learning "from that pain" (Hopper, 2012). We are asked to measure their resilience in already existing white supremacist capitalist patriarchal structures, especially when they destabilise the "normal" race-gender-sexuality performances expected of them (e.g., "BBHMM", Beyoncé's 2016 Superbowl performance, and "***Flawless") because this is also how insufficient affective labour is recuperated.

The stories in these articles can also be arbitrary such as comparing music videos, songs and performance that were not released in the same year to juxtaposing how

well they manage and discipline their bodies through fitness and diet. Fans even point out this arbitrariness in the articles they interpret: “*the two topics they don’t even go together [...] How are we comparing that?*” ([HIVE 2, Interviewee](#)) and “*I definitely think that they try to take anything and run with it to find something to make an article about*” ([NAVY 2, Interviewee](#)). This arbitrariness also undermines the constructed-ness of misogynoir, further entrenches it and naturalizes it. But paradoxically this is the “very point”; “the smallest thing can be blown up” (NAVY 2, Interviewee) such as how they are dressed, how they respond to paparazzi, their family lives, and how they use social media. Such features about their lives are amplified and loosely applied to their juxtaposition through discourse. The features of their public/private/transgressive selves are juxtaposed incoherently “yet immediately legible to anyone” including Rihanna and Beyoncé’s fans; this is the functional irrelevance noted by Van Dijk ([1991: 186](#)). This is because the articles are “controlled by the work’s immanent structure” which is juxtaposition (Shaviro, 2010: 74-80; James, 2015: 99).

As the constructed-ness of misogynoir is undermined by these post-cinematic processes, archetypal stereotypes originating from racist European constructions of Black womanhood during Caribbean and US slavery become prerequisites for the subjectification and agency of Rihanna and Beyoncé. Though these juxtapositions are arbitrary, a reoccurring theme (especially between the years 2011–2015) is that Rihanna is cast as bad-black-girl/Tragic Mulatta and Beyoncé is cast as the antithesis, SBW, in relation to one another. In the findings, we see these images in British and American discourses such as *Beyoncé Sick Of Trashy Rihanna* (National Enquirer, 2013: [Respectability Politics – 1](#)), *How Rihanna has become a victim her sleazy s-excess* (Graham, 2011: [Respectability Politics – 2](#)), *Beyoncé Tells Jay-Z Rihanna Isn’t*

Their Problem (Libby, 2012), *Rihanna v Beyoncé: Hot or not?* (Hewett, 2012: [Juxtaposition – 4](#)) and *Digital Diary: Rihanna and Beyoncé Define the Social Web Spectrum* (Wortham, 2012: [Juxtaposition – 2](#)). In the Metro's (UK) *Rihanna v Beyoncé: Hot or Not?* (Hewett, 2012), there are many oppositional descriptions of Rihanna and Beyoncé which I will list. Beyoncé's descriptions include; "oozed sexiness", "sophisticated", "delicate", "simply smouldering", "figure hugging", "yummy mummy" and "to support hubby Jay-Z". Rihanna's descriptions include; "trashy", "horrific", "left little to the imagination", "raunchy", "scraggily hair", "tacky", "dishevelled" and "Matt Cardle would steer clear". In the New York Times's *Digital Diary: Rihanna and Beyoncé Define the Social Web Spectrum* (Wortham, 2012: [Juxtaposition – 2](#)), Rihanna's descriptions include: "borderline unhinged", "completely nuts", "scantily clad", "unfettered messiness", "completely uncensored", "lashes out" and "wild child". Beyoncé's descriptions include: "cool", "poised", "gorgeous, glossy", "gazing wistfully", "charming", "palatable" and "easily digestible". We get these same images in earlier examples such as *The Devil's Daughter* (1939) set in Jamaica where we see Sylvia/Isabelle (Ida James and Nina Mae McKinney) juxtaposed as 'good' Jamaican girl who moved to America and her 'evil' Jamaican half-sister, and where Carmen Jones (1954) is violent and sexually threatening in juxtaposition to Cindy Lou, who seemingly adheres to the respectability of race-gender normativity (Zaire, 2016: online; Lefkovitz, 2017; Pilgrim, 2012: online). The aspect that remains the same in the generation of archetypal stereotypes, even in an upgraded post-cinematic sense with Beyoncé and Rihanna, is that these discourses are still "clustered around contradictory representations" as they were c. 1650 – 1838 and beyond (Bush, 2000: 762); even if white supremacist patriarchy is made multiracial the same race-gender hierarchies still exist underneath (MRWaSP).

