

Syracuse University

**SURFACE**

---

Theses - ALL

---

May 2019

## For the Culture: A Textual Analysis of Black Placemaking of Black Culture in “Beychella”

N'Dea Drayton  
*Syracuse University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://surface.syr.edu/thesis>



Part of the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Drayton, N'Dea, "For the Culture: A Textual Analysis of Black Placemaking of Black Culture in “Beychella” (2019). *Theses - ALL*. 305.

<https://surface.syr.edu/thesis/305>

This is brought to you for free and open access by SURFACE. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses - ALL by an authorized administrator of SURFACE. For more information, please contact [surface@syr.edu](mailto:surface@syr.edu).

## **Abstract**

This qualitative research seeks to understand entertainment media that is developed ‘for the culture.’ This study illustrates how Hunter, Pattillo, Robinson and Taylor’s (2016) concept of Black placemaking can be used to understand how Black people place-make Black culture into American mainstream popular culture. Beyoncé’s 2018 Coachella performance, or “Beychella,” was used as an entry point to further develop the concept of Black placemaking in the media. A cultural studies framework was utilized to understand the work Black artists, like Beyoncé, are doing with Black culture in American popular culture. NVivo 12 Plus, Microsoft Word and Windows Media Player were used to textually analyze a YouTube video of the live streamed Beychella performance through simultaneous concept and value coding and focused coding to uncover the dominant ideological themes encoded in Beychella. Five themes emerged from Black placemaking in Beychella: (1) The Beyoncé University, (2) celebration of identity, (3) Beyoncé’s place, (4) representation of Black popular culture and (5) resistance. Findings suggest Beyoncé’s intention to do a performance that was impactful for Black culture and American popular culture. Likewise, Beyoncé’s Coachella performance has arguably changed what it means to occupy space on a stage and perform forever.

*Keywords:* Beyoncé, Black culture, Black placemaking, cultural studies, entertainment media, power, representation, US pop culture

For the Culture: A Textual Analysis of Black Placemaking of Black Culture in “Beychella”

by

N’Dea I. Drayton

B.A., Smith College, 2016

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Media Studies

Syracuse University

May 2019

Copyright © N'Dea I. Drayton 2019

All rights reserved

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my advisor, Carolyn Davis Hedges, for her endless help, support and patience while I tackled this beast. Thank you for allowing me to come into your office countless times, listening to me ramble while I figured it out and guiding me throughout the way. However, “thank you” does not adequately express my gratitude for you. I am so grateful I got the opportunity to work with you this year. You are an amazing human being and this institution is lucky to have you. Ms. Marleah, thank you for being you!

Thank you to my committee members, Carol Liebler and Robert Thompson, for your help and support during my time at Newhouse – I appreciate you so much. Thank you to my thesis defense chair, Hubert Brown, for hopping on my team and being an amazing defense chair. Thank you all for matching my ‘vibe’ during my defense as well. I would also like to thank Charisse L’Pree Corsbie-Massay, Casarae Gibson and Christal Johnson who were all so very helpful during this research – thank you! Thank you to all my advisors from Smith College who helped me get to this point!

Thank you, Dean Branham, for all that you have done for this school and the culture. You are Newhouse’s Beyoncé.

I would like to thank my mom and dad, Deana and Butch, and my grandparents for giving me the space to become a person who wants to ask these questions. Y’all are so dope – I love you and thank you. Thank you to my big-little brother, Khalid, who helped me edit this thing. I adore you so so much, man. Thank you to my girls, y’all know who y’all are - squuuuuuuuaaad!

And last, but certainly not least, thank you, God!

This is for the culture...

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Chapter One - Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter Two – Literature Review</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Placemaking and the Construction of Occupied Space .....	<b>6</b>
Black Placemaking and the Construction of Occupied Space and Active Resistance .....	<b>7</b>
Moving Away from an Idealized Black Community .....	<b>9</b>
Defining Black Culture .....	<b>11</b>
Placemaking Black Culture in Other Spaces .....	<b>12</b>
US Media and Popular Culture as Constructed Space and Place .....	<b>13</b>
Cultural Studies, Media and Power .....	<b>14</b>
Black American Culture as American Popular Subculture .....	<b>17</b>
Placing Black Culture in American Popular Culture .....	<b>18</b>
Queen Bey .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Chapter Three - Methodology</b> .....	<b>22</b>
Textual Analysis .....	<b>22</b>
Sample .....	<b>24</b>
Data Collection Strategy .....	<b>24</b>
Threats to Validity .....	<b>25</b>
Ethical Concerns .....	<b>26</b>
Role of the Researcher .....	<b>26</b>
<b>Chapter Four - Results</b> .....	<b>28</b>
The Beyoncé University .....	<b>28</b>
HBCU Homecoming .....	<b>28</b>
The Bugaboos .....	<b>30</b>
Celebration of Identity: Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter aka Queen Bey .....	<b>32</b>
“Since 15, Comin’ Down Reppin’ Texas” .....	<b>32</b>
Queen Bey .....	<b>34</b>
Beyoncé’s Place .....	<b>35</b>

“New Name Alert” .....	35
Home is Where the Heart is .....	36
Representation of Black Popular Culture .....	38
Sampling Black Popular Music and Dance .....	38
Celebration of the African Diaspora Through Popular Song and Dance.....	39
Resistance .....	41
Beyoncé’s Feminism .....	41
Now, Let’s Get in Formation .....	43
<b>Chapter Five – Discussion and Conclusion .....</b>	<b>46</b>
Placemaking, Utopianism, Homespacing, Representation and Beychella .....	46
Limitations.....	49
Future Research.....	50
Summary.....	51
<b>References .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Vita .....</b>	<b>61</b>

## Chapter One – Introduction

Due to the transatlantic slave trade between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, captured Africans from across the continent were, “torn from kin and community, exiled from one’s country, dishonored and violated... the perpetual outcast, the coerced migrant, the foreigner, the shamefaced child in the lineage” (Hartman, 2007, p. 5). In Hartman’s (2007) “Lose Your Mother,” she recounts her experience as an American professor who, upon her arrival to Ghana, was instantly labeled an *obruni*, or an outsider and person who does not belong to any place (p.4). The nature and institutionalized policies of transatlantic enslavement deliberately stripped the enslaved of their distinct identities, cultures and traditions while prohibiting most displays of cultural expression.

