

Beyoncé: From Media Product to Black Feminist?



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This thesis has given me the opportunity to showcase the research skills that I acquired over the past two years at Radboud University and it has provided me with new insights into the artistry of Beyoncé Knowles.

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Abstract & Keywords

The topic of this MA thesis is the evolvement of Beyoncé's artistry from a media product to a Black activist. The main research question is: to what extent can the artistry of Beyoncé be considered feminist and how has this feminist agenda developed over time? Answering this question will help establish an analysis of Beyoncé's evolvement as a feminist. This is a relevant topic since Beyoncé is an iconic artist who could potentially use her position to address matters of feminism and racial inequality. However, while Beyoncé openly identifies herself as feminist and plays with the imagery of Black activism, a number of scholars argue that this is merely to make a profit. This thesis would like to challenge these arguments by showing the potential of Beyoncé's music to start a conversation on feminism and racial equality. After outlining the core concepts in a theoretical framework, this thesis will present an audiovisual analysis of a selection of music videos. I will analyze the music videos of "Survivor" (2001), "Naughty Girl" (2004), "Irreplaceable" (2006), "If I Were a Boy" (2008), "Run the World (Girls)" (2011), "Partition" (2013), and "Formation" (2016). Based on the analysis of these videos I will identify recurring audiovisual patterns which will be applied to an audiovisual performance analysis of the same songs in my final chapter to see to what extent these patterns are enhanced or contradicted.

Keywords: feminism, Black feminism, Black activism, Beyoncé, music videos, performances

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context

Beyoncé Knowles is one of the most popular African American artists of the 21st century. Her albums have received many awards and her performances are iconic. While she is a self-proclaimed feminist, many scholars disagree with her definition of feminism. Especially hooks regards Beyoncé as anything but a feminist. In an article she wrote about Beyoncé's latest album, *Lemonade* (2016), she describes how the album is "the business of capitalist money making at its best" (*Bell Hooks Institute*). Hooks argues that Beyoncé's construction of feminism cannot be trusted because it is a simplified version which promotes survival in a patriarchal society rather than resisting this society as a whole. Other scholars argue in line with hooks in the sense that they call Beyoncé's feminism "commodity feminism" (Utley 10) and "girl power inspired feminism" (Weidhase 128) because it does not address the real problems or pressing themes that, especially Black, women face in the United States.

However, there has been a number of scholars who do acknowledge the impact and importance of Beyoncé's feminism. Trageser and Durham present research linking Beyoncé to the concept of sexuality and argue that she is one of the few (Black) female artists who openly addresses sexuality in her performances and songs (Trageser 6). They argue how this provides Black women with a sense of empowerment. In their analysis of *Lemonade* (2016), Edgar and Toone argue that Beyoncé's music opens up a dialogue on Black heritage which encourages African Americans to look into the history of civil rights and Black Power (8). Finally, Brooks recognizes the impact of Beyoncé's album *B'Day* (2006) on African American women by establishing a platform of self-empowerment by voicing their discontent (201).

1.2 Relevance Within Field and Research Question

Beyoncé has been a subject of research in the academic world for a while now. Particularly Beyoncé's latest albums, *Beyoncé* (2013) and *Lemonade* (2016) are addressed by scholars with regards to representations of black sexuality and female empowerment. Edgar and Toone analyze the social impact of *Lemonade* (2016) around the world. Chatman analyzes Beyoncé in connection to black femininity, the black female body, and post-feminism. In addition, Hansen analyzes the concept of femininity in connection to female sexuality in *Partition* (2013). Furthermore, Railton analyzes Beyoncé's music video, *Baby Boy* (2003) and connects

it to aspects of race and femininity compared to the white femininity in Kylie Minogue's *Can't Get You Out of My Head* (2001). Ward also analyzes a number of songs by Beyoncé and argues that she uses imagery of Black radicalism to advance her personal career.

While these scholars either look at particular songs, Beyoncé's persona, or one album, this research would like to explore the evolving character of Beyoncé through time with regards to the development of feminism. Throughout this thesis I will trace patterns in her music videos and her performances which can be tied to feminism, sexuality, and activism. I would like to argue that Beyoncé's feminism is worth taking into account, even though it is tied to popular culture. In my opinion, addressing the artistry of Beyoncé in an academic manner is important because Beyoncé is an influential artist and a role model for many young girls. This research complements existing research by linking Beyoncé to feminism and female sexuality. However, it also fills a gap in the sense that it explores the evolving character of Beyoncé as a feminist throughout her musical career. In connection to this, I will attempt to answer following main research question: to what extent can the artistry of Beyoncé be considered feminist and how has this feminist agenda developed over time?

1.3 Theory and Methodology

The theoretical concepts I intend to include in this research are (black) feminism, sexuality, gender, whiteness, the gaze, and audiovisual analysis. I will engage with these concepts in a more detailed fashion in Chapter 2.

With regards to theories of black feminism I will mainly address the readings offered by hooks and Hill Collins. The books I will use are *Black Looks* (1992) and *Black Feminist Thought* (2000). These scholars are important to my thesis because they provide me with definitions and core themes of Black feminism which I will include in my audiovisual analysis of Beyoncé's music videos and performances. I engage with Black feminism from a Dutch white female perspective, this means that I am not part of the community which is addressed and therefore I engage with these theories from an outsider perspective.

Within the framework of Black feminism, I will also engage with the theories on the legacy of Black Power. Hill Collins and hooks recognize the importance of a belief in Black female activism. Therefore, it is important to this thesis to also outline the legacy of Black activism and civil rights. The most influential theoretician with regards to using Black activism in popular culture is Abernethy. In his book *The Iconography of Malcolm X* (2013), Abernethy explores the imagery of Black Power and Malcolm X. Another important theoretician is Carmichael, in his book *Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table* (2002) he describes

the legacy of Black Power and reasons why it should still be relevant for African Americans today.

Furthermore, I will address the concept of post-feminism in connection to popular culture. In *Interrogating Post-Feminism* (2007), Tasker and Negra explore the politics of popular culture in connection to gender and female artists. This source is relevant to my thesis because Chatman argues that Beyoncé is a “post-feminist subject” (928). Therefore it is important to see to what extent post-feminist characteristics apply to Beyoncé’s artistry and if this has evolved over time.

Another concept which is central to this thesis is Black female sexuality. In her book *Black Sexual Politics* (2005), Hill Collins offers insights into the politics behind Black female sexuality and new forms of racism. In addition, in *Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality* (1994), Hammonds addresses Black feminism in connection to female sexuality. These sources are relevant to my thesis because they provide me with theories on Black female sexuality which are vital to grasping what the representations of sexuality in Beyoncé’s videos and lyrics mean to African American women.

Since I will explore Black feminism, I also need to address the concept of whiteness and race in relation to this “black” in feminism. Dyer and Jacobson offer insights into concepts of whiteness, and race and ethnicity in general. This is important because it contextualizes the importance of Beyoncé’s African American background. I will also engage with theories by Turner which explore the concept of race in connection to Black artists.

As for the concept of gender, I will address the readings offered by Butler in *Gender Trouble* (1990). Another key concept with regards to gender is “the gaze” as explained by Mulvey in her book *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1999). In her book, Mulvey shows how the world of audiovisuality is based on the desires of men. This will be useful for my thesis because it helps me make sense of Beyoncé’s music videos. These sources are relevant to my thesis because the gendered female body and the concept of sexuality are ever-present in Beyoncé’s image and musical career.

The method I will use to analyze Beyoncé’s music videos and performances is an audiovisual analysis as described by Vernallis in her book *Experiencing Music Video* (2004). I will connect this audiovisual analysis to certain patterns that stand out based on the theoretical concepts which have been outlined in Chapter 2. In addition to these patterns, I will consider the concept of mediation in connection my live performance analysis as described by Auslander in his book *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (2008).

1.4 Primary Sources

The case studies I will use throughout this thesis are music videos and live performances of a selection of songs by Beyoncé ranging from her time in Destiny's Child to *Lemonade* (2016). I will engage with "Survivor" (2001), "Naughty Girl" (2004), "Irreplaceable" (2006), "If I were a Boy" (2008), "Run the World (Girls)" (2011), "Partition" (2013), and "Formation" (2016).

I selected one song from each album because I think that this will be the best way to critically engage with her evolution within the limited scope of a Master's thesis. Apart from her solo albums, I chose to include the final album of Destiny's Child to see how Beyoncé's image changed from being in a girl-group to becoming one of the most iconic solo artists of this era.

I chose to analyze "Survivor" (2001) because it is the album's title track and the most popular song from the album. I chose to use "Naughty Girl" (2004) because it can be linked to the theme of Black female sexuality and it was a hit single from the album. Furthermore, I chose to include "Irreplaceable" (2006) because it introduces an all-female African American band, and I wanted to include "If I were a Boy" (2008) because I think it is interesting how the music video reverses gender roles. Furthermore, I chose to use "Run the World (Girls)" (2011) because it has a narrative which is focused on women, and I chose "Partition" (2013) because it addresses the theme of Black female sexuality. Finally, I chose to include "Formation" (2016) because it addresses Black female heritage and activism.

With regards to the performances I included, I chose to use a performance from the same year the music video was released. Based on its ratings on YouTube, I selected the most popular performance from that year. This way, both the performance and the music video are from the same time period and can thus be compared to see whether the performance offers new nuances which enhance or contradict the narratives of the music video. The performances I used are "Survivor" (2001) at the Soul Train Music Awards, "Naughty Girl" at CD:UK, "Irreplaceable" (2006) at the American Music Awards, "If I were a Boy" (2008) at the MTV European Music Awards, "Run the World (Girls)" (2011) at the Billboard Music Awards, "Partition" (2014) from the Mrs. Carter Show, and finally "Formation" (2016) at the Super Bowl 50 Half-Time Show.

1.5 Outline of Thesis

In the second chapter of this thesis I will describe the key concepts of Black feminism, gender, race, Black female sexuality, post-feminism, and the legacy of Black Power. I believe it is important to gain an understanding of these concepts in order to critically engage with my

selection of music videos and performances.

In the third chapter I will look at Beyoncé's evolvment through time by exploring a selection of her music videos. Throughout her music videos I will identify certain recurring audiovisual patterns based on the key concepts of my theoretical framework. The sub question which is central to this chapter is: how are concepts of Black female sexuality, feminism, and Black activism represented in a selection of Beyoncé's music videos throughout the years? The answer to this question is relevant to the overarching research question because it addresses the artistry of Beyoncé in relation to concepts of feminism and activism.

In the fourth chapter I will link the audiovisual patterns from chapter 3 to an audiovisual analysis of live performances of the same selection of songs. The sub question which will be addressed is: how are concepts of Black female sexuality, feminism, and Black activism represented in a selection of Beyoncé's live performances throughout the years?

Finally, the conclusion will compare and contrast the outcomes of the music video analysis and the live performance analysis based on these audiovisual patterns in order to answer the overarching research question to what extent Beyoncé's artistry can be perceived as feminist and how it has evolved over time. I will also make recommendations for further research based on my findings which could lead to establishing a more comprehensive image of the artistry of Beyoncé Knowles-Carter.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Overview

This chapter will discuss the necessary theories and methodology required to answer my research question: to what extent can the artistry of Beyoncé be considered feminist and how has this feminist agenda developed over time? Since Beyoncé is an African American artist, it is important to consider the concept of race in connection to her artistry and feminist thought. Therefore, I will begin this theoretical framework by discussing the field of race studies to clearly outline the construction of race as described by Sollors, Jacobson, and Dyer and link it to African American artists. With a link to the concept of race, I will address the concept of colorism. Following the construction of race, I will look at theories of Black female sexuality as explained by hooks, Hill Collins, and Hammonds. Following Black female sexuality I will engage with the concepts of Black feminism and post-feminism. In connection to the female body, I will engage with the construction of gender as described by Butler and Kristeva. Finally, in connection to the concept of sexuality and gender, I will explore the concept of the “male gaze” as described by Mulvey. I will end with the legacy of Black Power within the framework of Black feminism.

2.2 Race and “Colorism”

Since Beyoncé is an African-American woman who addresses her cultural heritage in her music and performances, it is important to consider the theories behind the construction of race as described by Jacobson, Dyer, and Sollors in connection to African American artists. These theoreticians are still among the most influential scholars in the field of race studies, therefore it is important to take their theoretical concepts into account. Dyer’s theories on the concept of race stand out because he acknowledges the presence of “invisible whiteness” (3). Dyer argues that all people are raced except for white people, which makes them the racial norm (1). In her book *Black Looks* (1992), hooks also recognizes the invisibility of whiteness which results in making non-white groups the “Other” (167). These non-white people are identified with their racial markers while white people remain invisible. Therefore, Dyer believes that whiteness should be “made strange” in order to be fully able to address concepts of race (10). In addition, Dyer argues that White people “remain dependent on non-whites for their sense of self.” (24). In other words, they need to identify African-Americans by their racial markers to be able to distinguish themselves as white. These racial markers are also

present in music videos of African American artists by emphasizing their buttocks as a sign of “otherness” (Railton and Watson 97).

In connection to this, Jacobson describes how race in America has evolved over time. He recognizes that our current white race is “made and not born” (4). In other words, race and ethnicity are culturally constructed fluid concepts which are shaped by a certain cultural context. Sollors argues in line with Jacobson by stating that the term “race” was not determined by physical appearance, rather, it was based on religious, political, and cultural differences (xxxv). This shows how the construction of race is essentially based on the process of “perception” (Jacobson, 9). In other words, if a person is perceived as white within a certain cultural context, he eventually belongs to the Caucasian race. The Caucasian race was constructed as a unitary race which included white people with different ethnical backgrounds, however, African Americans will always be ‘othered’ because they deviate from the racial norm of having a white skin color (Jacobson 7) and white people will always need them for their “sense of self” (Dyer 24). Because of their dark complexion, the bodies of African American artists are sexualized and objectified to make them the opposite of white artists (Railton and Watson 92).

Furthermore, Dyer argues that whiteness is about “control of self and control of others” (31). White people are in charge of the media, the political system, and education (Dyer, 31). This provides them with a hegemonic position, a position which they would not want to give up or share with people from different racial backgrounds. Hooks also recognizes the fact that “white patriarchal media [is] shaping [our] perceptions of reality” (67). She states that the dominant position of Whites causes the “black gaze” to be controlled by white power (168). Similarly, Turner argues that the white-controlled music industry has exploited Black culture and dominated Black bodies for decades (187). Consequently, Black people have been denied agency of their own artistry and music (188).

This white control of the media also contributes to the concept of “colorism” as addressed by Phoenix. She argues that “racism and colorism lead to privileging of light skin” and that the concept of “colorism” endures “as long as the structure of white racism remains intact” (103). I want to argue that this fits the framework of white hegemony which favors light skin over dark skin, especially with regards to women. Even though they do not explicitly label it as “colorism”, both hooks and Hill Collins recognize this pattern as well. Hooks describes how racist aesthetics create the perception that “blonde hair is the epitome of beauty” (68) and that Black women should resemble white women to be considered attractive (73). Hill Collins also recognizes that one’s beauty is determined by “one’s closeness to

whiteness” (80). She argues that white institutions have a clear preference for African American women with light skin (80).

Phoenix states that “people with light skin earn more money, complete more years of schooling, live in better neighborhoods, and marry higher-status people than darker skinned people of the same race and ethnicity” (98). She also shows how the media often digitally alter or lighten pictures of women of color. Hooks also recognizes this pattern by stating that “darker-skinned models are most likely to appear in photographs where their features are distorted” (73). This again shows the hegemony of white people in creating a “hegemonic beauty ideal” which influences the media representation of women of color by making their skin seem more white than they actually are (hooks 73). Phoenix argues that this means that the media think that women of color “are not light enough for mainstream media because they are not white” (99). The concepts of race and “colorism” are relevant to my thesis because I want to argue that Beyoncé is also a product of “colorism” and white hegemonic beauty ideals in the sense that she has light skin and she often has long blond hair. Phoenix also recognizes Beyoncé as an example of “colorism” in her article (101).

2.3 Black Female Sexuality

Beyoncé plays with the concept of sexuality both in her music videos and more explicitly in her lyrics. Therefore, it is important to outline the concept of black female sexuality to be able to grasp the context behind these lyrics and performances. One of the pioneering theoreticians in the field of Black sexuality is Hill Collins. In her book *Black Sexual Politics* (2005), Hill Collins describes African-American gender relations in connection to modern racism. She argues that the sexual exploitation of African-American women has been central to racism for over a century (87). Hill Collins recognizes that the concepts of race and heterosexism share a history and should be viewed as two parts of the same whole (88). Furthermore, she identifies the concept of “promiscuity” as a concept that distinguishes black sexuality from white sexuality and names Destiny’s Child as one of its examples (98).

Railton and Watson’s study of contemporary music videos in relation to racial imagery argues in line with the theories as described by Hill Collins. Railton and Watson argue that “Black heterosexual womanhood has been historically constructed differently to its white counterpart” (90). In other words, they argue that it is important to acknowledge that black female sexuality is rooted in a different historical background than white female sexuality. Within the western framework of white hegemony and slavery, “promiscuity” was assigned to Black women in order to justify discrimination (98). This Western framework also classified

African Americans as being closer to animals and nature and thus being more wild and uncivilized with regards to their expressions of sexuality (100).

In connection to this, McGruder explains that Europeans linked the revealing attire of Africans to an “uncontrollable sex drive” (104). Railton and Watson also recognize this pattern by stating that white hegemonic culture inscribes “blackness as a ‘primitive’ sign, as wildness, and with it the suggestion that Black people have secret access to intense pleasure, particularly pleasures of the body” (90). Black female bodies were considered to be more primitive, particularly with regards to their buttocks, and therefore they were perceived to be more “animal-like” and thus more physically connected to animalistic uncontrolled sexuality (91). Hooks argues that this pattern is still present today and that non-white models wear revealing apparel that is supposed to evoke a sense of sexual desirability (72). Turner also recognizes this pattern by stating that African American women are significantly more likely to wear revealing clothes in music videos than white women (182). McGruder argues that these negative definitions of Black female sexuality were used to affirm white superiority (104). Hill Collins builds on this statement by arguing that the Black woman had to be “othered” to establish a white woman’s beauty (79). Similarly, hooks argues that Black female sexuality established “a narrative of sexualization dissociated from whiteness” (62).

During the times of slavery and colonialism in the United States, Black women were used as “sexual property” by white slave owners (Hill Collins, 101). McGruder builds on this by stating that white men raping Black women was justified because of their uncontrollable desire for sex (105). Stereotypes such as the “jezebel”, the “asexual mammy” and the “breeder woman” were used to justify racial discrimination based on black sexuality (Hill Collins, 100). Hill Collins argues that the history of black “promiscuity” still lives on today in “gender-specific” norms (102). She also argues that these stereotypes are still used today, particularly for working-class African American women. These women are still represented as having no sexual control (103). Similarly, hooks states that today Black women are either portrayed as an asexual “mammy” or as an oversexualized “slut” (74).

The Black female body was fascinating to white Europeans, so much so that they put the black body on display; an object that could be gazed upon by white people. The “Hottentot woman” was seen as the embodiment of black womanhood and was put on display throughout all of Europe (Railton and Watson 91). Railton and Watson emphasize that especially the buttocks of the Black female body was the hub of attention for white men (91). The Black female buttocks has remained the epitome of black female sexuality to this day, which is an example that the colonial discourse of racism is still relevant today (Railton and

Watson 97; Rose 167). Hooks also recognizes this continuing fascination with “Black butts” (63). Rose adds to this by stating that the black female butt was so fascinating to white men because it was the opposite of the skinny white female body with narrow hips (168).

In contrast to the sexualized Black female body, the White female body has always been considered “symbolically unattainable” (Railton and Watson, 92). White women were modeled after the Virgin Mary, therefore they were perceived as asexual with regards to the dark temptations of sexual desire, and they could only be approached by men through acts of love, marriage, and affection (92). They were considered to be the “guardians of sexual morals and cultural refinement” and the epitome of “cleanliness, purity, even civilization itself” (92). Railton and Watson recognize “binary oppositions” between the black and white female body (93). They argue that these oppositions that are rooted in colonial racism are still present in cultural representations of Black and white women today (95).

Hill Collins also recognizes Black popular culture as an important contemporary source for gender-specific ideas on Black female sexuality (122). Similarly, McGruder states that the media is an “important instrument in pathologizing Black sexuality” (106). Hill Collins and Rose both argue that Black popular culture can both enforce and resist stereotypes of black sexuality (Rose 168). The Black female body is objectified as part of this commodified Black culture (Hill Collins 128). She argues that Black women are usually represented as “nameless Black bodies” in popular culture, especially in film and music videos (129). Hooks argues in line with this by stating that popular culture exploits these Black stereotypes and creates an image of the black female body as “synonymous with accessibility, [and] availability” (66). Turner argues that these representations of the black female body in music videos construct a “one-dimensional” demonized view of Black womanhood (177). Black women have become “decorative eye-candy” (187). He also acknowledges that music videos with African Americans display sexual content more frequently than white music videos (186). This makes the display of the black body synonymous with representations of sexuality.

However, Collins argues that the Black female body is not only objectified in order to fit into the white hegemonic framework, they also want to be accepted within the “Black male-controlled universe” (129). In an essay on Black popular culture, Stuart Hall recognizes the importance of the use of the Black body as their “canvas of representation”, because it was “the only cultural capital” they possessed in colonial times (27).