The reproduction of misogynoir is not just about the reproduction of archetypal stereotypes; it is also about the reproduction of its “immanent structure” which is juxtaposition (Shaviro, 2010: 74-80). In interviews with Beyoncé and Rihanna fans there is the collapse of the economic and social sphere as this juxtaposition becomes a *means* of social interaction and where their “leisure and pleasure are fully integrated into the means of production” (James, 2015: 182). Demonstrated in the second half of my findings, there is the interposition of entertainment media discourses and I incorporate this interposition into the interview method with the use of article elicitation. As mentioned before, articles will give direct address to the audience in second person (e.g., “you”) and invite them to participate in Beyoncé and Rihanna’s juxtaposition. The results of this are evident through the participant’s responses. HIVE 1 and NAVY 1 reproduce the structure of the articles as they interpret them, while HIVE 2 and NAVY 2 offer critique of the structure as the structure (juxtaposition) “immediately legible to anyone”. Although “incoherent” to some fans, juxtaposition is still viewed as an inevitable and expected consequence of Rihanna and Beyoncé’s success. As NAVY 2 points out, the discourse (from entertainment media discourses) is “fuelling the two fan bases just by that title”. The economic collapses into the social as the discursive juxtaposition now transfers into a social competition between Beyoncé and Rihanna’s fan bases, the BeyHive and the Rihanna Navy (i.e., Stan Wars); this is the text trajectory of Beyoncé and Rihanna’s juxtaposition. From these responses, we can situate that fans point towards entertainment media discourses as the ‘fuel’ of the Beyoncé/Rihanna juxtaposition and as an interposition on their own fan practices, for instance, when HIVE 2 says “and I heard that rumour I like instantly was like “OK. I don't like Rihanna.” [...] it was more the media, they made it out that they didn't like

each other so obviously the fan bases are not gonna like each other". The social reproduction of the Beyoncé/Rihanna juxtaposition comes in the form of fan practices which encompass fan labour; advocacy and defence (Stan Wars), promotional, content and love(bor). These fan practices have always existed, but they are harnessed and optimized by neoliberal mechanisms.

One of the most visible ways neoliberal mechanisms harness fan practices is through advocacy and defence, which we see from the outset through HIVE 1 and NAVY 1 interpretations of the articles (Deino, 2016; Jones, 2011). When the articles express "A true measure of an artist's popularity is how well they're are selling concert tickets" (Deino, 2016) and "Is Rih Rih Bigger Than Bey?" (Jones, 2011) are answered with "she could release a tour tomorrow with no promotion and sell it out whereas Rihanna on the other hand, if Rihanna's not big in the charts at the time she struggles to sell her tickets" (HIVE 1, Interviewee) and "When I first saw the headline I thought yeah, Rihanna is bigger than Beyoncé [...] Like personally, I think Rihanna's more successful [...] Rihanna's achieved what Beyoncé achieved in a shorter amount of time so..." (NAVY 1, Interviewee). The same juxtaposing mechanisms are recycled through the advocacy and defence of the same Black women that are being juxtaposed. And it will come back on itself because *how can defending and advocating for a Black woman be racist? How is that racist? What does that have to do with colonialism?* etc. This is how fans' fannish practices are harnessed to generate the juxtaposition of Black women entertainers (at least). We know this when NAVY 2 lists white women entertainers who she does *not* see getting compared to each other in entertainment media discourses as opposed to Black Caribbean or American women entertainers

who she sees getting compared to each other. This reminds me of something Tyra Banks once said (E! True Hollywood Story: Tyra Banks, 2005):

“What’s sad is that the industry perpetuates like...a preconceived notion of divide and conquer. You know – ‘there’s only one top Black model and that’s Naomi’ – It’s hard because in order for me to be successful, the unspoken rule is that I have to kick somebody out”

This “unspoken rule” is juxtaposition as a “divide and conquer” technique of power that can be traced to the social ordering of slavery-colonial eras. Banks also said in *People* magazine that “With white models they don’t do that.” (Gliatto, 1994). NAVY 2 similarly says that “if you think of Dua Lipa, people like that. Katy Perry? Lady Gaga? You don’t see them get compared at all, not that I see. And they do similar things” (2019). There is a twenty-five-year gap between these observations. It shows again where the juxtaposition of Black women, specifically (misogynoir), in entertainment and fashion media discourses has been an enduring technique of power in the social ordering of Black women within MRWaSP and neoliberal capitalism. The communities digitally built around these women are also structured by the same neoliberal mechanisms, especially through their (free labour) practices. As we saw in Stan Wars, the juxtaposition of Beyoncé and Rihanna in entertainment/celebrity media discourses is the cause of “a lot of rivalry” between Beyoncé and Rihanna fans (HIVE 1, Interviewee). Additionally, this is where HIVE 2 conveys that “it was more the media, they made out they didn’t like each other so obviously the fan bases are not gonna like each other” – here we see where fan practices (that have always existed) are harnessed and optimized to (re)produce the Beyoncé/Rihanna juxtaposition

(particularly the structure) and, in turn and indirectly (because it is about having social intermediaries in-between), creating distance and making unintelligible the white supremacist capitalist patriarchy operating efficiently under the superimposition of neoliberal mechanisms. This facilitates the conditions in which misogynoir is generated in popular music culture.

There are also incentives for fans to keep reproducing the hierarchical and competitive social structures as fan practices and “fan valuation [...] are becoming marketized under neoliberalism” (Stanfill, 2019: 133). The optimization of their practices makes it easier for the entertainment industry to exploit and control fans, however, fans also gain forms of capital (social and cultural) through their proximity to Beyoncé and/or Rihanna and invitation “onto the music industry ranch” (2019: 11). Here is also where, forms of fan labour and the surplus value these practices produce are integrated into the means of production. For example, NAVY 1’s content labour and promotional labour for Rihanna is incentivized by an invitation to a Fenty Beauty party and meeting Rihanna herself. This proximity to Rihanna and invitation is also form a of social capital as for NAVY 1, meeting Rihanna means that the promotional, content labour and love(bor) has “all paid off” (NAVY 1). It is this invitation and love(bor) that keeps fans reinvesting in fandom and into the artist. Additionally, HIVE 1 and other Hive members travel the country during a Beyoncé tour in order to be close to Beyoncé and her crew, in turn, creating vlogs documenting their fan touring practices (content labour) and bonding as a community over their love(bor) and loyalty towards Beyoncé. However, fan investments of love(bor) are integrated into the competitive space of a neoliberal leisure as labour which in turn generates profits economically and ideologically for

neoliberal white supremacist capitalist patriarchy/MRWaSP (i.e., entertainment industries).