As a result, Black people continuously create spaces of resistance in opposition to the “patriarchal white supremacist society,” or a homeplace (hooks, 1990, p. 42). In these homeplaces, Black people, especially Black women, construct safe places where Black people can affirm each other, cultivate a distinctly Black culture and attempt to heal the wounds inflicted from centuries of racist domination (hooks, 1990, p. 42). These self and communal care practices cannot be accomplished while under white supremacy, but require a place that grants, “the opportunity to grow and develop, to nurture our spirits” (hooks, 1990, p. 42). This concept of Black people creating homeplaces extends from one’s nuclear family and home to larger communities, neighborhoods and groups where Black people create spaces amidst the brutalizing and inhumane realities of the outside world (Hunter, Pattillo, Robinson & Taylor, 2016, p. 2). Specifically, Hunter et al. (2016) explicate that Black placemaking, “refers to the ways that urban black Americans create sites of endurance, belonging and resistance through social interaction... [in this case, in] the black digital commons, black public housing reunions, black lesbian and gay nightlife, and black Little League baseball” (p. 31). Additionally,



Black people use these spaces to create art that are reflections of our experiences and fantasies ranging from the work songs sung during plantation labor to the stories told in blaxploitation era films.

The Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival is a massive annual festival held every April in the Coachella Valley in Indio, CA. This year's headliners included Ariana Grande and Childish Gambino (CBSNews, 2019). When Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter occupied the headlining stage of the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in April 2018, after postponing her performances due to pregnancy, it was a pop culture moment spawning countless internet memes and celebrity reactions including Chance the Rapper and Adele (Peters, 2018). Beyoncé's nearly two-hour set gave audiences a jaw-dropping display of Black cultural excellence, subsequently, on the same night Nina Simone and Sister Rosetta Tharpe were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame (Caramanica, 2018). The social commentary expertly weaved into Beyoncé's Coachella performance, from a performance of the Black national anthem to performing the 'Swag Surf,' can be understood as an "ancestral tribute and cultural continuum — an uplifting of black womanhood — as contemporary concert" (Caramanica, 2018). This performance is especially significant considering the tumultuous history of African diasporic people in the US and our constant strivings towards freedom, agency, ownership and recognition of our cultural expressions.

Creating spaces for Black cultural exploration, discussion, expression and celebration will be the focus of this research. By employing a cultural studies framework, this qualitative research seeks to extend Hunter et al.'s (2016) architectural concept of Black placemaking in urban spaces to specifically understand how Black people can place-make in the media by creating distinctly Black media content in mainstream American popular culture. For the

purposes of this research, Beyoncé's 2018 Coachella performances, colloquially renamed "Beychella" (Lockett, 2018), were textually analyzed and discussed as an entry point towards understanding a larger cultural phenomenon. In other words, this is not a study about Beyoncé. Rather, this is a study that analyzes the ways Beyoncé participates in placemaking her culture in mainstream American media and popular culture.

Studying culture is essential to research about the human experience. Culture is understood as a "shifting, contested, conflictual site of the meanings, values, norms, beliefs, actions, and so on that make up the stuff of everyday life for some social groups" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 49). Culture informs our distinct identities through common historical experiences and shared cultural codes (Hall, 1989, p. 69) and to us "being" or "becoming" which constantly transforms (Hall, 1989, p. 70). Cultural studies allow us to deeply examine the organization of identities, historical experiences, cultural codes, "meanings, values, norms, beliefs, actions, and so on; how they relate to one another; and, hence, how certain objects and events in a culture acquire particular meaning(s)" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 49).

Black placemaking privileges the humanity of Blackness in urban spaces. Moreover, the constant assault on these spaces and its inhabitants, such as lethal policing and destructive urban planning (Hunter et al., 2016, p. 4), make this research interesting considering how Black people can construct and occupy a physical space, but be demolished by 'the powers that be.' For instance, in the early 1900's, Tulsa, OK was the most affluent Black community in the country and earned the nicknames "Black Wall Street" and "Little Africa" (Fisher, 2017). On June 1, 1921, the Greenwood district of Tulsa was burned down and bombed in an airstrike because of a race riot, which reportedly started after a white woman accused a Black man of assaulting her in an elevator (Fisher, 2017). A story that was passed down to me was the bombing of Black Wall

St. is signified by the song, “You Dropped a Bomb on Me” (1982) by Tulsa native’s The Gap Band – one could argue that The Gap Band were placemaking when they released that song. If this story is true, The Gap Band used their music to illuminate dialogue amongst Tulsa residents about a racialized incident, while cloaked in funk music.

Media images contribute significantly to the formation of our identity as media culture provides materials that tell us who we are, who we are not, who everyone else is and who we should strive to be (Kellner, 2002, p. 1). When considering the hegemonic nature of our “patriarchal white supremacist society” (hooks, 1990, p. 42), which can prosper from the isolation and exploitation of marginalized groups, it is important to highlight the ways marginalized, or subcultural, groups “resist dominant forms of culture and identity [by] creating their own style and identities” (Kellner, 2002, p. 2). Cultural studies can also be instrumental in allowing us to both affirm marginalized culture and “attempt to deconstruct and criticize culture” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 49). Therefore, it is especially important to ensure that media portrays the nuances of subcultural groups and that these representations are reflective of their experiences because media images and their messages travel throughout spaces and the world.