Furthermore, Hill Collins recognizes the importance of female rap and hip-hop music in creating a platform of “woman-centered video narratives” (134). She argues that this

platform can challenge the commodified stereotypes of African American women. In her book *Black Noise* (1994), Rose also recognizes the potential for female rappers in addressing the “mastery of physical and sexual freedom” as a central theme in their music (147). She states that Black female rappers enable Black women to occupy a new “public space” in which they have a voice in the public sphere (182). Railton and Watson also recognize this potential by stating that music videos can call into question the racial hierarchy (88). On the other hand, hooks does not acknowledge this potential, she states that media representations of the black female body “rarely subvert or critique” the colonial stereotypes (62). However, in resisting this racial hierarchy, Hill Collins argues that successful African American women have to stay within certain lines to be considered a “Black lady” or a “modern mammy”, if they cross certain lines they risk the chance of falling back to the previously mentioned working-class stereotypes (143). Similarly, Springer argues that middle-class black women should conform to a “politics of respectability” if they wish to remain there (273).

A different perspective is offered by Hammonds in her article *Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality* (1994). Hammonds argues that because of the stereotypes that represent Black women as the commodified embodiment of sex, they are not inclined to openly address matters of sexuality. They would rather address these matters with “silence, secrecy, and partially self-chosen invisibility” (8). Rose also recognizes this pattern and states that “a history of silence has surrounded African-American women's sexuality.” (168). Hammonds recognizes this silence as a strategy to rally against these stereotypes of being sexually wild and promiscuous (10). She argues that this silence did not work in their favor, worse still, this silence disabled them from articulating any ideas with regards to their sexuality (10). Hammonds states that in order for this silence on Black female sexuality to be broken, Black women must engage in the “politics of articulation” and openly address their views on sexuality (21). Similarly, Hill Collins argues that Black female sexuality should be “reconceptualized” in order to empower African American women (164). This reconceptualization can be achieved by openly framing sexuality as a “domain of exploration, pleasure, and human agency.” (166)

This overview of the recent discourse on Black female sexuality offers insights into the construction of Black female sexuality and how it is shaped in popular culture today. With regards to Beyoncé, Railton and Watson consider her music video “Baby Boy” to be a prime example of the presence of colonial racism. I will build on these readings by further examining music videos by Beyoncé and see if the colonial racism of the past is still present. The sources by McGruder and Hill Collins allow me to analyze the history of Black female

sexuality and its stereotypes. Traces of this history are arguably still present in representations of popular culture today, I will look for these traces in Beyoncé's music videos and performances. The source by Hammonds offers a different perspective on sexuality, which is also important to consider while analyzing Beyoncé's expressions of sexuality in her music and lyrics.

2.4 Black Feminism

Since I want to connect Beyoncé's artistry to the concept of Black feminism it is important to outline and contextualize the theories behind this concept. In my opinion, the most influential theoreticians in the field of Black feminism are hooks and Hill Collins.

According to Hill Collins in her book *Black Feminist Thought* (1991), Black feminism incorporates "theoretical interpretations of Black women's reality by those who live it." (22). In other words, black feminism is shaped by the experiences of the African American woman. Hill Collins argues that only African American women can have Black feminist thoughts because only they can experience what it is like to be Black and female in a white patriarchal society (230). Black feminism rejects power by domination and promotes a "humanist vision of power through self-definition" (224).

Black feminism as a field is separate from mainstream feminism because African American women do not share the same past as white women. Black feminists argue that white feminists do not realize the privilege their white skin color creates for them (Hill Collins 229). Black women have had to endure many controlling images that define Black womanhood and Black female sexuality, these images do not apply to white women. Rose also recognizes that black women often read feminism as "white feminism" which they perceive as "a movement that has contributed to sustaining their oppression while claiming to speak on their behalf." (181). Rose states that this is the reason why many African American women are hesitant to call themselves feminists.

Similarly, Tang Nain also acknowledges this polarization between Black and white feminism (1). She argues that Black women "allow the force of racism to overshadow that of sexism" (2). In other words, Black women identify as Black first and as women second. Black women reject white feminism based on two reasons: white feminism is often insensitive to the experiences of Black women, and some of mainstream feminism's concepts do not take into account their experiences (Tang Nain 2). She does point out, however, that class influences Black women's opinions on mainstream feminism (3). Working-class Black women are most likely to reject the ideology of mainstream feminism because they encounter acts of racism

more frequently than middle- or upper-class black women (Hill Collins 24).

One important theme that Hill Collins identifies as a core theme of Black feminism is a “legacy of struggle” (22). Similarly, Hooks argues that “Black female experience has been about the struggle to survive in diaspora.” (51). In addition to the theme of struggle, Hill Collins identifies several other core themes such as the belief in Black female activism, thoughtfulness towards sexuality, and the call for defying “denigrating images of Black womanhood” (23).

According to hooks, African American women do not usually speak their minds in a radical manner. She argues that this has to do with a fear of being called “insane” (54). In order to overcome this fear, hooks argues that Black women should read the works of these “insane” women who dared to speak their minds and fight for their freedom. Educating themselves with the knowledge of these radical African American women might enable them to gain “Black female self-actualization” (56). She calls for the creation of a legacy of black feminist activism by collectively sharing “knowledge, resources, skills, and wisdom” among African American women (60). Hill Collins also argues that African American women should unite their knowledge and standpoints in order to survive (24). This legacy can raise awareness and develop critical thinking among African American women which can eventually lead to “political self-recovery” (hooks 176). These women can then struggle for freedom against white supremacy. Hill Collins also recognizes the importance of knowledge as a tool to achieve “self-definition” (221). In turn, this “self-definition” can create a sense of empowerment and an “Afrocentric feminist consciousness” that encourages resistance (Hill Collins 28).

Nonetheless, hooks points out that these radical female activists are not a part of mainstream popular culture, therefore many Black women are not exposed to their efforts (57). According to hooks, “developing a feminist consciousness is a crucial part of the process by which one asserts radical black female subjectivity” (57). In other words, Black women must develop a feminist consciousness to be able to voice black feminist thoughts. Hill Collins also calls for the development of a Black feminist consciousness among African American women (28). This consciousness can be achieved through “safe spaces” such as personal relations between African American women, the literary tradition, and music (103). These personal relations between African American women “affirm one another’s humanity, specialness, and right to exist.” (Hill Collins 97). In other words, these personal relations provide them with a sense of empowerment and “self-definition”. The literary tradition and music also provide these women with a sense of empowerment through the use of their voice.

Hill Collins states that the voice is one of the most important instruments for Black female “self-definition” (98). African American music has been one of the most important platforms for using the Black female voice (99). Rose also recognizes the importance of black female music in defining “women's racial, sexual, and political identities” within the social discourse of feminism (153). The female music tradition is part of a larger tradition of “Afrocentric oral culture” which is rooted in spirituals and the Blues tradition (100). Since many African Americans did not know how to read or write, singing was the way of telling their story. This tradition continues to be relevant in African American music today. Durham, Cooper, and Morris argue that hip-hop has occupied a space for itself within the framework of Black feminism (722).

In order to survive in this society, Hill Collins argues that Black women should use these free spaces to resist the stereotypes that are out there and create a sense of “self-definition” and identity (105). I will now briefly describe the stereotypes which Hill Collins addresses in her book *Black Feminist Thought* (1991).

Hill Collins identifies four colonial stereotypes that were used to maintain Black women's subordinate position (71). These stereotypes were created for and by the white “male gaze” (Mulvey 837). The first stereotype is the “mammy”, Hill Collins describes this stereotype as the “faithful, obedient domestic servant” in white families (71). The stereotype was used to maintain gender oppression for black women. The behavior of the “mammy” also shaped the conceptions of Black women's take on motherhood (72).

Another stereotype about motherhood is the “matriarch”, she is supposed to symbolize the mother figure in African American families (73). While the “mammy” symbolizes the good mother, the “matriarch” is supposed to symbolize the bad mother, she is essentially a “failed mammy” (74). The “matriarch” is an aggressive black woman who failed to adhere to the gender norms that were put in place by white men (75). This stereotype was used as a warning to show African American what happens if you step away from being a hard-working servant (73).

A third stereotype that Hill Collins identifies is the “welfare mother” (76). This stereotype was described to be “dangerous to the values of the country” because she has no work-ethic but does have a lot of children (76). She is another failed “mammy” in the sense that she refuses to work hard, she is the cause of her own poverty (77).

The fourth stereotype that Hill Collins recognizes is the “Jezebel”, she symbolizes a “whore” or a “sexually aggressive woman” (77). This stereotype was used to justify sexual assault by white men and to exploit the institution of slavery (77). In short, these four

stereotypes were enforced to keep the systems of racism, class, and gender in check (71). Hill Collins argues that the “Jezebel” was the foundation for the other stereotypes that were all created by white men. The “connecting theme” among these stereotypes is Black female sexuality and its links to fertility and gender roles in white patriarchal society (78).

Finally, Hill Collins argues that these stereotypes have been central to the “political economy of domination fostering Black women’s oppression.” (67). Confronting these stereotypes should be a “fundamental concern” of Black feminism because they are used to make racism, sexism, and poverty appear to be natural, normal and an inevitable part of everyday life.” (Hill Collins 68). This process of “othering” is necessary for White people’s sense of self (69). Therefore, Hill Collins argues that these stereotypes should be challenged. Similarly, hooks argues that black women should openly interrogate the racialized representations of their sexuality and womanhood in popular media instead of suffering from them (76).

2.5 Post-Feminism

Since Chatman calls Beyoncé a “post-feminist subject” (928), it is useful to outline theories of post-feminism to see to what extent Beyoncé’s feminism links to certain characteristics of post-feminism. The key theoreticians within the field of post-feminism in connection to its representations in popular culture are Tasker and Negra. In their anthology *Interrogating Post-feminism* (2007), Tasker and Negra collect essays on post-feminism and its representations in popular culture.

Tasker and Negra argue that post-feminism emphasizes a woman’s freedom as an “empowered consumer” within a western capitalist society (2). Women also have a newly developed sexual empowerment. The focus is on the woman as an individual who is allowed to treat herself with “retail pleasures” (Tasker and Negra 7). It also puts an emphasis on “female achievement” and being successful, independent women (Tasker and Negra 7). In terms of Beyoncé’s image, Kooijman states that Beyoncé presents the image of “African American achievement” (147). Furthermore, post-feminism “girls” femininity, in other words, women of all ages are termed as girls (Tasker and Negra 18). The term “girl power” is a recurring theme in post-feminist thought. The focus is mainly on commodity culture in which it is all about individual achievement and having money to spend (Banet-Weiser 205). This individual achievement is regarded as a form of empowerment and is promoted in media images of strong, independent women (Banet Weiser 207). With regards to the concept of female sexuality, women’s bodies are still objectified by the media because post-feminism

argues that the “problem of objectification” is in the past and they now use this objectification as a form of empowerment (Banet-Weiser 211). Post-feminism rejects extreme feminist ideologies because they believe that the goals of feminism have already been achieved and are no longer necessary to address (Banet-Weiser 204).

Moreover, with regards to the concept of race, post-feminist culture emphasizes the “New Economy of race” in which they aim to prove that historical struggles for racial equality are no longer necessary because of the media’s inclusion of racial minorities. Since they are visible in the media, post-feminists want to claim that race is no longer an issue. Kooijman also recognizes that, among others, Beyoncé is used to deny institutionalized racism and claim that the United States has already achieved a “post-racial” society (164). However, nothing could be further from the truth since sexism and racism are as institutionalized as ever (Banet-Weiser 216). “Indeed, the implication is that race itself no longer matters in the same way it once did but is now simply an interesting way to feature the authentic, cool, or urban or develop a theme in a reality show.” (Banet-Weiser 223) Images of diversity “no longer have the meaning it did in the media context of the 1970s and 1980s.” (Banet-Weiser 223). Racial minorities are now used as a theme in TV shows or to promote certain “urban” products (223).

According to Springer, post-feminism erases the progress of the struggle for racial equality by making racial difference just “another commodity for consumption” (251). Similarly, Tasker and Negra recognize that post-feminism is “white and middle class by default” and glosses over social differences such as race and class (2). Springer describes that the stereotypes as identified by Hill Collins are still relevant in today’s seemingly post-feminist society. She states that the image of the “diva” has been added to this racialized imagery as another way to categorize black women (257). Springer argues that “the master’s house has not been dismantled but instead has added additional rooms and annexes in which to harbor oppressive variations of racist, sexist, classist, and heterosexist themes” (273). In other words, racism has not been erased, instead, it is still present today, only in a different form.

What is interesting for this thesis is that Ward connects theories of commodified post-feminism to Beyoncé’s feminist ideologies. He argues that Beyoncé uses images of racial protest as commodities for her own “wealth accumulation” (147). She has “mastered the sale of Black radical ideas” (150). Ward argues that Beyoncé’s music has become increasingly centered around “individualism and economic self-advancement” as a form of empowerment (155). In other words, promoting individual female success and empowerment which links to

post-feminist ideologies of being successful and having money to spend. Ward concludes by stating that Beyoncé's "fetishized black radicalism" is only about "individualized paper chasing" (159). In her essay *Moving Beyond Pain* (2016), hooks agrees with this statement when she argues that Beyoncé's use of Black feminism and Black radicalism is only part of her financial success within commodity culture (*Bell Hooks Institute*). I would like to build on these sources by analyzing in how far her music videos are centered around individual achievement as a form of empowerment.

2.6 Gender

In connection to the concept of female sexuality it is important to outline the theories behind the construction of gender. The most important theoretician in the field of gender studies is Butler, a poststructuralist feminist who argues that sex and gender are culturally constructed (6). In her book *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler questions the "binary structure" of gender and sex and argues that people are not gendered from the start (6). Butler rejects this male/female binary by arguing that gender is something that is performed. This theory of performativity builds on the concept of linguistic performance as explained by Kristeva in her books *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984) and *Desire in Language* (1980). Kristeva argues that communication is a type of performance of the "speaking subject" (6; 87). Butler builds on this theory by arguing that gender can also be performed through use of language and behavior (Butler 25). This "performativity" of gender is shaped and enforced by society's cultural context (25). In other words, society provides people with a "binary structure" that enforces and recognizes certain behaviors for either men or women (6).

Moreover, Butler states that "there is no gender behind the expressions of gender", which means that it is entirely subjective and can thus be performed (25). This subjectivity is enforced by institutional powers and acts of violence that keep these idealized gender norms of the "binary structure" in place (6). These norms produce a "surface on which culture acts" (7). Gender serves as a starting point for culture and society. The media is one of these institutional powers that enforces the gender binary in its representations of men and women in films, music videos, and photographs.

Based on these theories, I want to argue that the way Beyoncé is represented in her music videos and performances also enforces these idealized gender roles with regards to what a woman should look like and how a woman should act.

2.7 The “Male Gaze”

Since I will analyze music videos which are performed by a female artist, it is important to keep the theories of Mulvey’s “male gaze” in mind (837). In her book *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1999), Mulvey describes how the media, and Hollywood in particular, is dominated by a patriarchal order that enforces an “active/passive heterosexual division” between men and women (838). She argues that male roles control the narrative in film. While Mulvey argues that this dominant order is specific to film, I want to argue that this also applies to music videos and performances.

Mulvey identifies Freud’s concept of “scopophilia” which is the pleasure that is derived from looking (835). With regards to this concept of “scopophilia”, women function as the objects which are looked at by the male audience. Women have become the passive object of the active “male gaze” and they play to this desire by dressing “for strong visual and erotic impact” (837). Turner also recognizes the pattern of “voyeurism” in connection to the “male gaze (Mulvey 837) in his analysis of music videos. He argues that today’s music videos are created for “the gaze of male onlookers”, which results in a “gender bias” that sexualizes Black women in particular (187). This applies to my thesis because Beyoncé is also usually dressed in revealing outfits which fit the “male gaze” (Mulvey 837). Her “to-be-looked-at-ness” is mainly directed towards the male audience as being a visually attractive object of pleasure (Mulvey 837).

2.8 Legacy of Black Power

Both hooks and Hill Collins argue that Black female activism is an important theme within the framework of Black feminism. Therefore, I think it is relevant to see how the legacy of Black power and civil rights fits into Beyoncé’s performances and music videos. In his book *The Iconography of Malcolm X* (2013), Abernethy recognizes how the imagery of Malcolm X is still used by popular culture today. His image and legacy have been used as a platform by Hip-hop musicians and film directors such as Spike Lee. Abernethy argues that Lee was met with a lot of criticism at the time because he used his heritage and the legacy of Malcolm X as a means of marketing. I want to argue that Beyoncé meets the same criticism for using representations of Malcolm X and Black activism from scholars such as hooks and Ward today. Abernethy argues that African Americans use this imagery because they want to emphasize their “relationship to Blackness” (216).

As for the legacy of Black Power, Stokely Carmichael argues that Black people should create their own separate platforms and organizations, just like people did in the 1960s (809).

Carmichael considers Black Power to be the solution for institutionalized racism today, black people should “unite, recognize their heritage, [and] build a sense of community” (808). He argues that “Black visibility is not Black Power”, that the community is the force African Americans need to advance their position in US society (809). He identifies “self-determination” and “self-identity” as core themes of the Black Power legacy (810). Black people should “fight back” and an “intense struggle” should take place before there can be any real results (813). They should not struggle as individuals, they should unite as a group, just like the Black Power movement did in the 1960s and 1970s.

As for the legacy of women in Black Power, Williams and Joseph argue that the role of women in the Black Power Movement is undertheorized and almost invisible (Williams 22; Joseph 710). Joseph states that masculine efforts within the movement still dominate popular and historical understandings of the era (711). Nonetheless, women were in fact present in the Black Power movement from its conception in 1966. Williams states that women’s involvement in the Black Power movement sparked Black feminist activism and is part of its legacy (24). Joseph also acknowledges that women used the militant character of the Black Power Movement to “articulate a bold feminist vision” (708). I will link these theories to Beyoncé’s representations of Black activism in her music videos and her performances.

2.9 Methodology

In chapter three of this thesis I will employ an analysis of music videos as described by Vernallis in her book *Experiencing Music Video* (2004). This will be an audiovisual analysis, which means that I intend to focus on the relation between the lyrics and visual framing of the music videos. I chose to use an audiovisual analysis because it allows me to examine both the lyrics and the visual performance and it allows me to analyze live performances. I want to argue that audiovisual analysis adds an extra dimension to examining music videos and performances because it takes into account the lyrics as well as the visual representation.

In her book *Experiencing Music Video* (2004), Vernallis identifies a number of elements that are included in music videos: “narrative”, “editing”, “use of human figures”, “setting”, “mise-en-scene”, “relation between video and lyrics”, and “modes of connection between music, image and lyrics” (xiv). I will focus on these elements throughout my audiovisual analysis of Beyoncé’s music videos and link them to theories on Black feminism, Black female sexuality, “colorism” (Phoenix 103), race, the “male gaze” (Mulvey 837), gender, and post-feminism to analyze how her visual image and lyrics connect to these concepts.

Moreover, in my final chapter I will apply this analysis to a number of live performances. While Vernallis strictly applies her analysis to music videos, I will attempt to focus on these elements in Beyoncé's live performances as well. A source which is important to keep in mind while analyzing live performances is Auslander's *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (2008). This book examines the relation between live performance and mediation. Auslander argues that live performances must be examined within "specific cultural and social contexts" (3) and that live performances are often still "mediatized performances" (4). These performances will also be linked to the recurring audiovisual patterns of chapter 3 to find out to what extent these performances enhance or contradict the findings of my music video analysis.

3. Music Video Analysis

3.1 Audiovisual Music Video Analysis

The music videos which will be analyzed in this chapter are “Survivor”, “Naughty Girl”, “Irreplaceable”, “If I were a Boy”, “Run the World (Girls)”, “Partition” and “Formation”. I will base by audiovisual analysis on a number of elements as outlined by Vernallis: “narrative”, “editing”, “use of human figures”, “setting”, “mise-en-scene”, “relation between video and lyrics”, and “modes of connection between music, image and lyrics” (xiv). I will use these elements in my audiovisual analysis of Beyoncé’s music videos and link them to the theoretical concepts that have been described in the previous chapter. After a close audiovisual analysis, I will outline recurring audiovisual patterns and developments in Beyoncé’s artistry over the years. The sub question that I will be addressing is: how are concepts of Black female sexuality, feminism, and Black activism represented in a selection of Beyoncé’s music videos throughout the years?

3.1.1 “Survivor” (2001)

“Survivor” is the title track of Destiny’s Child’s third studio album *Survivor* (2001). The album is produced by Columbia Records. Beyoncé was already part of the producer team of this album. The music video was directed by Darren Grant, an African American director.

The music video starts with the sound of a helicopter, at the bottom of the screen there is a computerized green font which states “somewhere in the South pacific..”. Behind the font the audience sees a blue ocean which indicates that the setting of the video is going to be a deserted island. After the shot of the ocean, the camera drifts ashore and zooms in on the bodies of the artists. This is where the intro music starts with strings and a hi-hat drumbeat. The singers lay down unconsciously on the beach and on a lifeboat, which indicates that they were washed ashore after a shipwreck. They are dressed in sleeveless, low-cut, ripped dresses which reveal their stomachs and a large part of their legs. The fact that their costumes are ripped indicates that they are shipwrecked. Their revealing attire is supposed to make them sexually desirable (hooks 72). Kelly Rowland and Michelle Williams are dressed in red and Beyoncé in yellow. This already makes Beyoncé stand out as the main singer. After they regain consciousness, the singers start looking around to find out where they are. This is also when the lyrics start and Beyoncé starts to sing the first verse.

The moment Beyoncé starts to sing she is singing with her face directed towards the

camera, she is on hands and knees in the sand and the camera circulates around her (Figure 1). This pose emphasizes her buttocks and her hair, these are signifiers of an uncontrolled sex drive that surrounds Black female sexuality (McGruder 104; hooks 69; Railton and Watson 97; Rose 167). The fact that she is the only one who has blonde hair emphasizes her beauty because this makes her look the closest to “whiteness” (Hill Collins 80). During the first verse, Beyoncé is the only one who sings the lyrics, Kelly and Michelle sing an “oh” riff in the background which accompanies Beyoncé’s voice. The camera alternates between the three singers. Beyoncé is on hands and knees for the entirety of the first verse while Michelle and Kelly are standing straight while exploring the setting. During the chorus the video shows shots of the three singers together and alternates them with shots of every singer separately. The alternating shots emphasize the lyric “survivor” with the singers looking fiercely into the camera.