Ideologically speaking, like British colonisers exploiting the differences of colonial populations to weaken their competitive leverage through archetypal stereotypes (essentialism), thus upholding and exnominating whiteness, and maintaining white monopoly over Black/Brown labour; we see similar essentializing mechanisms at work when HIVE 2 says “the fact that they’re both Black women so I feel like they are always compared but I feel like every time I know a Black woman comes into the industry they’re being compared to Beyoncé or to Rihanna”. What this says is that Black women in entertainment must be competitive with each other in order to be successful (and resilient through competition on the shoulders other Black women who perform insufficiently resilient affective labour) and be ‘included’ in MRWaSP privilege (affective labour of resilience; capitalistic success); to be a neoliberal emblem of *overcoming* white supremacist patriarchal misogynoir and violence through capitalism. Competition thrives on inequality to where one has to stand on the shoulders of another, pushing them down further, to get through a deliberately-made small hatch (Crenshaw, 1989: 151-52). As HIVE 2 says “I don’t know why they can’t just let these two Black women be great” – but from slavery to now, “the anxieties of powerful groups” (no matter how successful or powerful you are as a Black woman in white supremacist capitalist patriarchy) have been reactionary in (re)enforcing archetypal stereotypes that put us back to work in a way that suits the service needs of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy (affective labour of resilient – ‘women’s work’) and this is about subdividing us to reduce power and therefore reduce the power of

resistance; to break apart and caesura Black women's womanist culture as a function of racism and misogyny.

HIVE 2 stresses an important point about the *limited space* in the entertainment industry (white supremacist patriarchal illusion and minimization of Black/Brown people much like being a 'minority' amongst whiteness) and simultaneously reflects my own anxiety and sadness about Black women being juxtaposed in entertainment media discourses, which is the reason why I began this research in the first place. As Black women fans of Black women we are the spectators most implicated in this spectacle of juxtaposition. We are both the descendants of enslaved African women that were taken to the Americas like Rihanna and Beyoncé are. Like Gerald Early "after all these years of watching fights, I was beginning to wonder how much I had left, how much my heart could stand it" because the Beyoncé/Rihanna Juxtaposition "injures the performers, and the culture injures the spectators most implicated in the performance" ([1989] 2012), 369; Wanzo, 2015: 4.5). In the next section, I will conclude the *Fandom, Pop Music, and the Reproduction of Race-Gender Inequalities*.

Chapter 4:

Conclusion: Fandom, Pop Music and The Reproduction of Race-Gender Inequalities

Fandom, Pop Music, and Reproduction of Race-Gender Inequalities has already generated new knowledge in the wider public conversation surrounding the power relations between neoliberal fan culture, pop music and relationships with celebrity; specifically Black women entertainers which fills a significant gap in Cultural Studies and Fan Studies which has been traditionally centred on white objects of fandom (Olutola, 2021, 2019; Buchanan, 2019; Wanzo, 2015). *Competition and Controlling images as the fuel for Beyoncé and Rihanna fandom fights* (Buchanan, 2019), was published in the international peer-reviewed journal, *Transformative Works and Cultures* (TWC). TWC publishes articles about media studies and fan communities from wide range of disciplines and approaches including feminism, queer theory and audience theory. My paper was included in their special issue on *Fan of Color, Fandoms of Color*, dedicated to expanding the genealogy of Black fandom scholarship and issues regarding the media representations of objects of fandom of colour. The paper was guest edited by Abigail De Kosnik (Associate Professor at Berkley, University of California at the Berkeley Centre for New Media and the Department of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies) and André Carrington (Associate Professor at Drexel University, Philadelphia in the Department of English and

Philosophy). The paper was an early contribution to the Black fan scholarship paradigm which I have built upon during this thesis, and discusses how media discourses juxtapose Rihanna and Beyoncé (among other Black women in popular culture such as Naomi Campbell and Tyra Banks) and how this intensifies animosity and anti-fandom. I argue that this leads to the reproduction of archetypal stereotypes of their object of fandoms, which may counteract any forms of Black woman solidarity that Rihanna and Beyoncé show towards one another. Since then, this paper has been used in *The Conversation* regarding the Beyoncé and the BeyHive, and Nicki Minaj and 'the Barbz' (Nicki Minaj's fan base) (Olutola, 2021 and 2019). The paper and research has also been used in open educational resources such as Lumen Learning which use this work to demonstrate how sociologists make use of various methods with conducting research centred on Black women performers like Beyoncé as sociological subjects (Lumen Learning, 2021). *Fandom, Pop Music, and the Reproduction of Inequalities*, as evidenced above, is needed and vital to understand and extract the current neoliberal white supremacist patriarchal processes operating within contemporary popular culture.