In terms of the American entertainment industry, we know that institutions like Hollywood are a key player in the re-enforcement of racist stereotypes about Black people and other marginalized groups. Since the 1900’s, Black people have been placed “‘prominently in Hollywood’s racist symbolic relations’ because of their ‘unique history of material and cultural oppression as well as their rich expressive resources’” (Quinn, p. 469 as cited in Yuen, 2017, p. 22). The racist depictions of Black people in minstrelsy morphed into Black men as uncle Tom’s, sneaky villains, or lovable fools and Black women as tragic mulattos, mammies, sirens/jezebels (Ross, 1996, p. 9) or emasculating Sapphire women (Moody-Ramirez, 2017, p.

293). Despite pushback from industry leaders and audiences, these representations have continued to morph into contemporary stereotypes and depictions through film, television and music.

While Black culture is considered “low” culture on the spectrum of cultural hierarchies (Kellner, 2002, p. 2), Black cultural artifacts have been historically stolen, appropriated and discredited to the benefit of “high” culture. In an interview with TIME, Nicki Minaj stated, “A lot of pop culture takes from Black culture and oftentimes doesn’t really say they get it from Black culture... And you have to get used to living in a world that doesn’t acknowledge that you did certain things” (Time, 2017). Therefore, it is important to understand the context that Black cultural spaces and creations as tangible content or artifacts are situated within the “patriarchal white supremacist society” (hooks, 1990, p. 42) because Black culture, space and people can be destroyed and/or repurposed. This research will not end Black suffering or help Black people live their best lives. However, I hope this research will contribute to discourse about Black people attempting to create and exist in healthy and vibrant spaces that allow Black people to be unapologetically Black in every capacity.

The next chapter will situate Hunter et al.’s (2016) concept on Black placemaking in current academic and trade discourse surrounding placemaking, utopianism, homeplacing and representation of Black people and Black culture in American popular culture. The following chapter will, then, give a detailed description and rationale for the methodology chosen to best conduct this research. The findings from analyzing Beyoncé’s Coachella performance will be explicated in the following chapter and will conclude with considerations for its limitations, ideas for future research and closing remarks on Black placemaking in American media and popular culture and Beychella.

## **Chapter Two - Literature Review**

This chapter will briefly describe the concept of American placemaking in city planning. This chapter will also describe how Black American communities create space within their constructed place, which has extended into conceptualizing the ways that Black people place-make and its benefits towards intersectional Black communities. This chapter will later make the argument that American popular culture operates as socially constructed space within the American entertainment industry. Following that explanation, this chapter will conclude with an overview of discourse on Black American culture's space within American popular culture and why Beyoncé and her art are significant to study.

### **Placemaking and the Construction of Occupied Space**

Placemaking is an architectural approach developed in the 1960's for designing urban communal space (PPS.org, 2009). The Project for Public Spaces, or PPS (2009), states that the goal of placemaking is to develop a community amongst city residents which, "capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, and it results in the creation of quality public spaces that contribute to people's health, happiness, and well-being." The PPS make the distinction between what placemaking is intended to do and what it is not. Placemaking is supposed to be community-driven, context specific, transformative and inclusive, but placemaking is not supposed to be top-down, one-size-fits-all, exclusionary or dependent on regulatory controls (PPS.org, 2009).

Designing and residing in a harmonious space meant to enrich "the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution" (PPS.org, 2009), sounds like a wonderful idea, but it also sounds all-too familiar. In Kumar's (1991) book, "Utopianism: Concepts in Social Thought," they remind us of tales of explorers who imagined and voyaged to

lands with endless possibilities. At the core of the many years in search of, what Kumar (1991) calls, “the Paradise myth” (p. 5) is the desire to design an ideal place based on harmony and hope for themselves and their communities (p. 19).

This concept of creating a utopia is important when understanding placemaking because the concept of placemaking, or making a harmonious and healthy community for all, alludes to notions of utopianism with hints of manifest destiny and privilege. One could also argue that this idea of placemaking is inherently western and Eurocentric as America’s foundation was built on creating a utopia for Europeans who were either trying to escape religious oppression or seeking conquest and exploration. This European placemaking in the Americas simultaneously disrupted the ‘harmony’ of communities already present and those seas away. Current literature on the aftermath of city planning highlights the effects of pushing communities into small spaces for others. Friedmann’s (2010) study on efforts towards expanding international urbanization through placemaking in cities in Japan, China and Canada illustrate that much of the popular literature on placemaking is Euro/Western/American-centric, thus, maintaining the current problem with placemaking. Efforts towards creating a harmonious community through urban spatial (re)arrangement continuously lead to the segregation, discrimination and displacement of marginalized groups (Kaplan, 2018) who are often thrust into urban spaces previously viewed as undesirable by dominant groups in US society.

### **Black Placemaking and the Construction of Occupied Space and Active Resistance**

The case of how Black people and people of color navigate the constantly shifting and redesigned geographic space of urban areas is extensively studied and documented. A prime example of this phenomenon of placemaking versus gentrification is displayed in Montgomery’s (2016) case study. This study thoroughly examines how the concepts of urbanization and

gentrification as racial capitalism and social movements are re-emerging through contradictory market-driven placemaking in downtown Detroit (2016). This study highlights the historical flow of Black communities into urban areas, the ghettoization of urban areas during white flight into suburbia, the cultures that emerged during red-lining, the return of the white middle class into urban cities and the struggle and resistance of Black communities as they try to maintain their space in the face of white businesses and real estate investments underneath their feet (Montgomery, 2016).