Towards the end of the chorus the singers walk up to a wooden cabin and they find animal skins they can wear. In the second verse they are dressed in animal skin costumes and the setting is changed from the beach to a bamboo forest. The forest setting enforces colonial stereotypes in the sense that Black people were considered to be more primitive and animal-like (Railton and Watson 100). Their costumes reveal their stomachs, legs, and arms. The necklines of the tops are rather low-cut. This again ties to the notion that Black women are more frequently dressed in revealing attire in order to be considered sexually desirable (hooks 72). The fact that they are wearing animal skins ties to colonial racism where Black people were perceived as closer to animals and thus more sexually active (Railton and Watson 100). The singers walk around the forest while touching the bamboo, they walk towards the camera with Beyoncé in the center. Beyoncé is again the only one singing the lyrics while Michelle and Kelly sing riffs that accompany her voice. This again focuses the attention of the audience on Beyoncé as the main singer.

During the chorus the focus of the camera is shifted from the singers to an anonymous male figure who is watching them from afar. The audience can engage with this “male gaze” because they can see what he sees (Mulvey 837). In the chorus that follows the setting shifts from a forest to a waterfall. The singers are standing in the water up to their knees, Kelly carries a spear and they investigate the area. This shot is alternated by single shots of the singers looking fiercely into the camera again, similar to the first chorus. Because of the editing of these shots, the emphasis is again put on the lyric “survivor”.

At the end of the chorus, the girls are filmed while climbing up the waterfall. They discover a temple in which their costumes are suddenly changed from animal skins to army

printed tops and bottoms. These costumes are again low-cut and they reveal their stomachs, their legs, and their arms. The army print could indicate strength and perseverance, this ties to the main video narrative of surviving on a deserted island which is present throughout the video. In the temple, the bridge starts to play in which Kelly Rowland has the main voice. Shots of Kelly are alternated with shots of the singers dancing in the temple. The emphasis is put on the phrase “I’m better than that” by editing in single shots of Beyoncé, Michelle, and Kelly while they sing this line. In the dance routine which accompanies the bridge, the singers are accompanied by a multiracial cast of male and female background figures. These figures are also dressed in army attire, however, these costumes are less revealing than those of the singers, which makes their bodies stand out as desirable objects of pleasure. The dance routine includes fighting moves which indicate that the singers will do whatever it takes to survive.

After the bridge, the chorus is played again which alternates shots of the dance routine with single shots of Beyoncé, Kelly, and Michelle, and all three singers together. These single shots put emphasis on the word “survivor” again and on the fact that they will “make it”. After the chorus there is an interlude which alternates shots of Beyoncé singing riffs, the dance routine, and the three singers on a lifeboat in the ocean. After Beyoncé’s riffs, Michelle has the leading voice which is set in the lifeboat setting and the temple setting in which all three singers are present. This time, Michelle is in the middle instead of Beyoncé to indicate that she is the main singer of this part.

The final chorus is then introduced by a helicopter which flies over. The singers are shot running after the helicopter through the forest and on the beach. These shots are alternated with shots of the dance routine and single shots of Beyoncé, Kelly, and Michelle. These shots again emphasize the lyrics which indicate that they will “make it”, and that they will “work harder” and that they will “survive”. The music video ends with the singers running towards the helicopter on the beach in their army attire. In the final shot, the singers hold hands and thrust these above their heads to emphasize that they “made it” together. I want to argue that this evokes a sense of female empowerment. Weidhase also recognizes this and argues that Destiny’s Child displays “girl power-inspired feminism” (128). This is present in the narrative of the video because it focuses on three women who survive on a deserted island without the help of a man. The lyrics also play into this because the singers state that they became “wiser,” “stronger,” and “richer” without the presence of a “male Other” (hooks 69).

In addition, I want to argue that this “girl power-inspired feminism” (Weidhase 128)

fits into the framework of post-feminism. The emphasis of post-feminism is on “female achievement” and being a successful and independent woman (Tasker and Negra 7). I would argue that “female achievement” is the main narrative of this music video because the singers appear to be more successful without the help of men. Moreover, “girl power” is a recurring theme in post-feminism which is also present in the narrative of this video (Tasker and Negra 18). The focus of this “girl power” and “female achievement” is mainly on commodity culture which emphasizes individual achievement and having money to spend (Banet-Weiser 205). This ties to “Survivor” because the singers sing about being “richer” without the “male Other” (hooks 69) in their lives. The lyrics also talk about the individual “I” when they talk about surviving and making it, this shows the focus on the individual. Within the framework of post-feminism, this individual success is regarded as a form of empowerment and is promoted by examples of strong and independent women in the media, I want to argue that “Survivor” is one of these examples of empowerment through media representation (Banet-Weiser 207). Furthermore, post-feminists believe that the “problem of objectification” is in the past. Therefore, they use these objectified images of women as a form of empowerment (Banet-Weiser 211). I think that “Survivor” fits into this framework in the sense that it objectifies the bodies of the singers throughout the entire video while they sing about female empowerment.

While “Survivor” fits the framework of post-feminism, I want to argue that it does not touch upon any of the core themes of Black feminism as defined by Hill Collins (23). The video and lyrics do not challenge the colonial stereotypes of Black womanhood, nor do they openly address sexuality. Rather, the video enforces racialized stereotypes of Blackness as primitive and sexually desirable. They also do not refer to the legacy of black activism or struggle. While Destiny’s Child use their Black female voices in the public sphere of popular culture, they do not use it to challenge stereotypes about Black womanhood. They do, however, use it to empower women, but they do not address the empowerment of Black women specifically.

3.1.2 “Naughty Girl” (2003)

“Naughty Girl” is a song from Beyoncé’s first solo album *Dangerously in Love* (2003) which was meant to launch Beyoncé as a solo artist. Beyoncé co-wrote and co-produced the song together with Scott Storch. Storch is a white American man who has produced songs of many American hip-hop and R&B artists. The fact that she produced her song together with a white man indicates that her personal agency is controlled or influenced by white power (Dyer 31; hooks 67). However, the music video was directed by Jake Nave, a British director of African

descent.

The video starts with a beat, strings and a funky guitar riff. On the first count of the rhythm the lights in the video flash on and off. Between these flashes shots are alternated between a cigar being lit and Beyoncé's back while standing on a stage. Beyoncé then turns around and starts to sing. She is dressed in a revealing short pink dress with an open back that is decorated with rhinestones. The fact that Beyoncé is dressed in a revealing costume evokes a sense of sexual desirability (hooks 72; McGruder 104). Her hair is straightened and golden blonde, this enforces the white hegemonic perception that "blonde hair is the epitome of beauty" (hooks 68) and that African American women should look closer to white women in order to be considered beautiful (hooks 73; Hill Collins 80). Beyoncé is on stage, looking flirtatiously at the audience while playing with her hair. The camera then shifts to the gaze of the African-American male audience, indicating that Beyoncé performs in front of the "male gaze" (Mulvey 837).

The camera moves around the décor, suggesting that the setting is a club where people go to at night to have a good time. Beyoncé is on stage, which implies that she is one of the performers of the club. The camera then shifts to Beyoncé walking backstage and standing in front of a mirror which reflects her back. On her left and right are two female background figures who are also dressed in revealing attire. While standing in front of the mirror the lyrics state that Beyoncé is "feeling sexy", which emphasizes the way she looks. The camera then zooms in on Beyoncé's face when she sings "I want to hear you say my name, boy", directed towards the "male gaze" (Mulvey 837).

This shot is followed by a stage scene where Beyoncé and four other female figures are performing a dance routine. The performers are shown as black reflections on white screens. Their silhouettes are dancing to the music and it is insinuated that they are stripping (Figure 2). This ties to the concept of "promiscuity" (Hill Collins 98) and adds an element of fantasy for the "male gaze" (837). This camera shot is alternated with a shot of Beyoncé's face in profile. Her face is a silhouette, similar to the one from the dance routine. By alternating these shots, the lyrics "taken over" and "crazy" are emphasized. I want to argue that these lyrics enforce the colonial stereotype of an "uncontrollable sex drive" which Black women were believed to possess (McGruder 104). The camera then films Beyoncé entering a club setting together with two female figures. One of them is an African American women, the other is a blonde white woman. She is wearing a red fur coat, a sparkling red dress, and red lipstick. The use of the color red usually indicates love, lust, or danger. In this case, I would argue that it indicates lust, since Beyoncé is singing about men wanting her body.

When Beyoncé enters the club setting, she is gazed upon by the men in the room. Her “to-be-looked-at-ness” is again directed towards the “male gaze” (Mulvey 837).

Furthermore, Beyoncé is observed by one male figure in particular, he is portrayed as her love-interest because she is staring at him and he stares back. He takes off his jacket, then Beyoncé is filmed doing the same. In doing so, the lyrics of “sexy” and “your body moves across the floor” are emphasized. They are then filmed while walking up to each other and they start to dance. During the dance routine, Beyoncé’s body moves sensually against the body of the male dancer. He touches her body and hair and she emphasizes her buttocks by moving in sync with the rhythm of the song. The fact that her buttocks is emphasized ties to the fascination with “black butts” as described by hooks (63). By emphasizing her buttocks, Beyoncé implies that she is sexually available. The background singers take over the lyrics and Beyoncé sings “oh” and “ah” riffs which accompany the melody. This scene is followed by a collective dance routine which accompanies the chorus. Beyoncé and her love-interest are joined by multiracial male and female background figures. Throughout the chorus there are sensual female sounds that indicate sexuality, these sounds are accompanied by sensual movements in the dance routine. This ties to the colonial stereotype of the “jezebel” (Hill Collins 100) where the African American woman is portrayed as a sexually available woman who possesses an “uncontrollable sex drive” (McGruder 104).

The chorus is followed by an interlude in which Beyoncé repeats the lyrics “I love to love you baby”, these lyrics are accompanied by a shot of Beyoncé in an enormous champagne glass filled with foam. She is dressed in a glitter crop top and matching bottoms, she has a straight pony tail and elongated eyelashes. The camera films Beyoncé from above, she looks flirtatiously into the camera while covered in foam, again addressing the “male gaze” (Mulvey 837). The camera shot then returns to the setting of the first scene where Beyoncé wears her pink dress again. She whips her hair back and forth while again looking flirtatiously into the camera. Railton and Watson recognize wild hair as an indication of being uncontrolled and untamed (98). Hooks also recognizes that Beyoncé playing with her hair signifies “animalistic sexuality” (70). This camera shot is alternated with a shot of Beyoncé sitting on a white piano. She is wearing a gala dress and big earrings, and her hair is curly, almost afro-like. She is accompanied by a multiracial cast of female figures. Beyoncé is the only one who gazes into the camera flirtatiously while the background dancers look into different directions. The shot is then alternated with Beyoncé in the dance routine with her love-interest looking at her sensually and then Beyoncé in the champagne glass again. The

lyrics which are emphasized throughout these alternating shots are “I love to love you baby”¹. The chorus then slowly fades out, the song ends with Beyoncé sensually staring at the camera, again addressing the “male gaze” (Mulvey 837).

The entire music video enforces the racialized stereotype of the oversexualized black female body dissociated from whiteness (Railton and Watson 98; Hill Collins 128; hooks 62). Beyoncé’s objectified body enforces the stereotype of the “jezebel” and suggests that Black women are accessible and available for the pleasures of sex (Hill Collins 100). While the video and lyrics openly address black female sexual agency and empowerment, they also still fit into the patriarchal framework because eventually Beyoncé wants to please the “male Other” (hooks 69) with her body when she sings “I’m all yours boy”. This also ties to the notion that Black women still want to fit into the “Black male-controlled universe” (Hill Collins 129). Nonetheless, the video openly addresses the “mastery of physical and sexual freedom” (Rose 147) which ties to the need for Black women to break the silence that surrounds their personal sexuality (Hammonds 21). However, while it breaks the silence, it does not subvert any colonial stereotypes nor does it “reconceptualize” black female sexuality (Hill Collins 164; hooks 62). The video only addresses black female sexuality within a racialized framework.

With regards to addressing feminism in her music video and lyrics, I want to argue that Beyoncé does not explicitly address the core themes of Black feminism as they are recognized by Hill Collins (23). Beyoncé does not challenge the stereotypes of Black womanhood, rather, she enforces the “jezebel” (77) with her objectified body and her image of “promiscuity” (98). She also does not express a belief in black female activism, nor does she address the theme of struggle. However, I want to argue that she does address the theme of sexuality by openly addressing her sexuality in both the lyrics and the video. This sexuality, however, still fits within the white patriarchal order and the “Black male-controlled universe” (Hill Collins 129). Therefore, I want to argue that “Naughty Girl” does not fit into the framework of Black feminism.

3.1.3 “Irreplaceable” (2006)

“Irreplaceable” is the third single from Beyoncé’s second solo-album *B'Day* (2006). The song was written and produced by Beyoncé, StarGate, and Ne-Yo. StarGate is a record company in Los Angeles, owned by two originally Scandinavian men. This ties to the white hegemony

¹ These lyrics are an intermedial reference by Beyoncé to Donna Summer’s highly sexualized song “Love to Love You Baby” (1975).

which influences Beyoncé's agency (Dyer 31; Hooks 67). The video was directed by Anthony Mandler, an African American film and music video director.

The music video starts without the song, the first shot is Beyoncé filing her nails. She is dressed in jeans and a corset-like top which does not reveal a lot of skin. Her head is not filmed yet, the attention of the audience is focused on her hands. The only sound that is included is the scratching of the file. The camera then shifts to Beyoncé's face, a man walks past her and opens a door. The door suggests that the video is set in a house or an apartment. Beyoncé looks at the male figure briefly and then turns away. This suggests that she is either mad at him or annoyed with him. When the male figure walks by, Beyoncé continues to file her nails, the camera then zooms in on her face and shows Beyoncé's facial expression. She seems not amused, she looks to the camera and then looks away again. The camera follows her gaze to the male figure who is packing up boxes, this implies that he is moving out. The camera then turns to Beyoncé again, who is still filing her nails and rolls her eyes at the male figure, which suggests that she is annoyed with him. When the male figure picks up the box and walks through the door again, the music starts to play.

Beyoncé sings "to the left, to the left" while pointing her fingers into that direction. This indicates that the male figure has to move his things to a certain box. The camera then alternates between shots of the male figure carrying his personal belongings out of the house, and Beyoncé standing inside the house, singing to camera that the male figure has to get his things, and "if [she] bought it, please do not touch". When the chorus starts, Beyoncé puts on her coat and follows the male figure to the front yard. While she is walking, Beyoncé does not dub the lyrics. This shot is alternated with an up-close shot of Beyoncé singing at the camera. After the chorus, the shot of Beyoncé outside the house is alternated with a shot of her sitting in front of a dressing table. She is dressed in a bra and a skirt and she has rollers in her hair. This suggests that she is getting ready for something. This is the only shot throughout the video where Beyoncé is wearing revealing clothes and draws attention to her feminine body. I want to argue that the emphasis on her feminine body is supposed to evoke a sense of sexual desirability (hooks 72).

During the shots when Beyoncé is standing outside in the front yard, the emphasis is put on the things the male figure did, it is as if Beyoncé is talking to him through the lyrics of the song. She also sings about "standing in the front yard" which connects to the setting of the scene. Beyoncé then sits down on the hood of a car, the fact that she sits on it suggests that it is hers because the male figure is loading his boxes into a taxi cab (Figure 3). While sitting on the hood of the car, she sings that the male figure was "rolling around in the car that [she]

bought [him]”, this suggests that she is financially independent and that the car she is sitting on now belongs to her instead of him. This links to post-feminism because it emphasizes “female achievement” and being a successful and independent woman (Tasker and Negra 7). In the front yard shot, Beyoncé also takes off the male figure’s sweater and necklace, suggesting that those are hers, or at least that she bought them for him. This again emphasizes her individual achievement because she has money to spend (Banet-Weiser 205).

In the following chorus, Beyoncé’s lyrics address that she will have “another you in a minute, matter of fact he will be here in a minute” while she sings these lyrics she looks from her watch to the male figure, indicating that he can be replaced easily. The chorus again alternates between the front yard setting and the dressing table setting. In the front yard setting, the male figure gets into the taxi cab and Beyoncé walks towards the house. With her back turned to the cab, she waves him goodbye while walking towards the house, this suggests that she is satisfied with his departure.

The chorus moves to an interlude which is set in the dressing table setting. Beyoncé sits on a stool facing a mirror while singing towards the camera. The camera moves around the décor, showing Beyoncé from different sides, she looks into the mirror to indicate that she is getting ready and feels confident about the way she looks. The music then moves to the pre-chorus with the lyrics “to the left, to the left”. In this pre-chorus the camera moves to a different setting. Beyoncé is performing the song on stage with an all-female African American band. I want to argue that this ties to “girl power inspired feminism” through female empowerment because Beyoncé sings about not needing a man while being surrounded by women (Weidhase 128). She is dressed in baggy green shorts and a high-necked white t-shirt. When Beyoncé sings the lyrics, she and the band all point their fingers to the left. This shot is alternated with the dressing table setting. Beyoncé has removed her rollers and walks around the room, picking out clothes to wear. She again sings towards the camera and the “male gaze” (Mulvey 837).

When the pre-chorus moves to the final chorus, these scenes are alternated with a shot of Beyoncé sitting on a couch with her hair down, dressed in jeans and a different corset-like top. She seems to have gotten ready and seems to be waiting for someone to arrive. The camera is zoomed in on her face and upper body, while she looks flirtatiously into the camera, again addressing the “male gaze” (Mulvey 837). When the song is over, Beyoncé gets up from the couch and walks towards the front door. The camera films a shot from outside the house which shows Beyoncé opening up the door to a new male figure. Judging by her facial expressions, she seems happy that he arrived.

The main narrative of the music video revolves around female empowerment. This female empowerment ties to the theories of post-feminism because the video emphasizes Beyoncé's financial independence and her individual achievement. She owns the house and the car, the male figure has to get out of the house and "call a cab" because he does not own a car nor a house. This emphasizes female empowerment through commodity culture and personal success (Banet-Weiser 205).

Similarly, Brooks recognizes the theme of "black women's access to property, ownership, and modes of production" on Beyoncé's *B'Day* (2006) record (184). While I believe "Irreplaceable" fits into the framework of post-feminism and commodity culture, Brooks reads more into it. Brooks argues that *B'Day* (2006) in its entirety reflects a new development in Beyoncé's artistry. While she argues that both Destiny's Child and her first solo album *Dangerously in Love* (2003) portrayed her as a "daddy's girl, naughty-but-nice" icon, *B'Day* (2006) reflects Black women's "personal and spiritual discontent, satiation, self-worth, and agency" (184). In other words, Beyoncé as an artist became more focused on voicing the sentiments and discontent of African American women. According to Brooks, Beyoncé creates a platform for these women by voicing their discontent in the public sphere and creating a narrative of self-empowerment (201).

Moreover, I want to argue that creating this platform ties to Black feminism in the sense that it provides women with "self-definition" (Hill Collins 221). Hill Collins recognizes music and the female voice as an important "safe space" for Black female "self-definition" (103). Rose also recognizes the importance of black female music in defining "women's racial, sexual, and political identities" (153). Hill Collins argues that music is able to resist the stereotypes that are out there and create a sense of "self-definition" and identity for African American women (105). I think *B'Day* (2006), and more specifically "Irreplaceable", provides African American women with a sense of identity and "self-definition" because it includes a cast of African American female figures and it reflects and voices their discontent. It also empowers them with narratives of financial independence and female unification. However, the music video does not challenge stereotypes or patriarchal society because Beyoncé eventually ends up with a new man to make her happy. She is also still portrayed as a sexually desirable woman directed towards the "male gaze" (Mulvey 837) when she is only wearing a bra and a skirt.

3.1.4 "If I were a Boy" (2008)

"If I were a Boy" is the first single from Beyoncé's third solo album *I am... Sasha Fierce*

(2008). The song was written by American singer-songwriter BC Jean and German Los-Angeles based producer Toby Gad who sold the song to Beyoncé. Beyoncé then produced the song together with Toby Gad. The music video was directed by Jake Nava, who shot the video in black and white.

The video opens with an up-close shot of Beyoncé saying “intimacy”. There is no music yet, nor are there lyrics of the song. She is dressed in a white tank top, her hair seems wet and she seems to wear no make-up, I would suggest that this makes her look natural and vulnerable. The camera then shifts to an up-close shot of an African American male figure dressed in a black tank top who says “honesty”. The camera shifts back to Beyoncé again who says “commitment”. The camera then goes back to the male figure who says “you”, the sound indicates that Beyoncé says “you” at the same time. The camera then shows a shot of Beyoncé again who says “me”, the male figure’s voice says “me” at the same time. Then the camera shifts to a different setting where Beyoncé’s back is filmed while she puts on a white tank top. In the background the word “us” is voiced by both Beyoncé and the male figure. These words and these shots suggest that Beyoncé and the male figure are in a relationship based on these values.

Following this introduction, the song starts to play and the camera follows Beyoncé walking down the stairs. She walks into the kitchen where her husband has prepared breakfast for the two of them. Beyoncé is dressed in a white tank top and black pants, her hair is tied into a pony tail. Beyoncé briefly takes food from the table and then walks away. The male figure is left alone at the table, finishing his breakfast all by himself. The camera then shows a shot of Beyoncé dressed up in a police uniform, which implies that she is a police officer who is heading off to work. The song is played in the background and it connects to the setting by also addressing “roll[ing] out of bed in the morning, throw[ing] on what I wanted and go”. This is exactly what Beyoncé is doing in the video. She waves her husband goodbye and leaves the house. The camera then shows her getting into a police car with her white male colleague.