The Beyoncé/Rihanna juxtaposition is most of all a Black feminist concept that is intersectional, addressing racism, sexism and nationality (with respect to where Beyoncé and Rihanna were born and raised), and how their origins influence their cultural outputs. Equally, nationality (or regionality such as Caribbeanity) are used to understand and identify where racist-sexist controlling images of Black women develop (e.g., 'Mammy' is specific to the USA) – wherever European slavocracy took place and our ancestors were forced to go – the USA such as Alabama, Louisiana and Texas (i.e., Beyoncé references these US states as the origin of her parents in

'Formation', 2016), and the Caribbean, Barbados and Guyana (Rihanna's mother, Monica, is of Guyanese origin). In these regions during European slavocracy, the sexual ideology that developed was generated through the juxtaposition of white and Black women – virgin/whore (Carby, 1987: 25; Collins, 2000: 145: 266). Alongside the "Black Venus master narrative" of the 20th century, there is another juxtaposition played out in American cinema between the "Mammy" and the "bad-black-girl" (i.e., Jezebel, Tragic Mulatta) (Tate, 2015; Gilkes, 1983: 294). The politics of respectability are also structured by the juxtaposition of Black womanhood (via virgin/whore) as a *pushback* against white-ascribed hypersexualized stereotypes of Black women (Hammonds, in Price and Schildrick, 2017; Higginbotham, 1993; Hine, 1989: 912). In the theorization of the Beyoncé/Rihanna juxtaposition, the use of Black feminist (and anti-colonial) theory throughout this thesis has been indispensable and vital in addressing racism, sexism, heteropatriarchy and neoliberal capitalism in society at large and in analysing these intersections in entertainment media discourses, the music industry and popular culture. The visible artifice of juxtaposition and its contrasting effects (i.e., competition, dichotomy, hierarchy), however, are optimized rather than obscured, which undermines the constructed-ness of misogynoir due to the collapse of the economic and the social under neoliberalism (Bailey, 2014; Lemke, 2019; James, 2015). Juxtaposition and competition as an economic principle in neoliberal capitalism, there is always labour and a refusal/deferral of labour involved (e.g., insurrection, insufficient affective labour, Back-Chat, Disrespectability, refusal of service), and then there is a continuous and adaptable social ordering that can operate in various spaces but particularly deregulated spaces that offer a type of 'freedom' – e.g., neoliberal ecology of pop culture (entertainment industry, entertainment/celebrity news, social media, digital fan communities, advertising etc.) in order to recuperate

and reconfigure that labour and/or the loss of labour. These spaces can aid the generation of competition presented and circumscribed as 'choice' and 'preference' (e.g., *Who has rocked the MTV VMA red carpet better: Beyoncé or Rihanna?* Lubitz, 2016).

Beyoncé and Rihanna's success as Black women (with the privileges of complexion lore), their inclusion and presence at the top of the music industry, does not mean that white supremacist patriarchy does not operate the way it has operated since slavery, especially with both Beyoncé and Rihanna being descendants of slavocracy/plantocracy (US and Barbados); white supremacist capitalist patriarchy only adapts and upgrades itself with Black/Brown faces (MRWaSP) (James, 2015). In its diversion, such a system wants you to focus on the conduct of individuals (e.g., meritocracy, capital, resilience and choices). It is about how much *damage* as individuals we can endure and overcome as entertainment and at an ideological profit, normalizing the violence done by white supremacist capitalist patriarchy to Black women – it's still *our* job to clean up and get over it; get over the barriers and the obstacles (e.g., SBW). Archetypal stereotypes and their juxtapositions reposition Black women into labour through socially constructed narratives – e.g., Delilah/Peola, Carmen/Cindy Lou, Sylvia/Isabelle (cinematic) and, these narratives within entertainment/celebrity news which juxtapose Beyoncé and Rihanna based on their individual mediated conduct (post-cinematic). Centring Black women as postfeminist and post-racial subjects in this way is necessary for MRWaSP (multi-racial white supremacist patriarchy) because it is more efficient (and less expensive) for white supremacist patriarchy to hold up *some* Black women; ones who can be instrumentalized to uphold the ideology that white supremacist patriarchy is *not* racist

and sexist (misogynoir), through the mechanisms of neoliberal capitalism – resilience discourse, juxtaposition, deregulation. The socially constructed archetypal stereotypes within entertainment media discourses therefore are collapsed into economic terms (e.g., economic principles such as competition, which is then universalised in the social sphere) (Lemke 2019: 253). The values of “individualism, self-discipline, and merit” come to the fore when reading entertainment discourses, which, as we have seen in my findings, make underlying misogynoir unintelligible as the focus is then about individual conduct and the “immanent structure” within the discourse. This is how the misogynoir of the Beyoncé/Rihanna Juxtaposition is naturalised, how white supremacist patriarchy exnominates itself and maintains distance between the background conditions of (neo)colonialism and white supremacist capitalist patriarchy and the individual (i.e., including Beyoncé, Rihanna and the fan) (Bhandura, 2013: 236; Barthes, 1972).

