

Vulnerability in Masculinity: Resistance and Assertion of African American Masculinity in selected works of Kendrick Lamar

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ABSTRACT

Masculinities in rap and its analysis tend to heavily incline towards the aggression and violence. The present study seeks to subvert the popular views and evaluate the vulnerabilities within the frame of masculinity represented in the genre of rap. Moreover, the term, gender studies automatically tend to resonate with the women's social plights and sufferings and emphasize on the patriarchal bounds of hegemonic masculinity. However, masculinities come along with its own vulnerabilities. The spectrum of hegemonic and hyper masculinity obligates men to fit into strait jacketed compartments to fulfill the societal expectations of what it means a, "to be a man" or in the contemporary terminology, "What it takes to be a sigma male". This creates a sheer burden because failing to raise to the expected standards of the hegemonic society leads to intense humiliation and stigmatization. Based on the theories developed by leading theorists, Robert Johnson, R.W. Connell, and Michael Kimmel, this present work seeks to integrate features of redefining masculinity within rap. The research looks into the evolution of contemporary masculinities in rap, specifically through the works of Kendrick Lamar. African American masculinity is a highly contested space, oscillating between the between the lines of aggression and oppression. The current study attempts to undertake an in-depth exploration of the vulnerabilities fixated in hegemonic masculinity and its counter parts analyzed through the lens of the Kendrick's works namely, Money Trees (2012), God is gangsta (2014) and Mr. Morale (2022). Besides, the paper also discusses how the artist's perception of masculinities has undergone a change over the span of his career till his recent album, Mr. Morale and the Big Steppers on the basis of the aforementioned works.

Keywords: Masculinities, Money Trees, Kendrick Lamar, Rap, Hegemonic Masculinity, African American Masculinity, Mr. Morale and the Big Steppers.