Fortunately, the popular notion that urban communities are crime-stricken, drug-infested spaces of stagnant struggle is being challenged. In “Black Placemaking: Celebration, Play, and Poetry” (2016), Hunter et al. use Detroit as a site to make the argument that placemaking is occurring amongst Black people in urban spaces where various communities of Black people form to nourish their intersectional identities throughout the city. Hunter et al. (2016) use poetry and literature of prominent Black literary scholars and poets to explain and support their findings that Black spaces in “the black digital commons, black public housing reunions, black lesbian and gay nightlife, and black Little League baseball [develop to] elucidate the matter of black lives across genders, sexualities, ages, classes, and politics” (p. 31).

Likewise, Black communities actively resisting dominant notions and practices of stereotypical urban living for positive community development is displayed in Carter’s (2014) case study that examines how Black residents construct space, place and meaning in Post-Katrina areas of New Orleans. This resistance is primarily accomplished through a religious vigil at the memorial site of, civil rights activist, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in a section of the city that frequently experiences violent interactions (2014). This study serves as an example of how Black communities create and designate meaning to their own spaces that are counter to stereotypical

notions of crime-stricken and impoverished communities because these areas in New Orleans actively work to improve communal relations and unity (Carter, 2014). Likewise, Carter's (2014) findings directly coincide with the notion that Black placemaking, "offers a corrective to existing accounts that depict urban blacks as bounded, plagued by violence, victims and perpetrators, unproductive, and isolated from one another and the city writ large" (Hunter et al., 2016, p. 31).

In relation to Hunter et al.'s (2016) findings of community developed in the "black digital commons," or the realm of Black social media, Lee (2017) combined Bordo's (1993) concept of the battleground/playground and hooks' (1990) concept of homeplace to construct the theory of digital homespaces. Digital homespaces (Lee, 2017) are where Black people use Twitter as a space to respond and draw attention to the racist portrayal of Black criminality in news media, with attention to the recent killings of unarmed Black boys. Lee's (2017) work is useful because it highlights both the power of Black Twitter in American popular culture and the act of creating a space in new media where everyone's voices can be heard, from Black entertainers to average citizens.

### ***Moving Away from an Idealized Black Community***

In hooks' classic work, "Yearning" (1990), she develops the concept of a homeplace that highlights discourse about how Black communities reinforce their humanity, despite a society that would not blink twice if the community descended into utter chaos. hooks' (1990) nearly 30-year-old concept demonstrates discourse about how Black people form their own identities in the "patriarchal white supremacist society" (p. 42), in addition to the conceptualization of a utopian Black society or the impossibility of it. To highlight this homogenous communal divide, Dickerson (2004) discusses the many ways Black people can be viewed as complacent in the



maintenance of white supremacy. Dickerson (2004) highlights the popular idea that Black people can destroy their own communities through violence, separatism, tribalism and elitism.

Dickerson's (2004) perspective is important in this research as it paints a realistic picture of the constant struggle to achieve, or unlikeliness of, a 'real' Black community and Black experience. Many argue a collective Black experience will never exist as Black people are humans and inherently experience differing issues, problems and ideologies, as all people do. Moreover, many Black people participate in the maintenance of hegemonic societal norms, despite it disrupting our humanity through practices of homophobia, harassment and homicide (Hunter et al., 2016, p. 32). Therefore, keeping these differing ideologies in mind is essential to attempt to be realistic about the concepts of utopianism and the Black American community as Black people and culture are subject to hegemonic practices and values as well.

An example of the separate values and practices within the Black community is evident in Lacy's (2004) study of middle-class Black people's engagement in the integration into a 'white world.' Through in-depth interviews with middle-class Black people living in white and/or Black suburbs, Lacy (2004) establishes the concept of "segmented assimilation," where middle-class Black people engage in a manner of privileging of and socialization within Black culture without being constrained to an urban Black experience. This study is interesting because while Lacy's (2004) findings support a complicated, but positive view of urban Black culture by those moving out of the margins, many Black elites would still prefer the distinction and separation of the classes, regardless of a shared racial group. Lacy's (2004) findings also relate to Black placemaking because various groups of Black people within urban spaces form to build community amongst those like them. However, the groups are still different due to their respective identities, thus, perpetuating separatism amongst the same racial group. Noting this is

not a call to end group/identity distinctions, but it is vital when considering that all Black people are not the same and do not share the same ideological frameworks.

### ***Defining Black Culture***

This study will focus on those who believe in and strive for intersectional Black spaces and the celebration of intersectional cultural Blackness. The role intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) plays when studying humans and how humans interact is vital. There are multiple layers of one's identity that informs their beliefs, values, opinions, practices and behaviors (Kellner, 2002). Black people, like all people, are not a monolith and will not see eye-to-eye on every topic, including ideas of community and unity. An example of the way's intersectionality manifest in the development of a culturally enriching space for Black people is in "Gender and Sexual Geographies of Blackness: New Black Cartographies of Resistance and Survival (Part 2)" (2014). Bailey and Shabazz (2014) use a Black feminist framework to analyze the ways Black gender and sexual minorities challenge conventional feminist and queer ideologies of space construction. They further the discourse on how Black gender and sexual minorities confront their marginalization within misogynoir, or Black misogyny, and create spaces for nurturing and celebration of their intersectional Blackness (2014). This study is interesting because it relates to hooks' (1990) work on the hierarchies within the Black community and culture where many argue for sexual inclusivity, but ideological disagreements persist. These ideological disagreements uncover another disagreement in discourse in Black cultural studies for a single definition of Black culture. There is no single definition of Black culture because Black culture involves geographic, religious, ethnic, sexual, gendered, generational, socioeconomic, phenotypic and other identity-related specificities. In layman's terms, Black culture means different things for different Black people. For the purposes of this research, however, Black

culture can be understood as the practices, traditions and dialogue of mass populations and smaller collectives of intersectional Black people, with a capital 'B' because "Black is adjective, adverb, color and noun" (Theresa tha S.O.N.G.B.I.R.D., 2019).