In addition, my empirical data looks at the power relations and links between colonialism, Black women entertainers and the ecology of neoliberal pop music culture (i.e., entertainment/celebrity media discourses, entertainment industry and fandom); which as an area of study has been contributed to mainly through the Black feminist concepts [referenced](#) in this research. Concepts such as controlling images (Collins, 2000), I demonstrate have evolved with neoliberal capitalism through post-cinematic processes and resilience discourse which is my major and original contribution to the Culture Studies (James, 2015). Further to this I have expanded these understandings of controlling images in which mechanisms of social ordering (i.e., juxtaposition) have survived and adapted, not just in entertainment media discourses but how these mechanisms travel (i.e., text trajectories) through the social and are reproduced in a

way that is arbitrary and unintelligible as misogynoir – i.e., harnessing fan practices through competition within pop music fan culture – Stan Wars, advocacy/defence, promotion, production of content and love(bor). Fans are very much aware of the visible artifice of juxtaposition; it is inevitable and the social norm of two Black women entertainers/entrepreneurs. But it is a social norm that originates from racist-sexist forms of social ordering in slavery – the connection between colonialism, misogynoir and pop music fan culture has never been looked at in Fan Studies in particular. Making reference to this significant gap of researching Black women entertainers and their fan bases in Chapter 3 (Fandom and Fan Scholarship and Whiteness), including critical racial analysis to Fan Studies by way of Black women entertainers and their fan communities demands critical interrogation of how white supremacist patriarchy permeates fan culture. However, naming white supremacist patriarchy in any paradigm where whiteness is universal and default, removes the pleasures of exnomination where “names can be thrown back at them” (aca-fans), as in naming white supremacist patriarchy in a paradigm uproots white protection from being *seen* to be complicit white supremacist patriarchy and colonialization (Barthes, 1972: 138).

The exploration into how the music entertainment industry perpetuates the juxtaposition of Black women for economic and ideological profit is also another major aspect to take away from this research and it is important for Black Feminist paradigm to relook at controlling images in how cinematic processes upgrade with neoliberal processes in entertainment media discourses. Through the juxtaposition of Rihanna and Beyoncé in entertainment media discourses, their public/private/transgressive-intimate lives are instrumentalized to construct narratives based on archetypal stereotypes of Black women (originating from slavery). Juxtaposition of Black women

entertainers in entertainment media discourses is also a way to extract surplus value from them for the homeostasis (maintaining equilibrium) of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy (hooks, 1981). The surplus value produced in the entertainment media discourses in my findings consists of the affective labour of Resilience – “we liked doing damage to women, we now like to see women overcome that damage” (James, 2014: 120; Ziarek, 2012; Mulvey, 1975). The overcoming of “that damage” requires that Beyoncé and Rihanna to perform the overcoming of misogynoir through neoliberal capitalism – being able to manage oneself, being able to “*handle her business*”, while continuing to be of service (i.e., performing *overcoming* as spectacle through musical performances, music videos, public/private/transgressive self) “*and* maintaining a sense of self” (Springer, 2007: 252; Chatman, 2015). When Beyoncé and Rihanna fall short of this archetype, they become “every controlling image of Black women Patricia Hill Collins taught you about” through entertainment media discourses (Lewis, 2013). These post-cinematic controlling images are juxtaposed and used to shift Beyoncé and/or Rihanna back in her place to recuperate the affective labour that was lost through *ratchetness* (e.g., Beyoncé’s “Bow Down/Flawless”), Back-Chat (e.g., Rihanna’s “Bitch Better Have My Money” music video) and Disrespectability (e.g., Beyoncé Superbowl 2016 performance). What we see in the various media outlets such as Pitchfork, The Metro (UK), The National Enquirer, The Sun, and The New York Times, are Beyoncé and Rihanna juxtaposed to produce shame as a racial imperative when one is insufficiently resilient (e.g., overcoming an abusive relationship), not capitalizing on their hyper-visible pain – where there is the “expectation of the traditional survivors tale” for our consumption – and for being “in a ‘comfortable’ lifestyle” rather than visibly performing the affective labour of resilience as spectacle (Hopper, 2012; Mantz, 2015; James, 2015: 80-81). As neoliberal

emblems of success nevertheless, when either Beyoncé or Rihanna deliver “dull labor”, misogynoir comes through the narrative of the juxtaposition because it is in this that we see the lingering legacy of controlling images such as the “She Devil” and Jezebel (Hopper, 2012; Bush, 2000; Jordan-Zachery, 2009: 40); therefore, we see the continuum of white supremacist patriarchal and colonial archetypal stereotypes which intensify race–gender inequalities for Black women.

The triangulation of methods in this research (CDA, interviews and elicitation) helped in opening up multiple lines of inquiry. For example, how the Beyoncé/Rihanna Juxtaposition reinforces archetypal stereotypes of Black women through entertainment media discourses, how fans interpret these texts, how these discourses interpose on Beyoncé/Rihanna fan social practices, and how these texts have different trajectories that evolve through centuries. Nevertheless, in the design of this research I had considered other forms methodology such as focus groups and social media research via Twitter and Instagram. Being that my entry into Sociology and Cultural Studies was stimulated by my own online fandom on forums , BWBoard and Ultimate Rihanna/ Rihanna Daily, and Twitter (as an aca-fan), and fandom in offline spaces such as concerts, the main limitation of this research is my utilization of social media research methods analysing fandom and fan fiction message boards (e.g., ATRL and AO3), and/or conversation threads and tweets from Twitter. There is an opportunity here to explore yet another sociological, cultural and philosophical dimension to this research; for what I have laid out in this thesis is to be built upon.