During the chorus, Beyoncé’s day at work is shown through various shots of her doing police work. She is part of a car chase, and she is talking and laughing together with her male colleagues. The camera then shifts to a shot of her husband who is now also at work behind a desk at an office. He is browsing on his laptop for earrings, possibly for Beyoncé. The camera alternates between the two settings. While she is handing out parking tickets, Beyoncé is gazed upon by her male colleague, he seems to fancy her. The camera then shows Beyoncé and her colleague at a shooting range, Beyoncé helps her colleague to position himself better,

they smile at each other as if they fancy one another.

The song then moves into the second verse, the camera films Beyoncé standing in a locker room setting. She is dressed in black pants and a bra, which implies that she is changing into her regular clothes because she is finished at work. The camera moves to a restaurant setting where the audience sees Beyoncé eating together with her colleagues. This scene alternates with a shot of her husband who is trying to call her from work. Beyoncé is then filmed while denying her husband's call and turning off her phone. This ties to the lyrics because she sings that

“if I were a boy, I would turn off my phone,
tell everyone it is broken,
so they would think that I was sleeping alone”
(Beyoncé – “If I were a Boy”)

The combination of the video and the lyrics suggests that Beyoncé does not want to talk to her husband because she wants to spend more time with her colleagues. The camera then films Beyoncé's husband who denies an offer to go out with his female colleagues. This ties to the lyrics “I know that she would be faithful, waiting for me to come home”. In this case, the husband performs as the faithful woman.

During the second chorus, Beyoncé is at work again, arresting a convict in the middle of a street setting. While she arrests the convict, her male colleague gazes at her buttocks. The “male gaze” (Mulvey 837) is underscored by only framing Beyoncé's behind together with the male colleague who is staring at it from a distance (Figure 4). This emphasizes Beyoncé's sexual desirability because “black butts” are considered to be the epitome of black female sexuality (Railton and Watson 97; Rose 167; hooks 63). The video then moves to a different setting where Beyoncé and her husband are in a car. Beyoncé is at the driver's seat, which indicates that she is in charge. She is dressed in a black turtleneck dress and her hair is down. Her husband hands her a box with the earrings that he was looking at on his laptop during work. Beyoncé seems happy with the gift, she gives her husband a hug. The camera then shows a road, which implies that they are driving towards a destination. This destination is a party setting where Beyoncé is shown dancing intimately with her male colleague. Her husband is watching from afar. When Beyoncé seems to realize that he is watching, she walks away from her colleague to her husband. She wants to give him a kiss, but he rejects her and walks away angrily. Beyoncé looks astonished by the fact that he rejected her.

The chorus is followed by an interlude, the camera films the two of them in the car back home. This time, her husband is driving, suggesting that he is in charge. These shots connect to the lyrics because Beyoncé sings that

“It is a little too late for you to come back,
say it is just a mistake,
think I would forgive you like that,
if you thought I would wait for you,
you thought wrong” (Beyoncé – “If I were a Boy”)

In other words, Beyoncé’s husband no longer accepts Beyoncé’s behavior and is now putting his foot down. This is also what happens in the video.

The music and lyrics then fall silent and the two characters are filmed having a conversation. Beyoncé is sitting at a dressing table and her husband is standing behind her. She looks into the mirror while combing her hair. Her husband looks at her and says: “you know, when you act like that, I do not think you realize how it makes me look or feel”. Beyoncé then turns around and says: “Act like what? Why are you so jealous? It is not like I am sleeping with the guy”. Her husband responds by saying “What?”, Beyoncé then also responds with “What?”, after this moment, there is a silence where both figures look at one another. After the silence, the male figure says: “I said why are you so jealous? It is not like I am sleeping with the girl”. The gender roles now seem to be reversed again and the video shows a close-up of Beyoncé’s face looking into the camera. A tear is falling from her eye, which implies that she is hurt by her husband’s behavior. The changing gender roles are also present in the lyrics because the narrative switches from “I” to “you”.

In the final part of the song the second scene of the video is replayed with the changed gender roles. This time, Beyoncé makes breakfast for her husband and her husband goes off to work in his police uniform. He gets into a car with his female colleague and he leaves Beyoncé to eat breakfast by herself. After her husband got into the car, the video shows a close-up shot of Beyoncé’s face in a similar setting as the opening scene. This time, Beyoncé sings to the camera which suggests that she is now singing from a personal point of view because she now has the female role. The video ends with this close-up shot and Beyoncé saying “but you are just a boy” into the camera, implying that men do not understand what it is like to be a woman.

The narrative of the video is changing gender roles which ties to the lyrics when

Beyoncé sings what she would do if she “were a boy”. Throughout the video, Beyoncé performs as a man, and the male figure performs as a woman. I want to argue that this ties to the concept of gender performativity by Butler. Butler argues that gender roles are entirely subjective and can therefore be taken on and performed by every person (25). Beyoncé and the male figure take on each other’s idealized gender norms with Beyoncé being the police officer who arrests convicts and teaches her male colleague how to shoot his gun properly and the male figure preparing breakfast and waiting by the phone for Beyoncé to call him back. Nonetheless, while she performs male gender roles, Beyoncé’s looks still fit the female gender binary. She wears a dress, make-up, earrings, and heels. She also still performs as a passive object for the pleasure of the “male gaze” (Mulvey 837). The looks of the male figure also still fit the male gender binary because he wears jeans and blouse, and has a shaved head. I want to argue that the music video reverses gender roles, but it eventually enforces the idealized “binary structure” when these roles are reversed again (Butler 6).

Nonetheless, by reversing these gender roles within a media representation, I want to argue that Beyoncé challenges the role of women within the patriarchal order. In reversing these roles, Beyoncé shows how African American women are treated within the “Black male-controlled universe” (Hill Collins 129). With this message, I think Beyoncé empowers women because she shows them that they deserve better. Nonetheless, Beyoncé does not leave the male figure which enforces the patriarchal order again. The video also still underlines Beyoncé’s femininity and sexual desirability by emphasizing her buttocks in connection to the “male gaze” (Mulvey 837). I think this music video fits the framework of black feminism by challenging the relations between men and women in the patriarchal order, however, it does not actively challenge the stereotypes of black womanhood, nor does it break out of the patriarchal order.

3.1.5 “Run the World (Girls)” (2011)

“Run the World (Girls)” was released as the lead single from Beyoncé’s fourth studio album *4* (2011). Beyoncé co-wrote and co-produced the song with a team of producers and songwriters. Her music video was directed by Francis Lawrence, a Los Angeles-based Austrian director. The fact that Beyoncé works together with white men again indicates that her agency is influenced by white male hegemony (Dyer 31; hooks 67).

The music video opens with a sample that builds up to the actual beat and melody of the song. Beyoncé is filmed from behind, she wears her blonde hair down and she is riding a horse in a deserted landscape setting. This shot is alternated with shots of the area, which

show that the area belongs to rebellious women. The sample in the background and the alternating shots are edited to be in sync; the shots change at the pace and rhythm of the drums in the sample. There is also a shot where a woman smashes her fist on an abandoned vehicle prop in line with the rhythm of the sample. Furthermore, shots of Beyoncé standing in the desert are mimicking the voice-like sample in the background. These shots are alternated with a shot of rioting female figures, they are running around in some kind of mosh pit, this implies that they are probably rebellious. This shot is followed by a number of male figures in riot gear that pull up in a car. They carry shields and wear helmets, this suggests that the rebellious female figures might be dangerous. This is followed by more shots of the deserted area and female figures coming out of cages. Then the camera films a shot of a cast of multiracial female figures standing together with Beyoncé at the center. There is a lion sitting in the right-hand corner, this suggests courage and fierceness. This fierceness is also reflected in the faces of the women. After this shot, there is a close-up shot of Beyoncé's face, she is wearing a headdress which makes her look like the queen or the leader of the pack. The camera then shifts back to the group of women standing together.

During the first verse, the camera zooms in on Beyoncé, who starts a dance routine when the lyrics start to play. Beyoncé dubs the lyrics while she is dancing to the beat. She is wearing a black romper with a golden belt and choker. Her hair is blonde and looks frizzy and wild. Railton and Watson recognize wild hair as an indication of being uncontrolled and untamed (98). Hooks also recognizes that wild hair is a signifier of “animalistic sexuality” for African American women (70). The fact that her hair is blonde emphasizes her beauty because it signifies her “closeness to whiteness” (Hill Collins 80). In the scene, the women in the background stress the word “girls” in the lyrics by thrusting a fist in the air every time the word is sung. During her dance routine, Beyoncé is joined by two African American male figures. This dance routine is alternated with a shot of Beyoncé seducing the men in riot gear. Because her body is objectified and dressed in revealing costumes, Beyoncé is meant to evoke sexual desirability (hooks 72). Beyoncé then takes one of these men down by jumping on them. This shot is alternated with a shot of Beyoncé holding two enormous hyenas on leashes, this suggest that she is powerful. The camera then returns to Beyoncé and the male figures in riot gear, she crawls on hands and knees towards the camera. These movements associate her with the wildness and “animal-like” behavior that was ascribed to African Americans in colonial times (Railton and Watson 91).

The verse is followed by the chorus which shows a shot of Beyoncé in the deserted landscape setting. She is wearing another black romper with a long cape. Her hair is put up

and her hands rest on her hips, putting emphasis on her feminine body. This shot is alternated with another shot of Beyoncé in the landscape setting, she is wearing a glitter dress and her hair is put up again. She looks into the camera seductively and she licks a ring she is wearing. This costume makes her look fierce, this again ties to the lyrics because she sings “endless power”, and “you will do anything for me” which indicates that she is in charge. The camera then moves to a close-up of Beyoncé’s face when she sings: “Who run the world? Girls!”. When she says the word “girls” her facial expression becomes fierce, in the background there is an explosion of fire.

The editing of these shots puts emphasis on the word “girls” as the main narrative of this music video. The rest of the chorus is filled with shots of Beyoncé in a leather coat and dark make-up, standing on top of a car and a shot of the male figures in riot gear attempting to contain the women. Finally, the chorus moves into a dance routine again. This time, Beyoncé is dressed in a yellow dress which is cut on the side of each leg, revealing both legs entirely. The cast of multiracial female figures is dressed in black leotards with capes and suspenders. The capes suggest that they are superheroes. When the word “girls” is mentioned, there is a shot of a line of female figures with police caps. The camera then shifts back the dance routine again, the women are dancing to attack the male figures in riot gear.

During the second verse, the dance routine shot continues. The female figures are on hands and feet, this puts attention on their buttocks, I want to argue that this makes them seem more sexually accessible. This ties to the racialized framework of white men’s obsession with “Black butts” (hooks 63). The black female buttocks is considered to be the epitome of black sexuality, therefore it is quite often emphasized in music videos and other representations in popular media (Railton and Watson 97; Rose 167). The fact that the female figures are on hands and feet ties to the notion that Black female bodies were more primitive and “animal like” and therefore more connected to uncontrolled sexuality and wildness (Railton and Watson 91). The shot of the dance routine is alternated with a shot of the women rioting and a shot of Beyoncé in the sand. She is wearing a black leotard which reveals a lot of skin. She moves around on hands and feet, again emphasizing her buttocks. From this shot the camera moves to another dance routine. Beyoncé is joined by a larger cast of female figures than in the previous dance routine. The female figures are wearing the same outfits, but Beyoncé is dressed in a different costume. She is wearing a green dress which reveals her legs entirely and has cuts near her bosom.

This dance routine setting continues in the final chorus. The women thrust their fists in the air when the lyrics “who are we?” are sung. The connection between the camera shot and

the lyrics suggests empowerment. The women move towards the male figures in riot gear while dancing. The song ends when Beyoncé stands in front of the male officer and rips off his badge, all women then salute him as if they were in the army (Figure 5). I want to argue that these militaristic movements throughout the video play with the imagery of Black radicalism. Similar to Spike Lee, Beyoncé uses her African American heritage as a means of marketing in this music video. This imagery emphasizes her “relationship to Blackness”, however, it does not specifically address the political ideology behind Black Power (Abernethy, 216).

Throughout the video, Beyoncé is dressed in revealing costumes where the emphasis is put on her feminine body. This ties to the issue that black women in music videos are more often dressed in revealing apparel to evoke some sense of sexual desirability (hooks 72; Turner 182). Furthermore, Ward recognizes that the video’s costumes were designed by a number of high-end fashion designers such as Givenchy and Chanel (156). Beyoncé wanted the female figures to wear couture costumes, Ward connects this to a pattern he terms “commodity fetishism” (156). He argues that Beyoncé uses expensive products to convey a message of militarism and protest (156). These commodities distort the message of Black radicalism and protest because it is mostly focused on commodity culture instead of addressing a specific political movement of Black Power. Hooks argues in line with this in her essay *Moving Beyond Pain* (2016). I want to argue that this focus on commodities links to certain characteristics of post-feminism.

Throughout the video, Beyoncé and her crew are dressed in couture outfits. This ties to prestige and having money to spend within a capitalist society. Moreover, in her lyrics she sings about girls “who will buy it for themselves, and get more money later”. She also states that women are “smart enough to make these millions, strong enough to bare the children, then get back to business”. These lyrics all tie to “female achievement” and being a successful independent woman with money to spend (Tasker and Negra 7). Women become empowered because they can make their own money and buy their own things. This connects to post-feminism because it emphasizes a woman’s freedom and independence as an “empowered consumer” within a western capitalist society (Tasker and Negra 2). Post-feminism focuses on women as individuals who are allowed to treat themselves with “retail pleasures” (Tasker and Negra 7). This is exactly what the couture costumes and the lyrics in “Run the World (Girls)” emphasize.

Furthermore, post-feminism identifies women of all ages as “girls”. This is also a recurring theme throughout the lyrics and even the title of the song (Tasker and Negra 18).

This ties to the term “girl power”, which is a main theme in post-feminist discourse. “Girl power” mainly emphasizes individual female achievement as a form of empowerment for women (Banet-Weiser 207). Finally, post-feminism objectifies women’s bodies because they argue that the “problem of objectification” is in the past and this objectification can be used as a form of empowerment (Banet-Weiser 211). I think the objectification of Black female bodies and the emphasis on “girl power” are clearly present throughout the lyrics and the video. Chatman argues in line with this by stating that “Run the World (Girls)” is a “women-centered anthem” that celebrates “girl power” (931).

With regards to the core themes of Black feminism as identified by Hill Collins (23), I want to argue that “Run the World (Girls)” creates a platform of female empowerment for Black women within the “safe space” of music (Hill Collins 103). It also plays with the theme of black female activism in the sense that it shows images of militaristic African American women, however, it does not specifically address any politicized struggle nor does it challenge stereotypes of Black womanhood (Hill Collins 23).

3.1.6 “Partition” (2013)

“Partition” is a song from Beyoncé’s self-titled fifth studio album. Beyoncé co-wrote and co-produced the song together with a team of producers and musicians consisting of, among others, Justin Timberlake and Timbaland. The video for “Partition” was directed by Jake Nava, who shot the video in the Crazy Horse cabaret club in Paris, France. The fact that Beyoncé works together with only men again indicates that her agency is influenced by the patriarchal order that influences the institutions of media and popular culture (Dyer 31; hooks 67). However, according to Trageser, Beyoncé fired her father as her manager before recording this album. She also decided to release all 13 songs of the album as singles with accompanying music videos, these videos were shot on her terms and based on her vision (4). As a final move to reclaim her agency, Beyoncé named the album after herself (4). These actions show that Beyoncé re-claimed her self-authorship and agency within a male-dominated industry.

The video starts with various shots of a mansion setting which suggests that the residents of the house are wealthy. The camera then films Beyoncé sitting at the opposite side of the table, the video shows a newspaper which blocks most of Beyoncé’s face. This suggests that the audience gazes upon Beyoncé from the viewpoint of her husband, the “male gaze” (Mulvey 837). When the newspaper is put away, the camera captures Beyoncé’s entire face and upper body. She sits at the table, her hair is short and blonde, she is wearing glasses and

she is dressed in a robe. She is wearing red lipstick and red nail polish, the color red usually suggests lust, love or danger. The newspaper then blocks the shot of Beyoncé again, suggesting that her husband continues to read the newspaper. All of this was done in silence, when a clock strikes, Beyoncé takes off her glasses and reveals the lingerie that she is wearing underneath the robe. The sound of the clock counts in the rhythm of the baseline and the beat of the music, this baseline continues throughout the entire song. The camera shifts to a shot of Beyoncé dressed in a leotard which is covered in diamonds. She still has short blonde hair and she is wearing heavy make-up and a black top hat. She looks into a mirror of a dressing table setting, which suggests that she is getting ready. The camera then alternates between this scene and the dinner table setting. Beyoncé gazes sensually at the opposite side of the table, as if she is fantasizing about having sex.

Then the lyrics start and Beyoncé is filmed standing in a driveway in the dark. She is dressed in a black leather coat, lingerie, a black top hat, suspenders, and long stockings. Her hair is tied into a long blonde ponytail. The lights that make her visible are the headlights of a limousine. The car is also mentioned in the lyrics when Beyoncé sings “driver roll up the partition please”, suggesting that she is in a limousine. This setting is alternated with the dressing table setting. Beyoncé dubs the lyrics in both settings. Then the door of the limousine opens in the driveway scene. This is followed by a shot of Jay-Z and Beyoncé in the back of the limousine. His hands are touching her legs and she kisses his cheek, suggesting that they are going to have sex in the car. This links to the lyrics when Beyoncé sings “we ain’t even going to make it to this club, he so horny yeah he wants to fuck”. This scene is alternated with the driveway setting and the dressing table setting.

When the verse ends, the video shows Beyoncé slowly appearing from behind a stage. She is wearing a beaded headdress and a beaded leotard. The camera alternates with a different scene where Beyoncé is wearing a black strapless top, black underwear, and a lace kimono. She is sitting on her knees on top of a black piano. In both scenes, Beyoncé is touching her body and her hair, emphasizing her feminine body and her sexual availability (hooks 72).

As the scenes develop and the second verse starts, anonymous hands emerge from behind the stage setting, these hands also touch Beyoncé’s body, again emphasizing her curves and her body. In the other scene, the camera zooms out and it is suggested that Beyoncé is being watched by a male figure. The back of his head is shown in the left-hand corner of the camera frame (Figure 6). Beyoncé literally performs as a passive object for the pleasure of the “male gaze” (Mulvey 837). In the stage setting, Beyoncé’s back and buttocks

are filmed in a close-up shot. There is a connection to the lyrics because she sings “handprints and good grips all on my ass”. The fact that her bare buttocks is on display connects to the Black female buttocks as the epitome of Black female sexuality (Railton and Watson 97; Rose 167, hooks 63). Her body is almost naked except for the strings that hold together her beaded leotard. This scene is alternated with the shots of anonymous female legs. These legs are upside down on a theater setting, moving in sync with the rhythm of the music, suggesting that they are part of a show.

When the chorus starts again, Beyoncé is shot in a pole dancing setting together with four African American female figures. The dancers perform a pole dance routine with Beyoncé in the center. They are dressed in lingerie and high heels. Beyoncé has long blonde hair again. The emphasis of their movements is on their buttocks and their hair. Both the buttocks and hair are signifiers of “animalistic” Black female sexuality (Railton and Watson 97, hooks 70). The dance routine scene is alternated with a shot of Beyoncé’s body lying on a spinning platform. She is dressed in a lace leotard which only covers her bosom and her pubic region.

During the interlude, Beyoncé performs a solo dance routine on a chair-like prop. Her naked silhouette is shown against a purple background, this adds an element of fantasy for the “male gaze” (Mulvey 837). This shot is followed by a shot of a man sitting in a chair, lighting a cigar and watching this routine, this again enforces the “male gaze” as identified by Mulvey (837). Beyoncé’s dance routine is alternated with the stage setting where Beyoncé performs a similar routine. In the background of these scenes, there is a French voice talking about sexual relations. The French voice states that men think that feminists hate sex but that it is a natural activity that women love. In this part, the lyrics suggest that Beyoncé connects herself to feminism and that she loves sex. However, this narration does not tie Beyoncé to any specific feminist ideology.

The final chorus shows another dance routine on a different stage. Beyoncé is dressed in lingerie and a leopard print is projected on her skin. Projecting an animal print on her skin connects her to wildness, and “animalistic sexuality” (hooks 70). She is dancing together with a female background dancer. The emphasis of the movement in the dance routine is again on her buttocks, again emphasizing her sexual accessibility and availability (hooks 66). This scene is alternated with a shot of Beyoncé and Jay-Z in the back of the car again, looking sensually at one another. Finally, the music video ends with the dinner table scene and the striking of the clock which counted the music in, suggesting that this was all part of Beyoncé’s imagination while she was looking at her husband across the table.

Throughout the music video, Beyoncé is dressed in a number of revealing costumes which emphasize her feminine body. This ties to the issue that black women in music videos are often dressed in revealing apparel to evoke some sense of sexual desirability (hooks 72; Turner 182). This ties to the lyrics and the theme of the music video because she is openly addressing her sexuality. These costumes make her look sexually desirable, which strengthens the message of the music video and the song.

With regards to Black feminism, I want to argue that “Partition” connects to the core theme of openly addressing Black female sexuality. Hammonds and Rose argue that the silence that surrounds black female sexuality needs to be broken (Hammonds 10; Rose 168). This silence can be broken by engaging in the “politics of articulation” (Hammonds 21). Beyoncé engages in this articulation by openly addressing the joys of sex. Through a French narrator, the music video also addresses the notion that it is completely natural for feminists to enjoy the pleasures sex. Trageser argues that this serves as evidence that the video is also “implicitly sexual” (5). However, I think that in fetishizing her sexuality, Beyoncé also runs the risk of enforcing the stereotype of the “jezebel” (Hill Collins 77) and the narrative of “promiscuity” (Hill Collins 98) that surrounds Black women. In addition, Beyoncé still works within the framework of the patriarchal society because she states “I just want to be the girl you like” which emphasizes the importance of pleasing her man instead of focusing attention on her own sexual pleasures. Trageser also argues that this was the main aim of the video; she quotes Beyoncé stating that she wanted to perform a sexual show in the Crazy Horse club for her husband. This was the inspiration for the video of “Partition” (Trageser 5).