### ***Placemaking Black Culture in Other Spaces***

Another discipline where developing a community for nurturing one's Blackness has been discussed is in studies of education. Placemaking can be used to understand the ways geographical location and access intersect to form, for better or worse, identities and educational access for marginalized children. By reviewing research on the practices and experiences of Black girls in schools affected by sociocultural and geopolitical locations in education research, Butler (2018) proposes the framework for "Black Girl Cartography." Through this framework, Butler (2018) seeks to create an opening for transformative and liberational work in educational studies. This research is interesting because it proposes ways Black girl cartographers, or scholars and researchers of Black girls in the educational system, can work to put Black girls in a place that traditionally ignores their existence, through race, gender, socioeconomic status and geopolitical location (Butler, 2018). This work is also interesting because it demonstrates the current work scholars are doing in terms of geographical placemaking and race in America. Butler's (2018) framework supports Hunter et al.'s (2016) concept by demonstrating the agency Black people have to reclaim control over their space, specifically in education, for their children and how their children, especially Black girls, are impacted and studied.

Similarly, by examining the experiences shared from the Black Women's Gathering Place, Howard, Patterson, Kinloch, Burkhard and Randall (2016) attempt to eliminate the patriarchal, imperialist, capitalist traditions of critical approaches in Curriculum Studies in education. Combining Black feminist theory, theory of hidden curriculum and the "curriculum of

place,” the authors reconceptualize the notion of place within curriculum studies that would negotiate hegemony in social environments (Howard et al., 2016). With this reconceptualization, the authors validate the knowledge of Black diasporic women shared throughout various communities (Howard et al., 2016). This research demonstrates the resistance towards misplacing and invalidating the space for Black women in education (Howard et al., 2016). This is particularly fascinating when one considers conversations in the community for more Black teachers to teach Black students, regardless of whether there are “enough” teachers to meet the demand. These scholars have additionally formed a space for support and comfort, while simultaneously engaging in Collins’ (2000) concept of everyday activism and hooks’ (1997) call for a critical examination of the (re)presentations of Black women in media. The authors propose a lesson plan grounded in Black feminist frameworks for aiding students in developing critical media literacy (2016). This is one of the few articles cited here that proposes a lesson plan for combating the problems in media and, also, advocates for media literacy (Patterson, Howard & Kinloch, 2016). Additionally, this essay demonstrates the continuous work Black women do by placemaking spaces to discuss Black culture in American media, which directly relates to the work Black artists, especially Black female artists, are doing in American media and popular culture.

### **US Media and Popular Culture as Constructed Space and Place**

The goal of this research is to establish a presence of Black placemaking in US media and popular culture specifically. First, it seems appropriate to make clear what is meant when referring to American popular culture, which is a very broad concept and difficult to define. Leventman and Ebrary (2008) explain how American popular culture, originally based in folk culture, has morphed into mass produced and commodified life experiences and expressions

from creators and artists who are considered “icons of culture,” such as contemporary celebrities and mass media personalities (p. 2). Parker (2012) adds that a single definition of pop culture is not adequate as there are various elements of culture development that need to be accounted for. Cultural capital, consumption and “unauthorized culture,” or culture that is not readily recognized by societal elites, are among the concepts and theories Parker (2012) presents that are useful to understand how definitions of culture and popular culture transform depending on, essentially, who is asked (p. 165). For the purposes of this research, a finite definition of popular culture will not be provided. However, popular culture, particularly American popular culture, can be understood as an entity that involves multiple concepts and institutions flowing, connecting and feeding each other. These concepts and institutions include consumerism, mass media, content creators and artists, media executives, social media and the acceptance or rejection from a global audience.

### ***Cultural Studies, Media and Power***

Media culture can inform identity and culture (Kellner, 2002). Kellner (2002) asserts that cultural studies can provide the framework for how to study this media culture. Because it is created by institutions of people with their own identities and agendas, media culture is a social construction. Therefore, people with power can determine how much space content can occupy and how important it is through news, advertisements, endorsements etc. (Kellner, 2002). These same powerful people, or media placemakers, can remove the platforms of media content at their discretion. An example of media placemakers enforcing their power to grant or strip an artists’ place in American mass media and popular culture occurred when Billboard removed Lil Nas X’s “Old Town Road” from the Billboard Hot Country Songs chart in March 2019. Billboard explained that its initial inclusion was “a mistake because the song ‘does not embrace enough

elements of today's country music” (Coscarelli, 2019). Country legend Billy Ray Cyrus countered this notion by joining Lil Nas X for the remix of this song and, thus, gained a number one song on the Billboard Hot 100 Singles chart (Coscarelli, 2019). The initial removal of “Old Town Road” received criticism as “Many critics of the decision questioned whether race was a factor, and noted modern country's frequent use of rapping and digital drum sounds from hip-hop” (Coscarelli, 2019). This is also questionable with reflection on country music's roots.

Whites in Appalachian and the Deep South performed Celtic and English ballads and dance tunes which became the precursor to “hillbilly” or country music, but they acquired characteristics we associate with the blues, such as vocal melisma and flattened “blue notes.” Despite Jim Crow, southern whites and blacks borrowed musically from each other (Peretti, 2009, p. 69).

Considering this history of borrowing racialized musical styles in the American South, there is nothing more ‘country’ than “Old Town Road,” even if Billboard would disagree.