For future research, I recommend that the critical analysis of juxtaposition as a racialized–gendered technique of power, that has evolved and upgraded from the

colonial 'divide and rule' "splitting" strategy (Hall, 1997), be methodologically explored through social media research; including the analysis of 'breaking news' platforms (e.g., The Shade Room, TMZ) on social media, especially on Twitter where digital fan communities' dwell and socially interact (Vis et al, 2018; Vis, 2013; Vis et al, 2016). Twitter as a fragmented "mix of news, information and comments, usually connected to current reality, but without an established order" needs to be recognized as an integral part of the everyday news cycle changing the way audience-participants read and discuss entertainment news discourses (Hermida, 2012: 2; Vis, 2013: 29). I recommend that the concept of juxtaposition as a racialized–gendered technique of power be developed through social media research, as one of my original contributions to knowledge is that the post-cinematic controlling images of Black women generated through juxtaposition in entertainment news media discourses, break the fourth wall; the audience is allowed to participate in this technique of power ([see Chapter 4: Conclusion](#)).

Saying this, the participatory aspect (article elicitation) of this research, *Fandom, Pop Music, and the Reproduction of Race-Gender Inequalities*, shows where fan interpretations of discourse, their knowledge and investment in the culture, when interviewed about their Beyoncé/Rihanna fandom, can be integral to the generation of data. Due to the lack of studies on the fan communities of Black women entertainers and Black women fans, this study lays the foundation for a new critical genealogy of Cultural Studies that encompasses an analysis of racism/sexism (e.g., misogynoir) in contemporary pop music culture, neoliberal capitalism and fan culture. Through considering the intersection of the fans of Black female pop stars, neoliberal race-gender politics and media discourses, I explore a neglected area in an interdisciplinary

fan studies paradigm which includes cultural studies, sociology, gender studies, feminist theory and media studies. Beyoncé and Rihanna's juxtaposition in popular music culture, including the juxtaposition's social trajectory into fan culture, reproduces a "veritable phantasmagoria of colonial history, nationalism, globalization and sexual politics" because the neoliberal mechanisms (e.g., juxtaposition, affective labour of resilience) under discussion are an evolution of the same colonial techniques of power (Russell, in Fulani, 2012: 300).

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Appendix

1. Interview Schedule

Go over information for consent form and consent form (to be signed).

Preliminary Demographic Questions

1. Age? Ethnic Background? Country of origin? Gender?
2. Who are you a fan of? Which fan base[s] are you apart of (or associate with)?
3. How long have you been a fan of [artist]?

Commence Interview

- If it's ok with you, I'd first like to go back to a time when you first heard or became aware of Rihanna/Beyoncé.
 - Do you remember where you were?
 - What stood out the most to you at that time about [artist]?
- When did you first start following [artist] properly? (When did you start stanning² for [artist]?)
- What was it about Rihanna that made think "OK, I'm a stan"?
- What is your favourite moment in Rihanna's career and what is your least favourite moment in Rihanna's career? And why?

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- When was the 1st time you met other fans that shared your love of [artist]?
 - How did you meet them?
 - How and how often do you interact with other fans?
 - What kind of things do you do together [as fan base]?

While 'stanning'(e.g. a concert, online) what do you think of casual fans, newcomers or people who 'stan' for someone else?

- Online: e.g. Twitter
- Offline: e.g. At a concert
- How do you and your [fan base/ fellow 'stans'] react to them?
- Tell me about the [fan base] [as a whole].
 - What makes you a [fan base member/ an [artist] stan] rather than just a fan apart of the general audience?
 - What kind of things do you/ other fans do in order to be in/ be apart the [fan base]? e.g. on Twitter and Instagram?

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- In general, how would you say the [fan base] get on with other fan bases? [Has there been any alliances or rivalries in the past?] Tell me more about that.
- How would you say the Hive and the Navy get on?

[Article Elicitation/Interpretive]

[Provide copy/link of article to go through]

Questions:

- Had you come across articles like this before?
- What did you think when you first saw the headline? (Or see headlines like these?)
- Within the article, what statement/opinion would you say stood out to you the most?
 - **What was it about this statement/opinion that made it stand out to you?**
 - **Did (topic of statement) affect (= change/confirm) your opinion of [Beyoncé & Rihanna] in any way? (How did it change from before?)**
 - The article suggests that the Beyoncé and Rihanna have two different approaches to controversy and feminism. What are your thoughts on this opinion? What do you think is different about their approaches?
 - **What do you think the pictures in the way that they present Beyoncé & Rihanna? (Is there anything that stands out to you about these pictures?)**
 - **How would say other Rihanna 'stans' [The Navy] would react to an article like this (an article comparing Beyoncé to Rihanna and vice versa)?**
 - **How do you think the Beyhive would react to an article like this?**

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So think back to 2016. It was the ANTI/Lemonade era. How did 'stans' react to them both releasing music at the same time?