However, Trageser also offers an interesting angle where she states that Beyoncé explicitly addresses her eroticized body in “Partition” as a means to seize “the thing that was used against her and control it” with her newly gained agency (6). “She is taking back the power of her body and celebrating her sexual agency” (Trageser 6). In other words, Beyoncé celebrates her self-control by exploiting the image of her objectified body. Hansen recognizes this pattern in her analysis of “Partition” as well. She states that the narrative of the video is inspired by “the idea of empowerment through sexual display” (175). I want to argue that this empowerment through objectification is a post-feminist move. Nonetheless, within the framework of Black feminism it can still be considered problematic because it oversexualizes the Black female body and plays into the concept of “promiscuity” (98).

3.1.7 “Formation” (2016)

“Formation” was released as the lead single from Beyoncé’s sixth studio album *Lemonade*

(2016). Beyoncé again co-wrote and co-produced the song with a team of male producers. The music video was directed by Swedish director Jonas Akerlund. *Lemonade* (2016) was not released on Spotify, instead it was released on Tidal, a music streaming service which is owned by Beyoncé's husband, Jay-Z. I would argue that this ties to Black power in the sense that Jay-Z and Beyoncé created their own media platform away from the white-controlled media institutions. This ties to Carmichael's argument that Black people should create their own platforms and organizations, just like they did in the 1960s (809).

The video starts with Beyoncé squatting down on a New Orleans police car which is half underwater. She is surrounded by an urban setting which is flooded, I want to argue that it refers to hurricane Katrina that hit New Orleans in 2004. This shot is joined with the voice of an African American genderqueer narrator called Messy Mya that says "What happened at the New Orleans?", also referring to the setting. It also evokes a question what happened to him, since he was murdered in New Orleans but the killer was never caught (*New South Negress*). After this, the beat of the music starts and the camera alternates between shots of police officers, shots of New Orleans, and a close-up shot of Beyoncé in front of a plantation home setting, surrounded by five male figures dressed in black suits. Beyoncé is dressed in a black dress, chunky jewelry, and an enormous top hat that covers her eyes. Her hair is braided into two long, blonde braids. This shot of Beyoncé with the genderqueer voice of Messy Mya saying "Bitch, I'm back", suggests that Beyoncé is back with a new album. After this shot, there are alternating shots of flooded houses, a priest, and flashing lights. The editing of the shots is in sync with the rhythm of the beat; the shots are alternated on every first count of the beat.

When the verse starts, the camera moves to a close-up shot of Beyoncé sitting on the police car in the flooded urban setting. This shot is alternated with a shot of cameras, referring to her lyrics when she sings "Paparazzi, catch my fly and my cocky fresh" and a shot of her in a white lace dress with her hair tied into a bun, referring to her lyrics "I'm so reckless when I rock my Givenchy dress". She is holding a lace umbrella and she is sitting on a chair in a living room setting. The camera then moves to Beyoncé in a red low-cut leotard and her hair put up with braids. She is wearing a chunky necklace and black lace stockings. The scene is set in the hallway of a house, she is performing a dance routine together with two female dancers who are dressed in similar costumes. The camera moves back and forth between the police car setting, the hallway setting and the living room setting. When the lyrics sing "baby hair afros", a shot of Beyoncé's daughter, Blue Ivy, is shown, she is dressed in a white dress and she has her hair in an afro haircut. The camera then moves to Beyoncé driving by in a car,

she leans outside the window as the car drives past. She wears a fur coat and her hair is braided into numerous small braids, referring to her Creole heritage.

When the second verse starts with the beat again, the camera again shows shots of the area, these shots are filmed as if the audience were driving by in a car. This shot is alternated with the top hat scene and a shot of a shop that sells weaves. This scene is accompanied by the voice of genderqueer narrator Big Freedia who says “I like cornbread and collard greens, bitch” I want to argue that the connection between the narrator and the shot of the shop setting ties to Southern Black heritage. When the lyrics start, the camera films a shot of female figures sitting on a concrete floor, they have afro hairstyles and are dressed in grey tops and bottoms. The emphasis of this shot is on the afro hairstyles. The camera then briefly returns to the a shot of the top hat scene and then returns to the afro hairstyles, this time Beyoncé is at the center of this scene. She stands out because her hair is not in an afro, it is braided into cornrows instead, another African hairstyle. They perform a dance routine together as the verse progresses. This scene is alternated with shots of the top hat scene and shots of male African American basketball players wearing red jerseys and afros. This links to the lyrics because Beyoncé sings about liking “afros” and “negro nose[s]”.

During the chorus, the camera moves back to the hallway setting with a dance routine. This scene alternates with the car scene where Beyoncé hangs outside the window. She moves her braids back and forth, emphasizing her African hairstyle. This scene moves to a living room setting where Beyoncé is dressed in a white dress and a white hat. She is sitting on a couch and is surrounded by five African American female figures who are also dressed in white dresses. This is then alternated with another dance routine which is set in a parking lot. This scene is filmed with a vintage camera to give it a nineties feel. Beyoncé has frizzy blonde hair and is dressed in a jeans jacket, a crop top and high-waisted shorts. She is accompanied by African American female figures. They get into an ‘X’ shaped formation, I want to argue that this ties to the Malcolm X imagery as described by Abernethy. African American artists such as Beyoncé use this imagery as a platform for the legacy of Black activism. Abernethy also recognizes that artists use this imagery to define “their relationship to blackness” (216). These scenes are alternated with shots of anonymous African American male and female figures and the top hat scene where Beyoncé shows her middle fingers to the camera.

When the second verse starts, the camera moves back to the police car setting. This scene is again alternated with shots of anonymous African American male and female figures. When Beyoncé sings “I dream it, I work hard” the video shows an African American male

figure holding a newspaper called “The Truth” with on its front page a photo of Martin Luther King with the caption “more than a dreamer” (Figure 7). Here the video again plays with the legacy of Black power and civil rights by using the imagery of Martin Luther King. This again defines Beyoncé’s “relationship to blackness” (Abernethy 216).

Throughout the chorus, the parking lot setting is alternated with the afro hairstyle dance routine and the top hat scene and more shots of the urban New Orleans area. Two other shots that stand out are a shot of a little African American boy dancing on the street in front of a line of officers dressed in riot gear and a shot of an African American male figure in a priest costume dubbing Beyoncé’s “I slay” when he is preaching in an African American church setting with African American male and female figures cheering him on and dancing. Another shot that stands out is the little boy putting his hands up and the officers following his orders. This is followed by a shot of graffiti on a wall that states “stop shooting us”, referring to the violence against black bodies. I want to argue that this fits into the legacy of Black Power and the current Black Lives Matter ideology. It also links to the donation of 1.5 million dollars that Beyoncé’s husband Jay-Z made to Black Lives Matter and other social justice funds only a few days before this video was released (*New South Negress*).

In the lines of the final chorus, the video shows a shot of the top hat setting, Beyoncé reveals her eyes and looks into the camera and says “always stay gracious, best revenge is your paper”, making hand gestures that indicate having money. I would argue that this ties to post-feminism because it suggests that earning money can serve as a form of empowerment and individual achievement (Banet-Weiser 205). However, it could also be interpreted as a way to beat the white patriarchal order by becoming more successful than they are. The video ends with a shot of Beyoncé on the police car that is slowly being flooded by water. The police car symbolizes the power of the state and Beyoncé sacrifices herself to bring down the state. On the website *Newsouthnegress.com*, Robinson argues that this also ties to the efforts of the Black Lives Matter movement and Black liberation because Beyoncé sacrifices her own life as a form of resistance against the state.

I want to argue that the entire video is layered with the legacy of Black activism. The video films shots of ordinary Black people from New Orleans, emphasizing heritage and Black pride. Beyoncé sings about liking African American hairstyles and facial features. These African American features are also visually represented throughout the video by showing various people with afros, cornrows, and broad noses. In their analysis of *Lemonade* (2016), Edgar and Toone also recognize the importance of Black pride in “Formation” (6).

In addition, Beyoncé emphasizes her own Black Southern heritage by singing

“my daddy Alabama, momma Louisiana,
 you mix that negro with that Creole,
 make a Texas bama”

She recognizes her parents' heritage and links their heritage to her own roots as a “Texas bama”. According to the Urban Dictionary, a “bama” is a Southerner (*Urban Dictionary*). The video plays with the imagery and legacy of the civil rights movement, Black Power, and slavery by showing images of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King and standing in front of a plantation home setting. By recognizing Beyoncé's own Southern and Creole heritage and Black heritage in general, the video is in line with Carmichael's argument that Black people should “unite, recognize their heritage, [and] build a sense of community” (808).

This emphasis on Black heritage also links to the ideology of Black feminism. Throughout the video, the human figures that are filmed are all African American and predominantly female. I want to argue that the video ties to the “legacy of struggle” because it shows images of a hurricane-stricken New Orleans which is still struggling to get back on its feet (Hill Collins 22; hooks 51). The video also shows shots of working class African Americans in the area, recognizing their efforts. The video also ties to the core theme of Black female activism because it plays with the imagery of the civil rights movement when Beyoncé states “okay ladies, now let's get in formation”, suggesting that Black women should organize and resist.

In connection to this, Robinson argues that the title “Formation” is a Black feminist metaphor for “community organizing and resistance” (*New South Negress*). She argues that by ordering women to “get in formation”, Beyoncé critiques the white patriarchal order and argues that Black women should get organized and unite in order to be able to fight this order (*New South Negress*). This call for “formation” ties to the Black feminist core theme of defying “denigrating images of Black womanhood” that keep the patriarchal order in check (Hill Collins 23). Beyoncé also challenges these stereotypes by showing shots of ordinary African American women “at the margins” (*New South Negress*). Hill Collins argues that these stereotypes mainly apply to working class women (103). In showing shots of ordinary Black women, Beyoncé empowers these women and challenges these stereotypes. The call to unite also ties to the legacy of Black Power which states that Black people should organize in order to fight the white-controlled society (Carmichael 808).

In addition, the narrative of African American heritage that is present throughout the

video ties to the concept of “self-definition” (Hill Collins 28) and “self-identity” (Carmichael 810) that is central to the creation of an “Afrocentric feminist consciousness” that encourages resistance. As has been mentioned before, Hill Collins identifies music and the use of the Black female voice as a “safe space” for “self-definition” (103). Beyoncé has the potential to define “women’s racial, sexual, and political identities” (Rose 153). The video empowers Black women by emphasizing that they “slay”, suggesting that women can be successful too. Similarly, she argues that “you just might be a Black Bill Gates in the making”, suggesting that African American women have the potential to be as successful as her too. The video also affirms Black women’s racial identities by emphasizing the beauty of “afros” and “negro noses” which also has an empowering effect.

Moreover, the lyrics openly engage in the “politics of articulation” by openly addressing sexuality (Hammonds 21). Beyoncé sings “when he fuck me good, I take his ass to Red Lobster”, suggesting her sexual dominance. It also again links to Southern heritage because Red Lobster is a Southern food chain that sells seafood (*New South Negress*). By addressing female sexual dominance, the lyrics challenge the patriarchal order by flipping gender roles. The lyrics also flip gender roles when Beyoncé sings:

“if he hit it right, I might take him on a flight in my chopper,
drop him off at the mall, let him buy some J’s,
let him shop up” “(Beyoncé – “Formation”)

This suggests that Beyoncé will pamper her husband with retail pleasures if he does what she wants. This is empowering for Black women because it challenges the gender roles that were enforced by the colonial stereotypes of Black womanhood. Edgar and Toone also recognize the potential of “Formation” and *Lemonade* (2016) in general to resist white supremacist society and challenge the “status quo” (13).

Finally, the music video further challenges the heterosexual patriarchal order by including a genderqueer dimension. The voices that narrate the video belong to two African American genderqueer people from New Orleans. By choosing to include these voices, the video emphasizes the importance of Black Southern heritage and challenges the heterosexual patriarchal order. Nonetheless, the video also enforces idealized gender roles by wearing revealing clothes and emphasizing female curves and Beyoncé’s Black female buttocks in the dance routines. This affirms her sexual desirability within a patriarchal order that is directed at the “male gaze” (Mulvey 837).

3.2 Recurring Audiovisual Patterns

Based on these close readings of selected music videos, a number of patterns can be identified with regards to the concepts of Black activism, feminism, and Black female sexuality.

One of these patterns is Beyoncé's use of her objectified body and the "performativity" of femininity in her music videos (Butler 25). She performs her female gender by enforcing female gender markers such as long hair, wide hips, make-up, and attention to her buttocks. She is also dressed in revealing costumes which accentuate her feminine curves. These costumes tie to Mulvey's argument that women are passive objects that have to dress "for strong visual and erotic impact" which evokes a sense of desire and pleasure for the "male gaze" (837). Beyoncé's "to-be-looked-at-ness" (Mulvey 837) in her music videos as a visually attractive passive object for male pleasure enforces the idealized gender roles of femininity within the gender binary (Butler 7; Hansen 173).

Apart from her costumes, Beyoncé also emphasizes her feminine body with her movements and dance routines. In "Survivor", "Naughty Girl", "Run the World (Girls)", "Partition", and "Formation", the dance routines and movements emphasize her feminine curves. In "Survivor" and "Run the World (Girls)" she is filmed crawling towards the camera on hands and knees, which emphasizes her wildness and thus enforces the colonial discourse on Black female sexuality and an uncontrollable sexual desire (McGruder 104). These movements are also directed at male "voyeurism" because her movements evoke a sense of sexual desirability for "the gaze of male onlookers" (Turner 187). In connection to this, I would argue that these provocative movements play into the concept of "promiscuity" (Hill Collins 98) because she is an African American woman who seems to be sexually available for the pleasure of the "male gaze" (Mulvey 837). In her essay *Moving Beyond Pain* (2016), hooks also argues that Beyoncé's music enforces the colonial discourse of exploiting black female bodies (*Bell Hooks Institute*).

Her objectified body also ties to the colonial stereotypes that were enforced on African American women by white men in the sense that the Black female buttocks was regarded as the epitome of Black female sexuality (Rose 167; Railton and Watson 97; hooks 63). Their "black butts" (hooks 63) were regarded as animal-like and thus more primitive and untamed. This primitiveness was associated with an uncontrollable sexual desire (McGruder 104). Today, these colonial stereotypes are enforced by dressing African American women in revealing attire to emphasize their buttocks and evoke a sense of sexual desirability (hooks

72). I would argue that this sexual desirability through revealing attire is a pattern which recurs in every music video. Additionally, in “Naughty Girl”, “Run the World (Girls)”, and “Partition” the emphasis is put on Beyoncé’s wild hair, which hooks identifies as a signifier of “animalistic sexuality”. Similarly, Railton and Watson recognize wild hair on Black women as a sign of being uncontrolled and untamed (98). This shows that Beyoncé’s artistry fits into the colonial framework of Black female sexuality which objectifies and oversexualizes the Black female body.

While Beyoncé’s sexual desirability is directed towards the “male gaze” (Mulvey 837), I also want to argue that she also engages in the “politics of articulation” which breaks the silence that surrounds Black female sexuality (Hammonds 21). Both Hammonds and Hill Collins argue that it is important for African American women to openly address their sexuality in order to break the uncomfortable silence that surrounds this topic (Hammonds 21; Hill Collins 164). Hill Collins also argues that sex should be “reconceptualized” as a “domain of exploration, pleasure, and human agency” (166). I would argue that in “Naughty Girl”, “Partition”, and “Formation”, Beyoncé’s lyrics address female sexuality and personal agency with regards to sexual relations. She addresses her personal desires and pleasures with regards to sex, however, in “Naughty Girl” and “Partition” she also emphasizes the importance of pleasing her man. At the same time, in “Formation” she reverses the gender roles by singing that her man has to please her which puts her in charge of her personal sexual agency. According to Hill Collins, openly addressing female sexuality is a core theme within Black feminism, I want to argue that Beyoncé definitely addresses this theme in her music based on this selection of music videos (23). In her article *Check on It* (2012), Durham also praises Beyoncé for breaking the silence around Black female sexuality (44).

Another recurring pattern in this selection of music videos is the focus on individual achievement and financial independence as forms of female empowerment (Banet-Weiser 205). Beyoncé sings about being financially independent and being successful as the best “revenge” (Beyoncé – “Formation”). These patterns fit into the framework of post-feminism which emphasizes personal achievement and independence by having money to spend. This female empowerment through financial independence is already present in “Survivor”, and continues to be a theme in “Irreplaceable”, “Run the World (Girls)” and “Formation”.

A pattern which is also part of post-feminism is the “girl[ing]” of femininity, which means that women of all ages are termed as girls and their achievements are termed as “girl power” (Tasker and Negra 18). This pattern of “girl power inspired feminism” (Weidhase 128) is present in both the lyrics and titles of “Naughty Girl” and “Run the World (Girls)”, but

also in the lyrics of “If I were a Boy” and “Partition”. In addition to “girl power”, all of the previously described music videos engage in the objectification of the female body as a form of empowerment, this also fits into the framework of post-feminism (Banet-Weiser 211).

Similarly, Chatman argues that Beyoncé’s songs “communicate a post-feminist sensibility because [they] lack any complex awareness of continuing systemic struggle; instead, they provide an accessible, yet superficially ‘empowering’ version of feminism.” (931). In other words, Beyoncé does empower women with her lyrics and performances, however, her feminist vision does not challenge any pressing themes. I agree with this statement in the sense that many of her earlier songs do not challenge the colonial stereotypes of Black womanhood. However, I want to argue that “Formation” attempts to challenge these stereotypes by showing images of working class women in her video.

“Formation” also attempts to address the pressing theme of the legacy of Black power and Black female activism. By using the imagery of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, the music video defines its “relationship to blackness” (Abernethy 216). Abernethy also argues that using this imagery also establishes a platform for Black activism. By creating such a platform, Beyoncé opens up the conversation about Black female activism and civil rights, this is also recognized by Edgar and Toone in their analysis of *Lemonade* (2016). Edgar and Toone argue that the album provides African American people with an awareness of their heritage and legacy which encourages them to look into the history of Black activism (8). This fits into the framework of Black feminism because both hooks and Hill Collins regard the belief in Black female activism as an important tool to create an “Afrocentric feminist consciousness” and “Black female self-actualization” (Hill Collins 28; hooks 60).

In terms of agency, Beyoncé took control over her own artistry and her music when she fired her father as her manager in 2011 (Weidhase 4). She already co-produced and co-wrote songs when she was part of Destiny’s Child, this means that she has always had some form of control in the process of recording her music. However, when *Beyoncé* (2013) was recorded, she had more agency than ever before because she fired her father and took control over her own image. Griffin also recognizes the fact that Beyoncé controls the “direction of her career” and she states that she therefore does not have to choose between being a “respectable lady” and a “bombshell” anymore (138). Her agency shows in her music and her videos in the sense that she is no longer forced to be a “bombshell”, instead, she exploits this objectified sexuality as a way to make it her own in “Partition”.

Furthermore, Beyoncé’s hair is dyed blonde in the music videos of “Survivor”, “Naughty Girl”, “Run the World (Girls)”, “Partition”, and “Formation”. The fact that she has

blonde hair in the majority of the selection of music videos ties to the white beauty standards which are still enforced in today's society. Blonde hair is regarded as the "epitome of beauty" according to racist aesthetics (hooks 68). Therefore, if Black women want to be considered attractive they have to resemble white women (hooks 73). Similarly, Hill Collins argues that white institutions have a clear preference for African American women with light skin because they are closer to whiteness and can thus be considered beautiful and desirable (80). Because of her blonde hair and light skin, Beyoncé resembles a white woman and is thus accepted as a beautiful and desirable woman by white institutions. Her "black blood" then also enables her to also openly address her sexuality (Griffin 139).

However, in "Formation", her blonde hair is braided, which is a distinct African American hairstyle. I want to argue that this challenges the colonial stereotypes because she combines her light skin and blonde hair with African American hairstyles. In defining her "relationship to blackness" Beyoncé challenges the white beauty standards and empowers Black female beauty standards (Abernethy 216). In addition, she addresses her light complexion in her lyrics when she sings "I see it, I want it, I stunt it, yellow bone it". According to the Urban Dictionary, the phrase "yellow bone" is used to refer to the "lightest type of light skinned Black female" (*Urban Dictionary*). By using this slang in her lyrics, Beyoncé embraces her light complexion and challenges the critiques on her appearance as being too white to be a Black person.

3.3 Conclusion Audiovisual Analysis Music Videos

In conclusion, this selection of music videos definitely addresses the concepts of Black female sexuality, Black activism, and feminism. Based on the results of my audiovisual analysis I will discuss how these concepts were addressed in the selection of music videos.

In "Survivor", "Naughty Girl", "Irreplaceable", "Run the World (Girls)", "Partition", and "Formation", the concept of Black female sexuality is represented by putting emphasis on the objectified Black female body. In all of these videos, Beyoncé is dressed in revealing costumes which evoke a sense of sexual desirability by emphasizing her feminine curves and her buttocks in particular (hooks 72; Rose 167; Railton and Watson 97). In "Survivor" and "Run the World (Girls)", Beyoncé is filmed while crawling on hands and knees towards the camera, these movements evoke a sense of animalistic sexuality which enforces the colonial stereotypes of Black womanhood (Railton and Watson 91). Another way in which Black female sexuality is represented in her music videos is when Beyoncé addresses her sexual desire and sexual relations with her husband in her lyrics in "Naughty Girl", "Partition", and

“Formation”. Throughout the videos, these lyrics are accompanied by provocative and sensual movements which provoke a sense of sexual accessibility and desirability. These representations of Black female sexuality are all directed towards the “male gaze” (Mulvey 837).