Gerbner and Gross's (1976) concept of symbolic annihilation, or the absence of a social group in mass media, especially marginalized groups, to maintain social inequality can be used to understand the hypervisibility or complete absence of certain images of groups in their representations in Hollywood film and television. Symbolic annihilation (Gerbner & Gross, 1976) also relates to the politics of “Black cultural productions” such as films, art works and photography that were influenced more from the “popular culture of migrant populations... than on the traditions of the avant-garde” (McRobbie, 2016, para. 7). Historically, not only were “Black cultural productions” not considered art by society, the artists included, but these works rarely received recognition from the art world (McRobbie, 2016, para. 7). These concepts showcase how media placemakers use their power to create or eliminate the places for

marginalized groups in entertainment. Another contemporary example from music is described in a verse from J. Cole's song, "Fire Squad" (2014),

History repeats itself and that's just how it goes  
 Same way that these rappers always bite each other's flows  
 Same thing that my nigga Elvis did with Rock n Roll  
 Justin Timberlake, Eminem, and then Macklemore  
 While silly niggas argue over who gone snatch the crown  
 Look around, my nigga, white people have snatched the sound  
 This year I'll prolly' go to the awards dappered down  
 Watch Iggy win a Grammy as I try to crack a smile  
 I'm just playin', but all good jokes contain true shit  
 Same rope you climb up on, they'll hang you with (Cole & Farner, 2014).

J. Cole (2014) addresses white artists appropriating traditionally Black musical sound from Elvis with rock n' roll to Justin Timberlake with R&B and soul. J. Cole (2014) continues by describing how white artists will subsequently receive the highest accolades in entertainment for such appropriation, while he is expected to be content with not being recognized for doing the same work. This statement, from a man who entered 'the rap game' with a college education, is important as it validates sentiments about cultural appropriation of Black culture, which gives non-Black artists huge platforms to plagiarize Black art without repercussions and high recognition. In relation, J. Cole's (2014) comments about how the Grammy's, voted by members of a board, award appropriators continues to manifest throughout musical genres. Another example of this practice includes Adele's 25 being awarded the Grammy for album of the year over Beyoncé's *Lemonade*. During her acceptance speech, Adele stated that Beyoncé is her

inspiration and she shared the award with her, despite claims that *Lemonade* was the actual album of the year (Knopper, 2017). This practice of deciding who gets nominated for what and who wins the highest honors in entertainment is an example of someone or something controlling who gets access to the opportunities that follow such nominations and honors.

### **Black American Culture as American Popular Subculture**

In Hall's (1972) edited volume of "Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies," he highlights Cohen's research on the development of British neighborhoods. Cohen (1972) describes the rise of the British subculture by the planning authorities developing new housing units on one side of the country, developing other businesses inside of the towns and creating a distinction between who is moving to one end of the town and who is moving out. Within this development, the cultural divide only thickened, especially with the rise of poor immigrant populations (Cohen, 1972). This text is useful because many of the ideologies of class Americans have originate from their homeland with geographical planning strategies. The subsequent cultures that rise from class designations are very similar to that of British colonial rulers.

Throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century, culture has been perceived and normalized to be constructed on a hierarchy where those interested in high culture, i.e. the symphony, would be associated with higher education, wealth, and 'good taste' in artistic expressions (Campbell, Martin & Fabos, 2017, p. 15). Those interested in low and popular culture, i.e. teen pop music, would be associated with commercialized, low class and unstimulating content crafted by mass media (Campbell et al., 2017, p. 15). In response to another article describing the perceived issue with using "a culture of fake" over high culture, specifically digestible for "educated" populations, in education, Jones (2013) describes his dilemma with using high culture over low culture, or



popular culture, to teach younger populations who are seemingly more connected to pop/low culture. What is interesting here is (1) people assume marginalized groups are not interested in or do not participate in high culture and (2) the culture produced by marginalized groups, particularly people of color, cannot be high culture, but can be popular to youth. Kellner (2002) argues that cultural studies can be used to critically analyze the distinctions between how culture is viewed, digested and regurgitated. Additionally, cultural studies can be used to challenge the notion that someone, with a lot of power in the industry, can correctly claim what productions and content is high/better or low/poor.

### ***Placing Black Culture in American Popular Culture***

Rather than understand culture and its productions in an outdated top-down hierarchal manner, many scholars are moving towards reading culture as a constantly shifting map where culture is judged based on personal tastes and the aesthetics a society has at a specific point in time (Campbell et al., 2017, p. 22). Additionally, this cultural mapping allows audiences to “pursue many connections across various media choices and can appreciate a range of cultural experiences without simply ranking them from high to low” (Campbell et al., 2017, p. 22). Therefore, it is with a cultural map that one can locate an “icon of culture” (Leventman & Ebrary, 2008) like Beyoncé, with numerous accolades, references as one of the greatest performers of all time and curator of content that has been popularly considered ‘for the culture.’ Beyoncé can be considered a major influencer on America’s current cultural map and, thus, someone whose content, regardless of what messages are encoded or decoded, is highly impactful.

### ***Queen Bey***

Beyoncé is the,

“unapologetically regal, overflowing sensual, divinely hyperfeminine character... [that] is the jewel-laden, spectacularly abundant fantasy of a black feminist imagination: an (un)reality where black women *are our own wealth*, where our sexuality can glitter as openly as an unskirted gold hoop and the corset designed to rein in our womanness [that] transforms into a display of powerful self-creation” (Tinsley, 2018, p. 4).