- How do you feel about your *fave*³ [Beyoncé/Rihanna] being compared to [Beyoncé/Rihanna] in general?
- Why do you think the media compare them in this way?

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- Can you think of maybe an example where [Beyoncé/Rihanna] has inspired you to do something? (Maybe a "what would [Beyonce/Rihanna] do?" moment?)
 - How would you say [they/doing that] has impacted your life [in this/that way]?



2. Published Work

Competition and controlling images as the fuel igniting Beyoncé and Rihanna fandom fights

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[0.1] Abstract—Beyoncé and Rihanna, two of the most commercially successful black women of all time, have long been painted as rivals by the media, which in turn negatively affects the relationship between the women's fan bases, known respectively as the BeyHive and the Rihanna Navy. These controlling images of black women, which uphold the norm of competition in pop music fandom, dictate the production and dissemination of stereotypes of black women.

[0.2] Keywords—Advocacy; Hierarchies; Multiracial white supremacist patriarchy (MRWaSP); Neoliberalism

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[1] Chris Riotta (2016) touches the surface of the years-long rivalry between fans of pop artists Beyoncé and Rihanna, known as the BeyHive and the Rihanna Navy ([note 1](#)). As Riotta points out, Beyoncé and Rihanna are two of the most commercially successful black female artists of all time, and the media-constructed competition between them produces the problematic narrative in popular culture of pitting black women against each other. However, Riotta seems to make fans responsible for the construction of this narrative, concluding, "Fandoms, put it to rest. Go spread the good word of your queen in peace." As a black female Rihanna "stan" ([note 2](#)), I argue that there is a much larger picture to this narrative—one that was constructed not by fans but by the imperatives of the multiracial white supremacist patriarchy (MRWaSP) (James 2015; hooks [1994] 2006).

[2] Building on what Booth (2014, ¶1.3) describes as "a neoliberal turn in fandom," I first focus on the basic economic principle of competition. According to Foucault (2008, 120), competition is a "formal game between inequalities" that can only be actively produced. This production of competition is significant in

Beyoncé and Rihanna fandom, for it produces "their separation, their alignment, their serialization, and their surveillance" (Foucault 2004, 242) as black women in popular culture. Beyoncé and Rihanna are aligned this way in order to categorize black femininities into racialized archetypes that are then put to work by being juxtaposed. As Robin James, using the example of media-generated juxtaposed images of Barack Obama and Osama Bin Laden after the latter's execution, notes, "Some styles of blackness are conditionally incorporated within MRWaSP's privileged mainstream, they don't generate 'otherness' as efficiently as do newer, more exotic and unruly racial identities do" (2015, 154).

[3] The juxtaposition of Beyoncé and Rihanna within media discourses serves a similar purpose, but it also affects the ways their fans practice advocacy in defense of their favorite artist. Fans will defend their favorite entertainers adamantly, as well as "against other readings," as a way to authenticate their status within the fan base and to mutually recognize each other's shared passion (Sandvoss 2005, 105). This sociality—which, "at a collective level, display[s] constants that are easy, or at least possible, to establish" (Foucault 2004, 246), such as the constants that collectives are centered around a specific person and members of the collective will defend that person as a display of their dedication—makes sense in the practice of being a fan. Media discourses make competition the norm in fandom. An example of this norming is music award shows like those of iHeartRadio, MTV EMA, and BET, which introduce award categories such as "Best Fan Army," "Biggest Fans," and "FANdemonium," where fans must compete with each other and vote in order to be deemed the biggest fans (MTV 2017). Consequently, fans and stans perform the labor of placing black femininities in competition with one another by performing particular practices of advocacy—practices that may indeed constitute their fandom.

[4] The media-constructed Beyoncé-versus-Rihanna narrative is not the first time that competition between black women in popular culture has been actively produced and perpetuated—or even fabricated, in Rihanna and Beyoncé's case—by media discourses. For example, "Catwalk Catfight: Tyra Rips 'Hateful' Naomi" (Hutchinson 2004) documents the feud between supermodels Tyra Banks and Naomi Campbell, which dates to the 1990s. This very type of discourse has been used by the news media, celebrity gossip columns, and music sites, as screaming headlines like "Rihanna: Move Over, Beyoncé" and "Beyoncé Furious with Rihanna: New Song a Diss Track?" attest (Taylor 2005; Cox 2015). Words with strongly negative, even violent connotations ("catfight," "rips," "move over," "furious," "diss") sell the idea that these women are angry at each other, illustrating Patricia Hill Collins's (2000) concept of controlling images. Here the angry black woman trope takes center stage, forcing their relationships with one another to be read as a hierarchical struggle.

[5] These controlling images of Beyoncé and Rihanna must be taken into account because they indicate to us how they come to be competitively aligned and how these manufactured fandom fights occur. Beyoncé is an African American woman who hails from Houston, Texas; in contrast, Rihanna is an Afro-Caribbean woman from Barbados who moved to America as a teenager to pursue her music career. Each woman's story plays along a trajectory of race, gender, class, and nationality; the tropes that come with these trajectories have been racialized and positioned within this narrative.

[6] On August 29, 2011, the night that Beyoncé revealed she was pregnant with her daughter, Blue Ivy, at the MTV Video Music Awards, the Tumblr meme shown in figure 1 circulated widely on Twitter.