Furthermore, Beyoncé’s videos fit into the framework of post-feminism which puts an emphasis on “girl power inspired feminism” (Weidhase 128), individual achievement and empowerment through economic independence (Banet-Weiser 205). The focus on individual achievement and economic independence is mainly present in the lyrics of “Survivor”, “Irreplaceable”, “Formation”. The “girl power” narrative is present in the lyrics of “Naughty Girl”, “If I were a Boy”, “Partition”, and “Run the World (Girls)” which term all women as girls. In addition, these videos also engage in the objectification of the female body as a form of empowerment, which also fits into the framework of post-feminism (Banet-Weiser 211). Furthermore, “Run the World (Girls)” uses designer costumes and sings about earning money, this focus on “retail pleasures” is also part of the post-feminist discourse (Tasker and Negra 7).

Apart from post-feminism, this selection of music videos also represents the core themes of Black feminism as explained by Hill Collins (23). The representations of the legacy of civil rights and Black power fit into the framework of Black feminism to a certain extent. The inclusion of only Black female figures in “Irreplaceable”, “Partition”, and “Formation” empowers Black women by showing that they should unite in order to be powerful. This representation of women as a united front is important since music is regarded as one of the “safe spaces” for Black women to engage with Black feminism (Hill Collins 103). In addition, this selection of music videos can be connected to the core themes of Black feminism as identified by Hill Collins (23). She states that one of these core themes is the “legacy of struggle” (22). The shots of a hurricane-stricken New Orleans in the “Formation” video address this “legacy of struggle” by showing that the area and the African American community is still suffering from the effects of the natural disaster that happened 14 years ago.

With regards to the belief in Black female activism as a core theme of Black feminism, I think this audiovisual analysis has shown that its presence in Beyoncé’s videos has evolved over time. With the inclusion of an all-female African American band in “Irreplaceable” and the choice to include only African American background dancers in “Partition” and “Formation”, Beyoncé already defines her “relationship to Blackness”, and Black feminism in particular (Abernethy, 216). This provides Black women with a sense of “self-determination”

which could contribute to the forming of an “Afrocentric feminist consciousness” (Hill Collins 28). In addition, in the “Formation” video Beyoncé only used African American human figures and the video was set in New Orleans, which defines her African American heritage. Another decision which ties to the legacy of Black Power and civil rights is the fact that Beyoncé only streams her music on Tidal, which is a streaming service owned by her husband Jay-Z which focuses on the talents of African American artists, this ties to Carmichael’s argument that Black people should create their own organizations (809).

Another way in which the legacy of Black activism is represented in “Formation” is in the use of the imagery of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. The music video uses a newspaper cover photo of Martin Luther King, and a “formation” into an X-shape. In using this imagery, Beyoncé defines her “relationship to blackness” by creating a platform for the legacy of Black Power and civil rights in her music and performances (Abernethy, 216). In the lyrics of “Formation”, Beyoncé also addresses her Black heritage by addressing where her parents are from.

Furthermore, a number of representations of Black female sexuality in this selection of videos fits the core theme of thoughtfulness towards sexuality (Hill Collins 23). Hammonds and Hill Collins argue that Black women should be able to openly discuss sexual desire and personal sexual relations (Hill Collins; Hammonds 21). As has been mentioned before, in “Naughty Girl”, “Partition” and “Formation” Beyoncé openly addresses her sexual desires and sexual relations with her husband. In doing so, Beyoncé’s breaks “the silence” that surrounds Black female sexuality, which is exactly what Hill Collins and Hammonds regard as important. In addition to openly addressing her sexual desires, Beyoncé reverses the gender roles in “Formation” when she states that her husband has to “fuck [her] good” (Beyoncé – “Formation”). This shows her personal agency as a Black woman in a relationship with a Black man, this “reconceptualization” of Black female sexuality is important according to Black feminism (166).

The final core theme of Black feminism which is represented in this selection of music videos is challenging the “denigrating images of Black womanhood” (Hill Collins 23). This is represented by showing shots of ordinary working class women in the “Formation” video. These images challenge the colonial stereotypes that were enforced on black working class women by showing that these women are not objects of sexual desire but ordinary women just like everyone else. Another way in which these stereotypes are slightly challenged is when the gender roles are reversed the “If I Were a Boy” video. Beyoncé performs the male role and her love interest performs the female role. In doing so, she shows the performativity of gender

(Butler 21), however, these roles are also reversed again towards the end of the video and Beyoncé ends up staying with her man, which in turn enforces the patriarchal order again. In her essay *Moving Beyond Pain* (2016), hooks agrees with this by stating that Beyoncé's music does not encourage women to break out of the patriarchal order. Instead, hooks argues that her music tells women how to survive within this order, which is not in line with theories of Black feminism (*Bell Hooks Institute*).

To sum up, I want to argue that Beyoncé's music videos have definitely evolved over time with regards to addressing concepts of Black female sexuality, feminism and Black activism. While at first the videos used a multiracial cast of background figures, they now use only African American women. As for Black activism, "Formation" explicitly refers to Black heritage by using civil rights imagery. With regards to Black female sexuality, the concept of thoughtfulness about sexuality has definitely evolved based on this selection. The earlier videos have a narrative of "promiscuity" which evokes a sense of sexual desirability for the "male gaze" (Mulvey 837), while "Partition" and "Formation" exploit this "promiscuity". By openly addressing personal sexual desire and reconceptualizing sexual agency in "Formation", Beyoncé breaks the silence that surrounds Black female sexuality which fits into the framework of Black feminism (Hill Collins 98). While these evolvments in her music videos show an increasingly feminist and activist Beyoncé, it is also important to consider how this image is represented in her live performances. This will be addressed in the final chapter of this thesis.

4. Live Performance Analysis

4.1 Audiovisual Performance Analysis

Throughout this chapter I will apply the recurring audiovisual patterns which have been distinguished in chapter 3 to a selection of live performances of the same case studies which have been used in chapter 3. Based on the analysis of these patterns I will then describe the recurring audiovisual patterns of the live performances. The patterns which will be applied to the selection of live performances are the emphasis on Beyoncé's objectified body, the "performativity" (Butler 25) of femininity, the presence of the "male gaze" (Mulvey 837), enforcing/challenging colonial stereotypes, colorism, main themes of Black feminism, Black activism, sexual desirability, and characteristics of post-feminism. Similar to the previous chapter, shots from the live performances will be analyzed based on an audiovisual analysis which focuses on "narrative", "editing", "use of human figures", "setting", "mise-en-scene", "relation between performance and lyrics", and "modes of connection between music, image and lyrics" (Vernallis xiv). I will also consider the concept of liveness and mediation and the relevance of social and cultural context in live performances as explained by Auslander. The sub question that I will be addressing is: how are concepts of Black female sexuality, feminism, and Black activism represented in a selection of Beyoncé's live performances throughout the years?

4.1.1 "Survivor" Soul Train Music Awards (2001)

Destiny's Child's performance of "Survivor" at the Soul Train Music Awards qualifies as a "mediatized performance" since it is a reproduction of the original performance that was televised and then uploaded to YouTube (Auslander 4). With regards to its social and cultural context, the performance is part of the Soul Train Music Awards which is an annual award show which honors the best Black music and entertainment. Within this context, Destiny's Child is recognized as the most successful African American girl group. This is also how they are introduced by the show's host before the performance starts. The audience consists of fellow African American artists and other famous actors and musicians who were invited to attend the show.

The performance is set in a jungle-like setting, there are palm trees, torches, a primitive hut, and bare-chested male figures. This setting is reminiscent of the song's music video. When the human figures enter the stage, their entrance is accompanied by a tribal

sample of “oh-ah” sounds and war drums. Their movements are in sync with the beat, which makes it seem like a tribal dance routine. Beyoncé, Kelly, and Michelle are all dressed in revealing army-printed costumes which reveal their legs, stomachs, and a large part of their bosoms (Figure 8). This is similar to one of the costumes they wore in the music video. The combination of the jungle setting and the revealing costumes evokes a sense of primitiveness that enforces the colonial stereotypes of African Americans as being closer to animals and nature and more wild and uncivilized with regards to their expressions of sexuality (Railton and Watson 100). The revealing costumes objectify the Black female body by emphasizing their buttocks and their feminine curves which evokes a sense of sexual desirability and “otherness” (hooks 72; Rose 167; Railton and Watson 97).

Furthermore, their performance of femininity by objectifying and emphasizing their female bodies enforces idealized gender norms of what a female body should look like (Butler 25). I would argue that the “to-be-looked-at-ness” of Beyoncé, Michelle, and Kelly as an object of visual pleasure is directed towards the “male gaze” (Mulvey 837). As for the pattern of “colorism”, Beyoncé’s straightened long blonde hair defines her “closeness to whiteness” which qualifies her as desirable and beautiful according to white standards (Hill Collins 80).

Similar to its music video, the performance evokes a sense of female empowerment by emphasizing fight-like movements in the dance routine in connection to the lyrics “I’m a survivor”, “I’m going to make it”. There are also gestures which accompany the lyrics that the singers are “richer” “smarter” and “stronger” without the presence of a man. This ties to characteristics of post-feminism because the lyrics and the performance emphasize the importance of “female achievement” and being financially independent (Tasker and Negra 7). This also ties to the characteristics of “girl power inspired feminism” as explained by Weidhase (128).

Just like the music video, the performance does not touch upon the core themes of Black feminism as defined by Hill Collins (23). In addition, the performance does not challenge colonial stereotypes of Black womanhood, rather, it enforces the stereotype of Blackness as primitive and closer to animals. Nor does the performance openly address sexuality or refer to a belief in Black female activism. While the artists are African American and female, they do not use their voices to defy the stereotypes of Black womanhood. They do use their voices and performance to empower women, however, they do not specifically address the empowerment of Black women.

4.1.2 “Naughty Girl” CD:UK (2004)

Beyoncé’s performance of “Naughty Girl” at CD:UK qualifies as a “mediatized performance” because it is a representation of the original performance which was televised and then uploaded to YouTube (Auslander 4). As for the social and cultural context, this performance is part of the British CD:UK television program. The show featured live performances and interviews with artists and it included the latest chart-topping music. Within this context, Beyoncé is recognized as a chart-topping artist in the United Kingdom. The audience consists of people who wanted to attend one of the recordings of the program.

The performance is set on a stage with a live band. The camera first zooms in on Beyoncé’s feminine body before showing her face, these shots recur throughout the performance. I want to argue that this “voyeurism” is directed towards “the gaze of male onlookers” (Turner 187). Her “to-be-looked-at-ness” (Mulvey 837) as a passive object for male pleasure enforces the “gender bias” which sexualizes Black women in particular (Turner 187). These camera shots also enforce the idealized gender norms of what a woman’s body should look like within the gender binary (Butler 25).

Throughout the performance, Beyoncé is dressed in a revealing white costume which emphasizes her feminine curves and reveals her stomach and her legs. Her body is objectified and an emphasis is put on her buttocks. Both her revealing costume and the emphasis on her buttocks make her seem sexually desirable (hooks 72; Rose 167; Railton and Watson 97). This revealing outfit and the emphasis on her buttocks enforces colonial stereotypes about Black women possessing an “uncontrollable sex drive” (McGruder 104). The emphasis on her buttocks also defines her “otherness” as an African American woman as opposed to a white woman (Railton and Watson 97). However, while this emphasis on her buttocks emphasizes her “otherness” (Railton and Watson 97), her blonde hair defines her “closeness to whiteness” (Hill Collins 80). Her blonde hair together with her light skin tone qualifies her as beautiful and desirable according to white standards (Hill Collins 80).

Furthermore, the performance only includes African American human figures. Beyoncé performs a short dance routine with a male African American figure which resembles the dance routine she performs in the music video. Just as in the video, the performance is sensual and it enforces the racialized stereotypes of African Americans as possessing an “uncontrollable sex drive” (McGruder 104).

During the interlude of the performance, Beyoncé says “it’s time to jam, naughty girls, dance, dance, dance” (Beyoncé Knowles). Then four female African American figures join Beyoncé on stage in a dance routine. They are all dressed in revealing white costumes which

emphasize their objectified feminine bodies. The dance routine itself also objectifies their bodies by putting emphasis on their buttocks and their hair (Figure 9). According to hooks and Railton and Watson, “Black butts” and wild hair are two signifiers of “animalistic” Black female sexuality (hooks 63; Railton and Watson 98). Beyoncé emphasizes this sexual availability even further by referring to herself and the other African American female figures as “naughty girls”. This dance routine and the performance as a whole enforce the pattern of “promiscuity” because they are all portrayed as sexually available African American women (Hill Collins 98).

Similar to its music video, I want to argue that the entire performance of “Naughty Girl” enforces the racialized stereotype of the oversexualized Black female body dissociated from whiteness (Railton and Watson 98; Hill Collins 128; hooks 62). Beyoncé’s objectified body enforces the stereotype of the “Jezebel” and suggests that Black women are accessible and available for the pleasures of sex (Hill Collins 100).

I want to argue that the performance does not explicitly address the core themes of Black feminism or Black activism. However, the performance does address the “mastery of physical and sexual freedom” (Rose 147) which ties to the need for Black women to break the silence that surrounds their personal sexuality (Hammonds 21; Hill Collins 23). However, while it breaks the silence, it does not subvert any colonial stereotypes nor does it “reconceptualize” Black female sexuality (Hill Collins 164; hooks 62).

Finally, I would argue that the performance fits into post-feminist characteristics to a certain extent. Throughout the performance, Beyoncé’s body is objectified as an object for sexual pleasure. According to post-feminist thought, this objectification of the female body is a form of female empowerment (Banet-Weiser 211).

4.1.3 “Irreplaceable” American Music Awards (2006)

The performance of “Irreplaceable” at the American Music Awards qualifies as a “mediatized performance” because it is a representation of the original performance which was televised and then uploaded to YouTube (Auslander 4). With regards to its social and cultural context, the performance is part of the 2006 American Music Awards. This is one of the biggest annual national award shows for artists in the United States. Beyoncé performs as one of the star performers of the night. She performs in front of an audience of award show guests who were invited to the event. This audience consists of famous fellow artists, actors, and other celebrities.

The performance contains a number of recurring audiovisual patterns, the pattern

which occurs most frequently is post-feminism. Similar to the music video, the performance uses a car prop which refers to the lyrics “rolling around in the car that I bought you” (Beyoncé – “Irreplaceable”). Beyoncé is sitting on the car prop while singing the lyrics to an African American human figure (Figure 10). This suggests that the car belongs to her, which emphasizes “female achievement” (Tasker and Negra 7). Then an African American male figure enters the stage, he stands in front of Beyoncé and she takes off his necklace. This also resembles the music video and it again emphasizes her individual achievement because she has money to spend (Banet-Weiser 2005). These characteristics tie to “girl power inspired feminism” as a form of female empowerment (Weidhase 128).

Throughout the performance, Beyoncé is dressed in a tight, short sparkly dress which emphasizes her feminine body and she has long, coiffed, blonde hair. Her blonde hair defines her “closeness to whiteness”, which makes her seem more beautiful according to white standards (Hill Collins 80). Together with her light skin tone, Beyoncé qualifies as a beautiful and sexually desirable woman and a passive object of pleasure for the “gaze of male onlookers” (Turner 187).

Moreover, her tight costume, high heels, and long hair enforce idealized gender norms of what a woman should look like (Butler 25). Beyoncé performs what female bodies should look like and how they should dress within the “binary structure” (Butler 6).

Finally, I would argue that the performance ties to core themes of Black feminism in the sense that it provides African American women with a platform for “self-definition” (Hill Collins 221). The performance includes an all-female African American band which was also present in the music video. Hill Collins argues that music sung by African American women can provide other Black women with a “safe space” for “self-definition” and identity (103). By singing about female empowerment and financial independence and representing African American women with an African American female band, I would argue that this performance definitely creates a platform for “self-definition” for African American women. However, it does not challenge any racial stereotypes about Black womanhood nor does it encourage Black female activism.

4.1.4 “If I were a Boy” MTV European Music Awards (2008)

This performance of “If I were a Boy” takes place at the 2008 MTV European Music Awards. It qualifies as a “mediatized performance” because it is a representation of the original performance which was televised and then uploaded to YouTube (Auslander 4). With regards to its social and cultural context, the performance is part of an annual European award show

hosted by a different European country every year. The event is televised throughout the world and it includes performances of various world famous artists. The audience consists of international fans who bought tickets, and a number of artists, performers, and actors who were invited to attend the event.

Throughout the performance, Beyoncé is dressed in a short, tight dress which emphasizes her buttocks. Her hair is straightened and blonde, which, together with her light skin tone defines her “closeness to whiteness” (Hill Collins 80). This combination makes her a sexually desirable woman for the “gaze of male onlookers” (Turner 187). In addition, the performativity and objectification of her body enforces the idealized gender norms within the “binary structure” by emphasizing female features such as wide hips and long hair (Butler 6).

With regards to representations of Black feminism, I would argue that this performance establishes a “safe space” for Black women’s “self-definition” (Hill Collins 221). This “self-definition” can create a sense of empowerment and an “Afrocentric feminist consciousness” that encourages resistance (Hill Collins 221). This performance evokes a sense of “self-definition” and empowerment by including an all-female African American band (Figure 11). African American women are able to identify with these women which could contribute to the formation of their identity and their “self-definition” (Hill Collins 221). However, this “self-definition” does not create an “Afrocentric feminist consciousness” because the performance does not encourage Black female activism, nor does it challenge any of the stereotypes that surround Black womanhood (Hill Collins 28).

4.1.5 “Run the World (Girls)” Billboard Music Awards (2011)

Beyoncé’s performance of “Run the World (Girls)” at the 2011 Billboard Music Awards qualifies as a “mediatized performance” because it is a representation of the original performance which was televised and then uploaded to YouTube (Auslander 4). With regards to its social and cultural context, the performance is part of the 2011 Billboard Music Awards, this is one of the biggest annual music award shows in the United States. The audience predominantly consists of celebrity guests who were invited to attend the show. This performance was the first time Beyoncé performed “Run the World (Girls)” on network television, I would argue that this performance set the tone for the reception of the rest of the album since this song was released as its lead single (*Billboard*).

The performance starts with an intro which sets the theme of the entire performance. Similar to the lion in the music video, there is a lion-like projection on a stage setting which evokes a sense of empowerment and courage. In the background the audience can hear

Beyoncé's voice saying:

“even though you can't see me, I'm here,
our power is ever present, I am woman,
and when I think, I must speak” (Beyoncé Knowles)

Then the camera shows a shot of Beyoncé standing in front of the projection screen, she introduces the song by saying:

“men have been given the chance to rule the world,
but ladies, our revolution has begun, let's build a nation,
women everywhere, rule the world” (Beyoncé Knowles)

I want to argue that this introduction evokes a sense of female empowerment. This narrative of female empowerment is present throughout the entire performance.

Throughout the performance, Beyoncé is dressed in a revealing leotard and her hair is blonde and wild. Her revealing costume puts emphasis on her buttocks, her stomach, and her legs. Beyoncé's body performs as female according to the norms of what a woman should look like, this enforces the idealized female gender norms within the “binary structure” (Butler 6). Her wild hair and the focus on her “Black butt” are signifiers of “animalistic” Black female sexuality within colonial discourse (Railton and Watson 98; hooks 63). In addition, her blonde hair and her light skin define her “closeness to whiteness” which enables her to be qualified as sexually desirable according to white standards (Hill Collins 80).

Moreover, I would argue that her revealing costume and the emphasis on her feminine curves are directed towards the “male gaze” as a sexually desirable passive object of pleasure (Mulvey 837). Beyoncé and the other female human figures all wear revealing costumes which emphasize their feminine bodies. The fact that Beyoncé sings about the power of women, while being dressed in a revealing leotard fits within the post-feminist framework. According to post-feminists, “the problem of objectification” is in the past, and women can now use objectify their bodies as a form of female empowerment (Banet-Weiser 211).

Furthermore, the performance includes images of dollar bills while Beyoncé sings about “mak[ing] these millions”. This also ties to characteristics of post-feminism in the sense that it focuses on individual achievement and being financially independent (Banet-Weiser 205). Another characteristic is the projection of the term “girls” on stage that accompanies the

song's lyrics (Figure 12). This "girl[ing]" of feminism fits into the pattern of "girl power inspired feminism" as a form of female empowerment (Tasker and Negra 18; Weidhase 128).

With regards to the core themes of Black feminism, I want to argue that this performance does not establish a platform for Black women's "self-definition" since there is a multiracial cast of female human figures (Hill Collins 28). Black women are not specifically mentioned, nor are their racialized stereotypes challenged. However, the performance does establish a platform for universal female empowerment. Women all over the world might feel empowered by the message of a female revolution, however the message is not tied to any specific ideology.

Finally, I want to argue that the performance plays with themes of Black militarism in the sense that Beyoncé as an African American artist builds an army of female figures. During the performance she also "fights" two male figures. The dance routines also resemble fighting moves which literally shows that women are fighting back against the power of men. However, while this could tie to the Black feminist core theme of struggle and Black female activism, the performance does not specifically address any politicized struggle (Hill Collins 23).

4.1.6 "Partition" Mrs. Carter Show (2014)

This performance of "Partition" is part of Beyoncé's 2013-2014 Mrs. Carter Show tour. It qualifies as a "mediatized performance" because it is a representation of the original performance which was televised on HBO and then uploaded to YouTube (Auslander 4). With an eye to the social and cultural context, the performance was part of Beyoncé's world tour. The audience consists of international fans who bought tickets to see her show.