Today, Beyoncé is arguably one of the biggest superstars in the world; from her face being displayed on billboards in Nigeria, Korean pop stars covering her songs during Korean music programming to her being the first woman of color to headline Coachella. Similarly, Beyoncé is a highly debated pop cultural figure in academia, specifically in Black and feminist studies. Some scholars and cultural critics declare Beyoncé an icon of Black and female empowerment. Black transwoman journalist Janet Mock wrote, “I applaud Beyoncé and her feminist stance, a declaration of her own independence as a leotard-wearing, butt-cheek baring, Blue Ivy-toting, equal pay-advocating, Independent Woman-saluting, imperfect flawless feminist” (as cited in Tinsley, 2018, p. 8). Others argue that Beyoncé represents capitalism, white supremacy, classism, colorism and sexuality catered to the male gaze, which are anything but feminist (Trier-Bieniek, 2016). In fact, prominent Black feminist scholar bell hooks, who is frequently cited in this research, stated during a public forum at the New School in New York City that Beyoncé was a terrorist and a slave who was “doing active harm to other women and girls (a ‘terrorist’) while simultaneously rendering her as an abject victim (a ‘slave’) with no agency over her image and performative choices” (Hobson, p. 20 as cited in Trier-Bieniek, 2016). Additionally, Ward (2017) argues that Beyoncé is a part of a small group of Black cultural producers engineering American popular culture for individual economic improvement (p. 146). Ward (2017) continues

by claiming Beyoncé's type and display of Black feminist radicalism "has transformed the politics of social movements into a set of commodities that ultimately sustain her personal empire" (p.146).

While there are many aspects of the Beyoncé brand that are worthy of critique, Hobson asks, "Is there a space for a commercially mass-marketed feminism that could co-exist alongside radical feminism? Is Beyoncé really the problem here..." (p. 21 as cited in Trier-Bieniek, 2016)? Moreover, the debate about Beyoncé's feminism "demonstrates how rich black feminism is with differences, contradictions, and productive tensions" and that, perhaps, "the most important qualification for black feminist status is self-identification" (Tinsley, 2018, p. 8). Beyoncé proudly displays her celebration of her intersectionality as a Black Southern woman who loves her femininity, heterosexuality, motherhood, family and heritage while frequently citing Chimamanda Adichie in her works and proclaiming herself as a feminist.

While there is much to critique in Beyoncé's work, there is no denying that Queen Bey is a force to be reckoned with. Beyoncé has sold over 100 million records, has 22 Grammys, is the most nominated female artist in Grammy awards history (Macmillian, n.d.), has starred in over six major motion pictures, will voice the character, Nala, in the live-action *Lion King* (2019), has created her own production company, Parkwood Entertainment, created a new fashion line, Ivy Park, and her own philanthropic organization, BeyGood. Additionally, Michael Eric Dyson recently stated that "Beyoncé snatched the crown from Michael Jackson – I saw him at his height... and he was extraordinary. He was a genius, but what she's doing is on another level" (Breakfast Club Power 105.1 FM, 2019). This claim is debatable, but Beyoncé's showcase at Coachella necessitates critical attention in relation to Black placemaking in the media as Beychella "was more than just a history-making performance with the first black female

headliner -- it was a cultural watershed moment” (France, 2019). What Beyoncé does has tangible impact on popular culture as even her mere (if displayed on a massive screen during the 2014 VMAs is ‘mere’) self-declaration as a feminist gave audiences a stamp of approval for mainstream feminism that was “overwhelmingly popular *and* undeniably black” (Tinsley, 2018, p. 8). Likewise, Beyoncé has changed the expectations of headlining a music festival forever because “there’s not likely to be a more meaningful, absorbing, forceful and radical performance by an American musician this year, or any year soon, than Beyoncé’s headlining set at Coachella” (Caramanica, 2018).

To understand how Black placemaking is present in American pop culture through Beychella, the following research question was posed:

*RQ1 How is Black placemaking encoded in “Beychella” through representations of Black cultural practices, dialogue and/or traditions?*

The next chapter will provide an explanation for the qualitative research method selected for this study.

### **Chapter Three - Methodology**

This chapter provides an explanation for the decision to examine Black placemaking in Beyoncé's 2018 Coachella performance by textual analysis. I will briefly explain what a textual analysis is and how it is used to evaluate media content qualitatively. Then, I will describe the particularities for executing this study in terms of sampling and data collection. I will conclude this chapter with a consideration for threats to validity, ethical concerns and an explanation of my role as the researcher for this study.

#### **Textual Analysis**

Qualitative researchers consider a text a cultural artifact that can be interpreted to gain some understanding of the relationships between media, culture and society (Brennen, 2013, p. 193). Textual analysis is a qualitative methodology that is employed to zone in on the implicit or explicit ideological and cultural assumptions of a text (Fürsich, 2009, Textual Analysis as a Research Method section, para. 5). Interestingly, textual analysis is one of the preferred methods for cultural scholars to investigate media content (Fürsich, 2009, Introduction section, para. 5). Through this methodology, researchers study the intended, or dominant, meanings encoded in a text by its author, the various meanings decoded by its audience as well as the intertext surrounding the text, or the text that refers to another text (Brennen, 2013, pp. 199-200). Furthermore, there are a variety of styles of textual analysis a researcher can choose from to best answer their research questions or purpose such as ideological, genre and rhetorical analysis (Brennen, 2013, pp. 201 - 206) among others.