Figure 1. A Tumblr meme released on August 29, 2011 (https://78.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_lqpnktx53O1qicqv6o1_500.png), after Beyoncé announced at the MTV Video Music Awards that she was expecting her first child. Beyoncé is pictured sitting with a child on a bed with a laptop. Typed in red is a displeased message to Beyoncé.

[7] This message to Beyoncé evokes the archetype of the strong black woman, in which she has "too many obligations but she is expected to handle her business" and must continue "to be everything for everyone else" (Springer 2007, 252). The strong black woman trope goes hand in hand with older controlling images of African American women, such as the black woman who "works twice as hard as everyone else" (Collins 2000, 89). In this meme, Beyoncé is expected to get "back on that stage," as she is a hardworking, high-achieving woman with an all-consuming career; she does not have time to start a family because she "JUST took a year off."

[8] Such messaging falls in line with the meritocratic ideal of neoliberalism: if you work hard enough, you will reap the benefits (Littler 2017). However, black women have to work, and they are expected to work twice as hard. Furthermore, to get back to the trajectories that dictate Beyoncé and Rihanna's competitive alignment, Beyoncé must get back to business because "that Barbadian is racking up #1's like she collectin fuckin coconuts." By acquiring Number 1 songs on the US Billboard Hot 100, Rihanna is here othered as an unworthy Caribbean migrant whose success threatens the progression of African American, middle-class, strong black women. To emphasize Rihanna's migrant status in this context, we are invited to imagine Rihanna "collecting coconuts" as a primitive exoticization of Caribbean life. This example of Rihanna dangerously "racking up #1's" also corroborates Alisa Bierra's point that "though the material circumstances of Rihanna's life are radically different from those of most Afro-Caribbean immigrant women in the United States, her resources did not prevent her public persona from being haunted by these archetypal stereotypes of 'island women.'" These stereotypes mark her as already being "dangerous" and "out of control" (2011–12, 105), as opposed to being respectable and humble like the archetypal strong black woman (Rodier and Meagher 2014).

[9] Figure 1 also exemplifies a deregulated controlling by MRWaSP imperatives, which creates distance between the background conditions of its agenda (an inclusive approach to racist and sexist oppression that has its origins in exclusionary slavery and colonialism) and the activities of fans and their favorite artist. This distance undermines the constructedness of the background conditions of MRWaSP at play. Thus, fans in the BeyHive and the Rihanna Navy who "appear to operate 'free' of direction" are susceptible to the danger of reproducing archetypal stereotypes of the women of color we stan for by practicing competitive advocacy against another black female entertainer's fan base. This renders unintelligible the background conditions that posit black women as adversaries in popular culture (James 2015, 97).

[10] What the dynamic between Beyoncé and Rihanna fandoms brings into question, as Rebecca Wanzo (2015, ¶2.1) highlights, is the notion that "fan culture stands as an open challenge to the 'naturalness' and desirability of dominant cultural hierarchies" (Jenkins 1992, 18). If fans of black female entertainers, who are competitively juxtaposed by media discourses, are increasingly at the "center of media convergence" (Busse 2009, 356), then we become amplifiers of the consumption, competition, and conditions that naturalize such controlling images. These fandom fights between the BeyHive and the Navy are further complicated by the defense of Rihanna or Beyoncé (when they are juxtaposed) because it is also a defense of their own investment in the fannish consumption of these singers.

[11] During an interview on *Larry King Live* (2009), Beyoncé said of Rihanna, "I'm here to support her, as well as all of my family. She's like family to me [...]"

Jay and all of my family." Similarly, in the April 2016 issue of *American Vogue*, Rihanna noted that the rivalry is fabricated by the media: "They just get so excited to feast on something that's negative. Something that's competitive. Something that's, you know, a rivalry. And that's just not what I wake up to" (Aguirre 2016). Beyoncé and Rihanna's solidarity is a form of resistance to the processes that competitively pit their black femininities against each other, as Collins argues: "Self-defined and publicly expressed Black Women's love relationships, whether such relationships find sexual expression or not, constitute resistance. If members of the group on the bottom love one another and affirm one another's worth, then the entire system that assigns that group to the bottom becomes suspect" (2000, 170). Simply put, if fans engage in their juxtaposition, it counteracts this resistance.

[12] This is not to say that there are not instances of resistance by Beyoncé and Rihanna fans, which indeed need perusal. Still, this is an underdiscussed aspect of popular culture that needs further critical exploration, as it brings the whole MRWaSP societal agenda into question. Analyses of these constructed fandom fights, which pit black woman against each other and seek to reinforce stereotypes, illuminate wider societal complexities that greatly affect the practices of fandoms centered on women of color. Such cultural analysis raises further questions about the processes that actively work against black female solidarity and "harnesses the pleasures" and practices of their fandoms for the continuation of the dominant MRWaSP (Booth 2014, ¶2.11).

Notes

1. Beyoncé's fan base is known as the BeyHive, shortened to the Hive. Rihanna's fan base is called the Rihanna Navy, shortened to the Navy.

2. "Stan" is a term derived from a 2000 Eminem song of the same name. My master's thesis, "How Is the Term 'Stan' Being Used as a Classification of Status in Pop Music Fandom?," explores how fans use it as a term of distinction. It can be used as a verb or a noun.

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