Similar to its music video, this performance of "Partition" fits into the pattern of sexual desirability directed towards the "male gaze" (Mulvey 837). Beyoncé is dressed in a nude leotard with sparkles which accentuates her buttocks and her hips. The dance routine she performs throughout the entire performance emphasizes her wild blonde hair and her curves (Figure 13). Her buttocks and her wild hair are racial markers of her "animalistic" sexuality (Railton and Watson 91; hooks 70). This "animalistic" sexuality is also reflected in the leopard prints which are projected onto Beyoncé's body and the multiracial cast of female figures. In addition, her blonde hair defines her "closeness to whiteness" which, together with her light skin tone, qualifies her as beautiful and desirable according to white standards (Hill Collins 80). However, what is different from the music video is that there is a lack of silhouettes in the performance which does not play into the fantasy of the "male gaze"

(Mulvey 837).

Furthermore, Beyoncé's costume objectifies her body and performs femininity. Both her costume and her dance moves emphasize her feminine curves and her buttocks, this enforces the idealized female gender norms within the "binary structure" of what a woman should look like (Butler 6).

Unlike the music video, the performance does not include the French narration which states that feminists can enjoy sex. Therefore, this performance does not explicitly tie Beyoncé to any feminist ideology. However, I want to argue that her performance addresses the Black feminist core themes to some extent. The performance, accompanied by the lyrics, openly addresses the pleasures of sex for women. Beyoncé performs a sensual dance routine on a chair-like prop, similar to the routine she performs in the video. This routine emphasizes her sexual desirability and breaks the silence that surrounds black female sexuality (Hammonds 21). Engaging in the "politics of articulation" (Hammonds 21) by addressing the "mastery of physical and sexual freedom" is important for African American women in order to engage with their personal sexuality (Rose 147). With regards to the other core Black feminist core themes, the performance does not challenge any stereotypes, rather, it enforces the "Jezebel" to some extent (Hill Collins 77). The performance also does not address any legacy of struggle nor does it have a narrative of Black female activism.

Nonetheless, I want to argue that the performance provides Black women with a sense of "self-definition" since they can watch how an African American artist engages with her personal sexuality. However, the performance also includes white women, which makes it a more universal message of female sexuality in general.

Finally, aside from the core themes of Black feminism, I would argue that the performance addresses characteristics of post-feminism. Post-feminists believe that the "problem of objectification" is in the past (Banet-Weiser 211). Therefore, they consider the objectification of their bodies as a form of empowerment. The performance fits into this framework of objectification in the name of empowerment because it objectifies the bodies of Beyoncé and the other female figures throughout the entire performance while Beyoncé sings about her personal sexual empowerment.

4.1.7 "Formation" 50th Super Bowl (2016)

Beyoncé's 2016 Super Bowl performance of "Formation" is part of Coldplay's Super Bowl 50 halftime show. This qualifies as a "mediatized performance" since it is a reproduction that was televised and uploaded on to YouTube (Auslander 4). The performance starts with a

medley of songs by Coldplay which merges into “Uptown Funk” by Bruno Mars. I will not address Coldplay’s performance, since it did not mix with Beyoncé’s performance. I will engage with Bruno Mars’ performance, however, I will only address the parts that mix with Beyoncé’s performance. With an eye to the social and cultural context, the performance is part of an annual event in the American Football competition, the Super Bowl. The Super Bowl is part of American sports culture and it is one of the most-watched television sports games, the Super Bowl halftime show is an important aspect of this game. Therefore, the message that is sent with these performances will carry far within American society.

The performance is set on the football field. The African American female human figures are dressed in all-black costumes, and black hats and sunglasses. They do not smile, nor do they look into the camera, this suggests militant behavior. As the camera moves through the line of the female figures that step away from the frame of the camera, the camera zooms in on Beyoncé who starts with the lyrics “Okay ladies now let’s get in formation”. While she repeats these lyrics, she is joined by three lines of Black female figures. They are all dressed in black leather costumes, black boots, black afros, and black berets.

Beyoncé is also dressed in a black leather leotard and black boots. Her leotard is decorated with golden bullet-like props and it reveals her legs and emphasizes her buttocks. This enforces the white patriarchal fascination with “Black butts” (hooks 63) as the epitome of Black female sexuality (Rose 167; Railton and Watson 97). Her hair is blonde and curly, unlike her female dancers, she does not wear a beret, nor does she have an afro hairstyle, this makes her stand out as the main artist. Her blonde hair also defines her “closeness to whiteness” which, together with her light skin tone, makes her seem more beautiful and desirable according to white standards (Hill Collins 80). This sexual desirability is directed towards the “male gaze” (Mulvey 837). Both her hair and her revealing costume enforce idealized gender norms of femininity within the “binary structure” (Butler 6).

While these costumes may evoke a sense of sexual desirability, they also resemble the Black Panthers that were part of the Black Power movement in the 1960s and 1970s. The movements of the human figures are also strict, determined, and in sync with one another, as if they are soldiers who are marching. Beyoncé’s costume also resembles Michael Jackson’s costume on the cover of the *HIStory: Past Present and Future* (1995) album. This use of black imagery defines Beyoncé’s “relationship to blackness” (Abernethy 216). This activist imagery is used again when the dancers move into an X shape, which refers to Malcolm X (Figure 14). This X shape is accompanied by the lyrics “I slay”, which provokes a sense of empowerment in connection to the pattern of Black female activism. In addition, she sings

about liking African American hairstyles and facial features such as “afros” and “negro noses”, she also emphasizes her heritage by singing “my daddy Alabama, momma Louisiana” (Beyoncé – “Formation”).

The fact that Beyoncé emphasizes Black characteristics and sings about her Southern Black heritage and uses this Black activist imagery during a performance that will be watched by so many people around the world, and especially in the United States, shows that she wanted to start the conversation on Black activism and civil rights. This performance also took place the day after her lead single “Formation” was released, which set the tone for the reception of the entire studio album that would follow. Starting the conversation by using imagery of Black female activism contributes to Black female “self-definition” which could lead to the formation of an “Afrocentric feminist consciousness” (Hill Collins 28). African American women are exposed to Beyoncé’s performance where she calls for Black women to organize and “get in formation” (Beyoncé – “Formation”). I want to argue that this performance could function as a call for Black female activism, which is one of the core themes of Black feminism according to Hill Collins (23). This call for a unified force also ties to the importance of community organizing as explained by Carmichael (809). The performance also specifically addresses the legacy of struggle by using civil rights imagery. However, the imagery only refers to male civil rights activists instead of recognizing the efforts of female activists.

After the dance routine, the camera moves to a shot of Bruno Mars with four African American male figures who are also dressed in black leather costumes. The camera shifts between a dance routine performed by Bruno Mars and his male dancers and Beyoncé and her female ‘army’. There is a clear difference in movement of the male and female dancers. The women move vehemently, strictly and well-coordinated, while the men move rather laid-back and un-coordinated. This suggests the militancy and unity of the African American female dancers, and on a larger scale, this unity provides the audience with a sense of Black female empowerment. This challenges stereotypes of Black womanhood by suggesting that they can break out of the “Black male-controlled universe” and the white hegemonic framework if they operate as a strong unified force (Hill Collins 129).

4.2 Recurring Audiovisual Patterns

Based on this selection of performances a number of patterns stand out that are similar to the music video analysis with regards to the concepts of Black Power, feminism, and Black female sexuality.

One of the recurring patterns is Beyoncé's use of her objectified body and the "performativity" of femininity within the "binary structure" (Butler 6). In every performance of this selection Beyoncé enforces idealized female gender norms with her long hair, make-up, and the emphasis that is put on her wide hips and buttocks. Just like the selection of music videos, Beyoncé is dressed in revealing costumes which emphasize her feminine body. With these costumes, she is dressed "for strong visual and erotic impact" which makes her sexually desirable for the "male gaze" (Mulvey 837).

Similar to its music videos, the dance routines in the performances of "Survivor", "Naughty Girl", "Run the World (Girls)", "Partition", and "Formation" emphasize Beyoncé's feminine body and especially her buttocks. These movements are supposed to evoke a sense of sexual desirability for the "gaze of male onlookers" (Turner 187). During the performances of "Survivor", "Naughty Girl", and "Partition" Beyoncé's dance routines enforce the concept of "promiscuity" because her movements suggest that she is available for the pleasures of sex (Hill Collins 98). These performances also confirm hooks' statement that Beyoncé enforces the colonial discourse of exploiting Black female bodies (*Bell Hooks Institute*).

Apart from dressing for the "male gaze", the emphasis on Beyoncé's buttocks also ties to colonial stereotypes which regarded the Black female buttocks as the epitome of Black female sexuality (Rose 167; Railton and Watson 97; hooks 63). Beyoncé is dressed in revealing attire in every performance of this selection, this is supposed to evoke a sense of sexual desirability. Another signifier of Black female sexuality is the focus on wild hair. This is a recurring pattern in the performances of "Naughty Girl", "Run the World (Girls)", and "Partition".

Another pattern which is present in Beyoncé's performances is her engagement in the "politics of articulation" which breaks the silence that surrounds Black female sexuality (Hammonds 21). During her performance of "Partition", Beyoncé performs a sensual dance routine on a chair-like prop. In doing so, she engages with her personal sexuality accompanied by lyrics that express her personal sexual desires. This ties to the core theme of Black feminism that Black women have to be able to engage with their personal sexual desires. Hill Collins argues that it should be "reconceptualized" as a "domain of exploration, pleasure, and human agency" (166). I would argue that this performance of "Partition" reconceptualizes sexual pleasure and female agency as something that is acceptable for Black women. However, the performance is still directed towards the "male gaze" and pleasing men, therefore it does not entirely focus on female agency as its most important theme.

In addition, I want to argue that "Naughty Girl" also engages with the "politics of

articulation” by performing a sensual dance routine and singing about personal sexual desire, however, this also runs the risk of enforcing the colonial stereotype of the “Jezebel” since she is framed as a sexually available woman with an untamed sexual desire (Hill Collins 100).

With regards to characteristics of post-feminism, Beyoncé’s performances use individual achievement and financial independence as forms of female empowerment and they focus on “girl power inspired feminism” (Weidhase 128) by “girl[ing]” femininity (Tasker and Negra 18). These patterns are present in “Survivor”, “Irreplaceable”, and “Run the World (Girls)”. In addition, all of the previously analyzed performances engage in the objectification of the female body as a form of empowerment, this also fits into the framework of post-feminism since post-feminists believe that the “problem of objectification” is in the past (Banet-Weiser 211).

Many of Beyoncé’s earlier performances do not challenge any pressing themes with regards to Black feminism and challenging racialized stereotypes. However, there is one performance that challenges these stereotypes and addresses themes of struggle: “Formation”. The performance plays with civil rights movement imagery which defines Beyoncé’s “relationship to blackness” (Abernethy 216). The use of Black panther costumes, militant dance moves, an all-female cast of African American human figures, and the X-shape address the legacy of Black Power and establish a platform for Black female activism. By using this imagery during a performance that is viewed by nearly all Americans, Beyoncé opens up the conversation about Black female activism and civil rights. According to hooks and Hill Collins, this focus on the legacy of Black female activism can contribute to the development of an “Afrocentric feminist consciousness” and “Black female self-actualization” (Hill Collins 28; hooks 60).

Another theme of Black feminism which is present in her performances of “Irreplaceable”, “If I were a Boy”, “Partition”, and “Formation” is “self-definition” within the “safe space” of female African American music (Hill Collins 103). In her performances of “Irreplaceable” and “If I were a Boy” Beyoncé has an all-female African American band on stage. In “Formation” she uses a cast of all-female African American dancers. In “Partition” she shows Black women that they can also enjoy the pleasures of sexuality. These performances can contribute to Black female “self-definition” and the formation of a new Black female identity because Black women are represented in Beyoncé’s performances. In turn, this “self-definition” can create a sense of empowerment and an “Afrocentric feminist consciousness” that encourages resistance (Hill Collins 28).

Finally, with regards to the pattern of colorism, Beyoncé has got long blonde hair in

every performance. Together with her light skin color, this defines her “closeness to whiteness” and qualifies her as beautiful and desirable according to white patriarchal standards (Hill Collins 80). Blond hair is regarded as the “epitome of beauty” according to racist aesthetics (hooks 68). Therefore, if Beyoncé wants to be considered attractive, she has to look closer to a white woman. Based on the analysis of these selected performances, there is no change in this pattern, not even in “Formation” where all female human figures are wearing afros. However, she does address her light complexion in her lyrics when she sings “I see it, I want it, I stunt it, yellow bone it”. By voicing these words, Beyoncé addresses her light complexion and challenges the critiques on her appearance.

4.3 Conclusion Audiovisual Performance Analysis

To sum up, this selection of performances can be linked to the same patterns as the selection of music videos. With regards to the concept of Black female sexuality, all performances portray Beyoncé as a sexually desirable woman. However, the framing of her body cannot be controlled as thoroughly as it could in her music videos. This desirability is achieved by dressing “for strong visual and erotic impact” by emphasizing her female curves and her wild hair (Mulvey 837). The objectification of her body is directed towards the “male gaze” (Mulvey 837) and enforces the idealized female gender norms within the “binary structure” (Butler 6). Moreover, her blonde hair and her light complexion define her “closeness to whiteness” (Hill Collins 80) and qualify her as a beautiful and desirable woman according to white patriarchal standards whereas her “black blood” enables her to express her sexuality (Griffin 139). This shows that Beyoncé’s sexually desirable image has been present from the start and has not changed up until the present.

There are also a number of characteristics of post-feminism which are present in this selection of performances. First of all, every performance objectifies the female body as a form of empowerment. This links to the post-feminist belief that the “problem of objectification” is in the past (Banet-Weiser 211). Secondly, the performances of “Survivor”, “Irreplaceable”, and “Run the World (Girls)” focus on individual achievement and being financially independent. Lastly, these performances also have a narrative of “girl-power inspired feminism” which focuses on the “girl[ing]” of femininity by naming women of all ages girls (Tasker and Negra 18; Weidhase 128). It can thus be concluded that characteristics of post-feminism have been present from the earliest performances up until the present.

Furthermore, a number of core themes of Black feminism are increasingly present in her performances. In her performances of “Irreplaceable”, “If I were a Boy”, “Partition”, and

“Formation”, Beyoncé establishes a platform for Black women’s “self-definition” within the “safe space” of African American music (Hill Collins 221). By representing African American women on stage and engaging with themes of female empowerment, Beyoncé enables Black women to create a new identity which could contribute to the formation of an “Afrocentric feminist consciousness” that encourages resistance against the patriarchal order (Hill Collins 28).

Another core theme which is addressed in “Naughty Girl” and “Partition” is openly addressing Black female sexuality. Both performances engage with the “politics of articulation” (Hammonds 21) which is an important theme for Black feminism according to Hammonds and Hill Collins. Her earlier performances enforce the concept of “promiscuity” because Beyoncé is portrayed as a sexually available woman (Hill Collins 98). “Naughty Girl” plays with this concept but it also engages with the “politics of articulation” by openly expressing Beyoncé’s personal sexual desire (Hammonds 21). Nonetheless, this performance can also be considered problematic since it could enforce the stereotype of the “Jezebel” by portraying Beyoncé as a sexually available African American woman (Hill Collins 100).

On the other hand, the performance of “Partition” could run a similar risk. However, I would argue that this performance also frames sex as a “domain of exploration, pleasure, and human agency”, which is an important theme of Black feminism according to Hill Collins (166). Throughout this performance, Beyoncé openly addresses her personal desires and engages in the “politics of articulation” by breaking the silence that surrounds Black female sexuality (Hammonds 21). It can thus be concluded that there is a development with regards to how Beyoncé addresses sexuality in her performances. While her earlier performances enforce the concept of “promiscuity”, Beyoncé exploits this concept in “Partition” as a way to engage in the “politics of articulation” (Hammonds 21). However, both performances are essentially still directed towards pleasuring men and the “male gaze”, this undermines the importance of openly addressing Black female sexuality.

Furthermore, Hill Collins argues that Black feminists should challenge the stereotypes of Black womanhood. However, both “Naughty Girl” and “Survivor” enforce stereotypes of African American women as sexually available and closer to animals. While these earlier performances clearly enforce stereotypes of Black womanhood, I want to argue that the “Formation” performance challenges these stereotypes by framing a narrative of struggle and resistance. Beyoncé and her female background figures are framed as Black female activists instead of sexually available women. This provides Black women with a sense of “self-definition” (Hill Collins 221) and “self-identity” (Carmichael 810) which could lead to an

“Afrocentric feminist consciousness” which encourages resistance (Hill Collins 221). This shows her evolvement from enforcing stereotypes to challenging them.

In connection to the themes of Black feminism, I would argue that the theme of a belief in Black female activism is openly addressed in the performance of “Formation”. By using civil rights movement imagery, this performance establishes a platform for Black female resistance. Therefore it can be concluded that, similar to her videos, her performances have evolved from being a sexually desirable media product to a Black female activist that promotes Black female “self-definition” (Hill Collins 221).

5. Conclusion

There are certain recurring audiovisual patterns which stand out both in the selection of music videos as well as in the selection of performances. There are some patterns which occurred only in her more recent works, and there are others which have remained present from her earliest until her most recent work. I will compare and contrast the patterns that stand out in both the performances and music videos and conclude whether or not Beyoncé's feminist agenda has developed over time.

A pattern which has remained unchanged in both her performances and music videos is Beyoncé's portrayal as a sexually desirable woman. She is always dressed "for strong visual and erotic impact" by wearing costumes which emphasize her female curves (Mulvey 837). This sexual desirability is mainly directed towards the pleasure of the "male gaze" (Mulvey 837). The emphasis that is put on her female curves also enforces the idealized female gender norms within the "binary structure" (Butler 6). The emphasis that is put on her female curves and her wild hair also enforces racialized stereotypes which have been present for over centuries (Hill Collins 87; hooks 66).

Nonetheless, I want to argue that the use of her objectified body is also a way to show the reclamation of her personal agency. In her video and performance of "Partition", Beyoncé exploits the narrative of "promiscuity" as a means to show her agency (Hill Collins 98). With this exploitation of her sexualized body, Beyoncé wants to show that she is now the one in control (Trageser 6). I want to argue that the objectification of the female body also ties to post-feminist discourse. Post-feminists believe that the "problem of objectification" is in the past and that women can now objectify their bodies as a form of empowerment (Banet-Weiser 211).

Another post-feminist characteristic which is present in the performances and videos of "Survivor", "Irreplaceable", and "Run the World (Girls)" and the video of "Formation" is the focus on individual achievement and being financially independent. These performances and videos also have a narrative of "girl-power inspired feminism" which focuses on the "girl[ing]" of femininity by naming women of all ages girls as a form of empowerment (Tasker and Negra 18; Weidhase 128). The performance of "Run the World (Girls)" adds to this narrative of female empowerment by including an introduction which calls for a universal female revolution. Post-feminist discourse has been part of Beyoncé's artistry from the start and continues to be a theme in the present, which confirms Chatman's statement that Beyoncé can be considered a "post-feminist subject" (928).

Another pattern which has remained unchanged in both her music videos and her performances is Beyoncé's blonde hair. This, together with her light complexion, signifies her "closeness to whiteness" and qualifies her as beautiful and desirable according to white hegemonic standards (Hill Collins 80). In the music video of "Formation", however, Beyoncé addresses her complexion in her lyrics and her hair is braided into cornrows and the human figures wear afros which ties to African American heritage. In the performance Beyoncé does not have braids, this takes away from the message of African heritage since it enforces the white hegemonic standards of blonde hair as the epitome of beauty (hooks 68).

Furthermore, a number of core themes of Black feminism is increasingly present in both her performances and her music videos. By including an all-female African American band in both the performance and the video of "Irreplaceable" and the performance of "If I were a Boy" and by using only Black female human figures in her video and performance of "Formation" and the video of "Partition", Beyoncé establishes a platform of "self-definition" within the "safe space" of African American music for Black women (Hill Collins 221). With this "self-definition", Beyoncé's music can contribute to the forming of Black female "self-identity" (Carmichael 810) and possibly an "Afrocentric feminist consciousness" for these women (Hill Collins 28).

The fact that the all-female African American band is used in the performance of "If I were a Boy" makes the song more relevant for a Black female audience than the music video. The fact that the performance of "Partition" included a multiracial cast of female human figures makes the message of female sexuality more universal instead of specific to Black female sexuality. The performance also does not include the French narration which states that feminists can enjoy sex. Therefore, unlike the music video, this performance does not explicitly tie Beyoncé to any feminist ideology.

Another core theme which is present both in her music videos and her performances is the theme of thoughtfulness towards Black female sexuality (Hill Collins 23). In her videos of "Naughty Girl", "Partition", and "Formation" and her performances of "Naughty Girl" and "Partition", Beyoncé engages in the "politics of articulation" by openly addressing her personal sexual desires (Hammonds 21). A difference between the videos and performances of "Partition" and "Naughty Girl" is that in the videos there are silhouettes which perform sensual routines. The performances do not include these silhouettes which does not leave much room for the fantasy of the "male gaze" (Mulvey 837).

By openly addressing her sexual desires, Beyoncé breaks the silence that surrounds Black female sexuality. Nonetheless, these desires still fit into the patriarchal order because

Beyoncé emphasizes the importance of sexually pleasing her man. This confirms hooks' statement that Beyoncé remains within the confines of the patriarchal order (*Bell Hooks Institute*). Nonetheless, I want to argue that in her video of "Formation" Beyoncé reverses these roles by singing that her husband has to please her. The performance of "Formation" does not send the same message since it does not address these lyrics.

While these videos and performances openly engage with Black female sexuality, they could also run the risk of enforcing the racialized stereotype of the "Jezebel" (Hill Collins 100). However, I would argue that, in the performance and video of "Partition" and in the video of "Formation", Beyoncé frames sex as a "domain of exploration, pleasure, and human agency", which is an important theme of Black feminism according to Hill Collins (166). This "reconceptualization" of Black female sexuality is important for the construction of a new Black female identity (Hill Collins 166). The performance of "Formation" lacks this "reconceptualization" since these lyrics are not addressed (Hill Collins 166).

With regards to the core theme of challenging stereotypes of Black womanhood, I want to argue that this has definitely evolved. While her earlier videos and performances of "Naughty Girl" and "Survivor" enforce stereotypes of African American women as closer to animals and sexually available, both the video and the performance of "Formation" challenge these stereotypes. The music video shows images of ordinary African American women, this challenges the racialized stereotypes by showing that African American women are not only sexually available "Jezebels" (Hill Collins 100). Both the performance and the video frame a narrative of struggle and resistance. This provides Black women with a platform for "self-definition" which could contribute to an "Afrocentric feminist consciousness" (Hill Collins 28).

A core theme which is increasingly present in her music videos and performances is legacy of struggle. Both in the video and the performance of "Formation", Beyoncé defines her "relationship to Blackness" by using civil rights and Black activist imagery (Abernethy 216). In the performance the dancers are dressed in Black panther uniforms and they are dancing in an X shape to refer to Malcolm X and Black Power. Beyoncé is dressed in a costume which refers to an album by Michael Jackson. In the video there are references to Martin Luther King and Malcolm X by using the X-shape and showing a picture of Martin Luther King in a newspaper. While this imagery ties to the legacy of struggle, it should be noted that Beyoncé only refers to male activists instead of acknowledging the efforts of the lesser-known Black female activists of the civil rights movement.

Finally, with regards to the core theme of a belief in Black female activism and "self-

identity” (Carmichael 810), the choice to only include African American female figures in performances of “Irreplaceable”, “If I were a Boy”, and “Formation” and in the videos of “Irreplaceable”, “Partition”, and two genderqueer African Americans in “Formation” defines Beyoncé’s “relationship to Blackness” and voices a belief in Black activism (Abernethy 216).

In contrast, Ward argues that the imagery of Black activism and feminism which is present in Beyoncé’s videos and performances is only there to improve Beyoncé’s popularity among more diverse audiences and to advance her individual economic success as an artist (155). Similarly, Utley labels this use of feminist discourse as “commodity feminism” and states that Beyoncé only uses feminist ideologies to improve her own position as an artist (10). Hooks agrees with this use of feminism in *Lemonade* (2016) as a commodity in her essay *Moving Beyond Pain* (2016) where she argues that Beyoncé’s use of Black female bodies and feminist discourse are “the business of capitalist moneymaking at its best” (*Bell Hooks Institute*).

However, based on their analysis of *Lemonade* (2016), Edgar and Toone conclude that, while the album is “certainly not without its problems”, it possesses the ability to open up a dialogue on “Black identity in the public sphere” (13). They also argue that the album provokes awareness of the history of Black activism and shows the potential of musicians within mainstream media to build a platform for resistance (Edgar and Toone 13). Brooks also argues in line with this when she states that *B’Day* (2006) created a platform for identification for Black woman (184). I definitely agree with their arguments, since Beyoncé’s videos, “Formation” in particular, refer to certain themes and images of civil rights which the audience can engage with by researching them or talking about them. In turn, this raises awareness on the legacy of civil rights and Black female activism.

In an attempt to challenge these arguments, I want to argue that Beyoncé’s artistry has definitely evolved with regards to addressing themes of feminism and activism in her music videos and performances. While her earlier videos and performances are mainly directed towards the “male gaze” as a sexually desirable object of pleasure, Beyoncé exploited this use of her objectified body by openly addressing her sexuality and engaging in the “politics of articulation” by reconceptualizing sex as a domain of pleasure and exploration (Hammonds 21; Hill Collins 166). Furthermore, Beyoncé increasingly addresses themes of struggle and she increasingly represents Black women by only including Black female human figures in her band and her performances. Both the performance and music video of “Formation” are main examples of Beyoncé’s development as a Black feminist. It remains to be seen whether this image will persist in her upcoming albums and performances.

With regards to further research on Beyoncé as a Black female activist within the framework of Black feminism, it would be relevant to engage with her newest album *Everything is Love* (2018) which she suddenly released together with her husband Jay-Z just as this thesis was rounded off. It would especially be interesting to investigate this album since its first single “Apeshit” has already received many rave reviews on the way it aims to reclaim Black, and predominantly Black female, history in the “white art” of the Louvre (*Rolling Stone*). This confirms the conclusion of this thesis in the sense that Beyoncé’s feminist agenda has definitely developed and continues to evolve.

[Word Count: 32828]

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7. Appendix



Figure 1: Screenshot from music video "Survivor" (2001) (0:32)



Figure 2: Screenshot from music video "Naughty Girl" (2004) (0:58)



Figure 3: Screenshot from music video "Irreplaceable" (2006) (1:52)



Figure 4: Screenshot from music video "If I were a Boy" (2008) (2:30)



Figure 5: Screenshot from music video "Run the World (Girls)" (2011) (4:49)



Figure 6: Screenshot from music video "Partition" (2013) (1:43)



Figure 7: Screenshot of music video "Formation" (2016) (3:30)



Figure 8: Screenshot from performance "Survivor" (2001) (2:12)



Figure 9: Screenshot from performance "Naughty Girl" (2004) (2:50)



Figure 10: Screenshot from performance "Irreplaceable" (2006) (1:39)



Figure 11: Screenshot from performance "If I were a Boy" (2008) (3:50)



Figure 12: Screenshot from performance "Run the World (Girls)" (2011) (1:30)



Figure 13: Screenshot from performance "Partition" (2014) (2:14)



Figure 14: Screenshot from performance "Formation" (2016) (8:26)

Retrieved from <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/destinyschild/survivor.html>

Destiny's Child – "Survivor"

Now that you're out of my life
I'm so much better
You thought that I'd be weak without you
But I'm stronger
You thought that I'd be broke without you
But I'm richer
You thought that I'd be sad without you
I laugh harder
You thought I wouldn't grow without you
Now I'm wiser
Thought that I'd be helpless without you
But I'm smarter
You thought that I'd be stressed without you
But I'm chillin'
You thought I wouldn't sell without you
Sold 9 million

I'm a survivor (What?)
I'm not gon' give up (What?)
I'm not gon' stop (What?)
I'm gon' work harder (What?)
I'm a survivor (What?)
I'm gonna make it (What?)
I will survive (What?)
Keep on survivin' (What?)

I'm a survivor (What?)
I'm not gon' give up (What?)
I'm not gon' stop (What?)
I'm gon' work harder (What?)
I'm a survivor (What?)
I'm gonna make it (What?)
I will survive (What?)
Keep on survivin' (What?)

Thought I couldn't breathe without you
I'm inhaling
You thought I couldn't see without you
Perfect vision
You thought I couldn't last without you
But I'm lastin'
You thought that I would die without you
But I'm livin'
Thought that I would fail without you
But I'm on top
Thought it would be over by now

But it won't stop
Thought that I would self destruct
But I'm still here
Even in my years to come
I'm still gon' be here

I'm a survivor (What?)
I'm not gon' give up (What?)
I'm not gon' stop (What?)
I'm gon' work harder (What?)
I'm a survivor (What?)
I'm gonna make it (What?)
I will survive (What?)
Keep on survivin' (What?)

I'm a survivor (What?)
I'm not gon' give up (What?)
I'm not gon' stop (What?)
I'm gon' work harder (What?)
I'm a survivor (What?)
I'm gonna make it (What?)
I will survive (What?)
Keep on survivin' (What?)

Wishin' you the best
Pray that you are blessed
Bring much success, no stress, and lots of happiness
(I'm better than that)
I'm not gon' blast you on the radio
(I'm better than that)
I'm not gon' lie on you and your family
(I'm better than that)
I'm not gon' hate on you in the magazines
(I'm better than that)
I'm not gon' compromise my Christianity
(I'm better than that)
You know I'm not gon' diss you on the Internet
'Cause my mama taught me better than that

I'm a survivor (What?)
I'm not gon' give up (What?)
I'm not gon' stop (What?)
I'm gon' work harder (What?)
I'm a survivor (What?)
I'm gonna make it (What?)
I will survive (What?)
Keep on survivin' (What?)

I'm a survivor (What?)
I'm not gon' give up (What?)

I'm not gon' stop (What?)
I'm gon' work harder (What?)
I'm a survivor (What?)
I'm gonna make it (What?)
I will survive (What?)
Keep on survivin' (What?)

Oh (oh) oh (oh)

After all of the darkness and sadness
Soon comes happiness
If I surround myself with positive things
I'll gain prosperity

[4x]

I'm a survivor (What?)
I'm not gon' give up (What?)
I'm not gon' stop (What?)
I'm gon' work harder (What?)
I'm a survivor (What?)
I'm gonna make it (What?)
I will survive (What?)
Keep on survivin' (What?)

Retrieved from: <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/beyonceknowles/naughtygirl.html>

Beyoncé – “Naughty Girl”

I love to love you baby
I love to love you baby.

I'm feelin' sexy
I wanna hear you say my name boy
If you can reach me
You can feel my burning flame

I'm feelin kind of n-a-s-t-y
I just might take you home with me
Baby the minute I feel your energy
Your vibe's just taken over me
Start feelin so crazy babe
Lately, I feel the funk coming over me
I don't know what's gotten into me
The rhythm's got me feelin so crazy babe

Tonight I'll be your naughty girl
I'm callin all my girls
We're gonna turn this party out
I know you want my body
Tonight I'll be your naughty girl
I'm callin all my girls
I see you look me up and down
And I came to party

You're so sexy, tonight I am all yours boy
The way your body moves across the floor
You got me feelin n-a-s-t-y
I just might take you home with me

Baby the minute I feel your energy
The vibe's just taken over me
Start feelin so crazy babe
Lately, I feel the funk coming over me
I don't know what's gotten into me
The rhythm's got me feelin so crazy babe

Tonight I'll be your naughty girl
I'm callin all my girls
We're gonna turn this party out
I know you want my body
Tonight I'll be your naughty girl
I'm callin all my girls
I see you look me up and down
And I came to party

I love to love you baby
I love to love you baby
I love to love you baby
I love to love you baby

Tonight I'll be your naughty girl
I'm callin all my girls
We're gonna turn this party out
I know you want my body
Tonight I'll be your naughty girl
I'm callin all my girls
I see you look me up and down
And I came to party

Retrieved from: <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/beyonceknowles/irreplaceable.html>

Beyoncé – “Irreplaceable”

To the left, to the left
To the left, to the left (mmmmmm)
To the left, to the left

Everything you own in the box to the left
In the closet that's my stuff
Yes, if I bought it, please don't touch
And keep talking that mess that's fine
But could you walk and talk at the same time
And, it's my name that's on that jag
So come move your bags, let me call you a cab

Standing in the front yard
Tellin' me, how I'm such a fool
Talkin' 'bout, I'll never ever find a man like you
You got me twisted

You must not know about me, you must not know about me
I could have another you in a minute
Matter of fact, he'll be here in a minute, baby
You must not know about me, you must not know about me
I can have another you by tomorrow
So don't you ever for a second get to thinking
You're irreplaceable

So go ahead and get gone
Call up that chick and see if she's home
Oops, I bet you thought, that I didn't know
What did you think I was putting you out for
Because you was untrue
Rollin' her around in the car that I bought you
Baby drop them keys
Hurry up before your taxi leaves

Standing in the front yard
Tellin' me, how I'm such a fool
Talkin' bout, I'll never ever find a man like you
You got me twisted

You must not know about me, you must not know about me
I could have another you in a minute
Matter of fact, he'll be here in a minute, baby
You must not know about me, you must not know about me
I can have another you by tomorrow
So don't you ever for a second get to thinking
You're irreplaceable

So since I'm not your everything
How about I'll be nothing
Nothing at all to you
Baby I won't shed a tear for you
I won't lose a wink of sleep
'Cause the truth of the matter is
Replacing you is so easy

To the left, to the left
To the left, to the left (mmmmmm)
To the left, to the left
Everything you own in the box to the left
To the left, to the left
Don't you ever for a second get to thinking
You're irreplaceable

You must not know about me, you must not know about me
I could have another you in a minute
Matter of fact, he'll be here in a minute, baby
You must not know about me, you must not know about me
I can have another you by tomorrow
So don't you ever for a second get to thinking (baby)
You must not know about me, you must not know about me
I could have another you in a minute
Matter of fact, he'll be here in a minute
You can pack all your bags
We're finished
'Cause you made your bed
Now lay in it
I can have another you by tomorrow
Don't you ever for a second get to thinking
You're irreplaceable

Retrieved from: <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/beyonceknowles/ifiwereaboy.html>

Beyoncé – “If I Were A Boy”

[Verse]

If I were a boy
Even just for a day
I'd roll outta bed in the morning
And throw on what I wanted and go
Drink beer with the guys
And chase after girls
I'd kick it with who I wanted
And I'd never get confronted for it.
'Cause they'd stick up for me.

[Chorus]

If I were a boy
I think I could understand
How it feels to love a girl
I swear I'd be a better man.
I'd listen to her
'Cause I know how it hurts
When you lose the one you wanted
'Cause he's taken you for granted
And everything you had got destroyed

[Verse]

If I were a boy
I would turn off my phone
Tell everyone it's broken
So they'd think that I was sleepin' alone
I'd put myself first
And make the rules as I go
'Cause I know that she'd be faithful
Waitin' for me to come home (to come home)

[Chorus]

If I were a boy
I think I could understand
How it feels to love a girl
I swear I'd be a better man.
I'd listen to her
'Cause I know how it hurts
When you lose the one you wanted (wanted)
'Cause he's taken you for granted (granted)
And everything you had got destroyed

[Bridge]

It's a little too late for you to come back
Say it's just a mistake
Think I'd forgive you like that

If you thought I would wait for you
You thought wrong

[Chorus 2]

But you're just a boy
You don't understand
Yeah, you don't understand, oh
How it feels to love a girl someday
You wish you were a better man
You don't listen to her
You don't care how it hurts
Until you lose the one you wanted
'Cause you've taken her for granted
And everything you had got destroyed

But you're just a boy

Retrieved from: <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/beyonceknowles/girlswhoruntheworld.html>

Beyoncé – “Run The World (Girls)”

Girls, we run this mother, yeah! [4x]
Girls!

Who run the world? Girls! [4x]
Who run this mother? Girls! [4x]
Who run the world? Girls! [4x]

Some of them men think
They freak this like we do
But no, they don't
Make your check come at their neck,
Disrespect us?
No, they won't

Boy don't even try to touch this, touch this
Boy this beat is crazy, crazy
This is how they made me, made me
Houston Texas baby
This goes out to all my girls
That's in the club rocking the latest
Who will buy it for themselves and get more money later
I think I need a barber
None of these niggas can fade me
I'm so good with this,
I remind you I'm so hood with this
Boy I'm just playing
Come here baby
Hope you still like me
F-U pay me

My persuasion can build a nation
Endless power, with our love we can devour
You'll do anything for me

Who run the world? Girls! [4x]
Who run this mother? Girls! [4x]
Who run the world? Girls! [4x]

It's hot up in here
DJ don't be scared to run this, run this back
I'm reppin' for the girls who taking over the world
Help me raise a glass for the college grads

41 Rollie to let you know what time it is, check
You can't hold me, you can't hold me)
I work my 9 to 5, better cut my check

This goes out to all the women getting it in,
You're on your grind
To other men that respect what I do
Please accept my shine
Boy I know you love it
How we're smart enough to make these millions
Strong enough to bear the children, children
Then get back to business
See, you better not play me
Oh, come here baby
Hope you still like me
F-U hate me

My persuasion can build a nation
Endless power
With our love we can devour
You'll do anything for me

Who run the world? Girls! [4x]
Who run this mother? Girls! [4x]
Who run the world? Girls! [4x]

Who are we? What we run?
The world
Who run this mother? Yeah
Who are we? What we run?
The world
Who run this mother? Yeah
Who are we? What do we run?
We run the world!
Who run this mother? Yeah
Who are we? What we run?
We run the world

Who run the world? Girls

Retrieved from: <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/beyonceknowles/yoncpartition.html>

Beyoncé – “Partition”

[Verse:]

Driver roll up the partition please
Driver roll up the partition please
I don't need you seeing Yoncé on her knees
Took 45 minutes to get all dressed up
We ain't even gonna make it to this club
Now my mascara runnin', red lipstick smudged
Oh he so horny, yeah he want to fuck
He popped all my buttons and he ripped my blouse
He monica-luwinski'd all on my gown

Whoa dere daddy, daddy didn't bring a towel
Oh, baby, baby we better slow it down
Took 45 minutes to get all dressed up
And we ain't even gonna make it to this club

[Hook:]

Take all of me
I just wanna be the girl you like (girl you like)
The kinda girl you like (girl you like)
Take all of me
I just wanna be the girl you like, girl you like
The kinda girl you like is right here with me
Right here with me
Right here with me
Right here with me

[Verse 4:]

Driver roll up the partition fast
Driver roll up the partition fast
Over there I swear I saw them cameras flash
Hand prints and foot prints on my glass
Hand prints and good grips all on my ass
Private show with the music blatin'
He like to call me peaches when we get this nasty
Red wine drip filth talk that trash
Chauffeur ease droppin trying not to crash

Oh, there daddy, daddy now you ripped my fur
Oh, baby, baby be sweatin' on my hair
Took 45 minutes to get all dressed up
And we ain't even gonna make it to this club

[Hook]

Hello!

[French:]

Est-ce que tu aimes le sexe?

Le sexe. Je veux dire, l'activité physique.

Le coït. Tu aimes ça?

Tu ne t'intéresses pas au sexe?

Les hommes pensent que les féministes détestent le sexe,

Mais c'est une activité très stimulante et naturelle que les femmes adorent.

[English translation:]

Do you like sex?

Sex. I mean, the physical activity.

Coitus. Do you like it?

You're not interested in sex?

Men think that feminists hate sex,

But it's a very stimulating and natural activity that women love.

[Hook]

Hello!

Retrieved from: <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/beyonceknowles/formation.html>

Beyoncé – “Formation”

[Messy Mya:]

What happened at the New Wil'ins?

Bitch, I'm back by popular demand

[Beyoncé:]

Y'all haters corny with that Illuminati mess

Paparazzi, catch my fly, and my cocky fresh

I'm so reckless when I rock my Givenchy dress (stylin')

I'm so possessive so I rock his Roc necklaces

My daddy Alabama, Momma Louisiana

You mix that negro with that Creole make a Texas bama

I like my baby heir with baby hair and afros

I like my negro nose with Jackson Five nostrils

Earned all this money but they never take the country out me

I got a hot sauce in my bag, swag

[Messy Mya:]

oh, yeah, baby, oh, yeah I, oh, oh, yes, I like that

[Big Freedia:]

I did not come to play with you hoes, ha ha

I came to slay, bitch

I like cornbreads and collard greens, bitch

Oh, yes, you besta believe it

[Beyoncé:]

Y'all haters corny with that Illuminati mess

Paparazzi, catch my fly, and my cocky fresh

I'm so reckless when I rock my Givenchy dress (stylin')

I'm so possessive so I rock his Roc necklaces

My daddy Alabama, Momma Louisiana

You mix that negro with that Creole make a Texas bama

I like my baby heir with baby hair and afros

I like my negro nose with Jackson Five nostrils

Earned all this money but they never take the country out me

I got a hot sauce in my bag, swag

[Beyoncé:]

I see it, I want it, I stunt, yellow-bone it

I dream it, I work hard, I grind 'til I own it

I twirl on them haters, albino alligators

El Camino with the seat low, sippin' Cuervo with no chaser

Sometimes I go off (I go off), I go hard (I go hard)

Get what's mine (take what's mine), I'm a star (I'm a star)

'Cause I slay (slay), I slay (hey), I slay (okay), I slay (okay)

All day (okay), I slay (okay), I slay (okay), I slay (okay)

We gon' slay (slay), gon' slay (okay), we slay (okay), I slay (okay)
 I slay (okay), okay (okay), I slay (okay), okay, okay, okay, okay
 Okay, okay, ladies, now let's get in formation, 'cause I slay
 Okay, ladies, now let's get in formation, 'cause I slay
 Prove to me you got some coordination, 'cause I slay
 Slay trick, or you get eliminated

[Beyoncé:]

When he fuck me good I take his ass to Red Lobster, 'cause I slay
 When he fuck me good I take his ass to Red Lobster, 'cause I slay
 If he hit it right, I might take him on a flight on my chopper, 'cause I slay
 Drop him off at the mall, let him buy some J's, let him shop up, 'cause I slay
 I might get your song played on the radio station, 'cause I slay
 I might get your song played on the radio station, 'cause I slay
 You just might be a black Bill Gates in the making, 'cause I slay
 I just might be a black Bill Gates in the making

[Beyoncé:]

I see it, I want it, I stunt, yellow-bone it
 I dream it, I work hard, I grind 'til I own it
 I twirl on my haters, albino alligators
 El Camino with the seat low, sippin' Cuervo with no chaser
 Sometimes I go off (I go off), I go hard (I go hard)
 Take what's mine (take what's mine), I'm a star (I'm a star)
 'Cause I slay (slay), I slay (hey), I slay (okay), I slay (okay)
 All day (okay), I slay (okay), I slay (okay), I slay (okay)
 We gon' slay (slay), gon' slay (okay), we slay (okay), I slay (okay)
 I slay (okay), okay (okay), I slay (okay), okay, okay, okay, okay
 Okay, okay, ladies, now let's get in formation, 'cause I slay
 Okay, ladies, now let's get in formation, 'cause I slay
 Prove to me you got some coordination, 'cause I slay
 Slay trick, or you get eliminated

[Beyoncé:]

Okay, ladies, now let's get in formation, I slay
 Okay, ladies, now let's get in formation
 You know you that bitch when you 'cause all this conversation
 Always stay gracious, best revenge is your paper

Girl, I hear some thunder
 Golly, look at that water, boy, oh lord