Critics of textual analysis argue that its methodology lacks depth, leaving its findings incomplete and, thus, needing to be substantiated and validated by an additional analysis of the decoded meanings or production context (Fürsich, 2009, A Defense of Textual Analysis section,

para. 1). Similarly, textual analysis does not provide knowledge to researchers for how to make their interpretations replicable or generalizable to wider populations (Brennen, 2013, p. 206), thus appearing less academically rigorous to some. However, Fürsich (2009) maintains that “only independent textual analysis can elucidate the narrative structure, symbolic arrangements and ideological potential of media content” (Introduction section, para. 5). Likewise, Phillipov (2013) argues that using textual analysis for popular media content offers innovative ways to express experiences that can be inaccessible to empirical research methods and can strengthen, rather than weaken, how we interpret and understand popular media and culture (para. 3). Additionally, cultural studies, when employed counter-hegemonically, can further support the goals of textual analysis of popular media texts as cultural studies,

...can be a site of meaningful contestation and constructive confrontation... [that must be] committed to a ‘politics of difference’ that recognizes the importance of making space where critical dialogues can take place between individuals who have not traditionally been compelled by politicized intellectual practice to speak with one another (hooks, 1990, p. 133)

An ideological analysis is the most effective methodology for completing a close reading of Beyoncé’s 2018 Coachella performance as a pop cultural text. Smith (1990) urges social inquirers to approach research ideologically and “to think in situationally determined modes” (as cited in Schwandt, 2001, p. 123). The ideological perspective this research was conducted from was with the Black American colloquial phrase, “for the culture,” in mind to analyze the ways deliberate Black cultural expressions were displayed. Therefore, to understand how Black placemaking is encoded in Beychella, an ideological textual analysis was done to illustrate the dominant ideas of individuals, groups, classes or societies and how meanings are socially

constructed and displayed in the text (Brennen, 2013, p. 201). Intertext (Brennen, 2013, p. 199) of Instagram posts from Beyoncé's official Instagram account and Coachella's official Instagram account about Beychella were used for analysis because these two accounts are ran by the official teams of both parties, thus, curated with the same intended meanings as the performance.

### ***Sample***

Beyoncé became the first Black woman and woman of color to headline the Coachella festival and performed two minutely different hour and forty-five-minute-long sets on Saturday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018 and Saturday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018 (Chavez, 2018) with the first performance live-streamed on YouTube. The live-streamed footage is not easily accessible online, but there are numerous videos of segments of Beychella uploaded by festival attendees on social media and an unofficial upload of the footage was available during data collection on YouTube. For the purposes of this research, the unofficial upload of the entire live-streamed performance was downloaded and analyzed, but the source is no longer available. In terms of intertext, eight images and one video posted on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018 to Beyoncé's official Instagram account (Beyoncé, n.d.) and three images posted on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018 to the Coachella Festival's official Instagram account in relation to Beyoncé's first Coachella performance (Coachella, n.d.) were analyzed in support of the main text.

### ***Data Collection Strategy***

As a primarily strategy to resituate myself within the overall narrative, Beychella footage was watched with field notes taken on Microsoft Word. Because the nature of coding is cyclical rather than linear (Saldaña, 2016, p. 68), a first and second cycle coding method was implemented for this study. Using the qualitative research software NVivo 12 Plus, a YouTube video of Beychella downloaded onto my computer via Windows Media Player and Microsoft

Word, the first cycle of simultaneous concept and value coding was completed from February 2019 to March 2019 to both “assign meso or macro levels of meaning to data” (Saldaña, 2016, p.119) and to “reflect a participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldview” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 131) in Beychella. Simultaneous coding of Beychella was appropriate for first cycle coding because there appeared to be “manifest (apparent) and latent (underlying) meanings” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 94) encoded in the performance.

Next, code mapping the findings from first cycle coding was completed to enhance the credibility, trustworthiness and organization of my first round of analysis (Saldaña, 2016, p. 218). To find the most frequent and significant codes in the text in order “to develop the most salient categories in the data corpus” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 240), the second cycle of coding was conducted by focused coding in March 2019. Data collection concluded by creating categories of categories of the findings (Saldaña, 2016, p. 278) by the end of March 2019 to develop clear themes of Black placemaking of Black culture that were elucidated in Beychella. Additionally, the 12 Instagram posts from Beyoncé and Coachella’s official accounts were analyzed to see if there were any connections to the findings of the main text.

### ***Threats to Validity***

Due to simultaneous coding, some may consider that suggestive of an unfocused research purpose (Saldaña, 2016, p. 94). However, establishing how Black people celebrate and play (Hunter et al., 2016) within their intersectional Black identities and communities requires very close and thorough analysis. Additionally, understanding how Black people use their spaces to critique and nurture their identity and community within the media required a nuanced reading of the explicit messages displayed coupled with the implicit messages subtly weaved into the



performance's narrative. Lastly, the downloaded video for this research did not contain subtitles, so the words cited from this performance are rather subjective.

### ***Ethical Concerns***

Two concerns arise in this research. The first is the potential of copyright infringement of the video content. However, the downloaded video from YouTube was solely used for research purposes and will not be redistributed, reposted or sold for commercial reasons. The second concern is the nature of this research elicits a methodological strategy that may generate results that are not replicable (Brennen, 2016, p. 206). However, it was my intention to keep Beychella conceptually placed within a larger social, historical, cultural and political context (Brennen, 2016, p. 206) by keeping up with the discourse produced in response to Beychella and other developments that are 'for the culture' as they all had the potential to be informative to ideas of Black placemaking in US media.

### ***Role of the Researcher***

Acknowledging the values, experiences and potential biases of the researcher is vital as "it is worth remembering that all discourse is 'placed', and the heart has its reasons" (Hall, 1989, p. 69). How this research is written and positioned is absolutely a reflection of my own interpretations based on my cultural, social, gender, class and personal politics (Creswell, 2016, p. 223). It is possible that I could have only reported positive results (Creswell, 2016, p. 52) to illustrate a specific picture of the work Beychella is doing 'for the culture.' This is precisely why I made it my business to remain open-minded by reporting contrary findings (Creswell, 2016, p. 52) that presented complicated or problematic occurrences within the discourse of Black cultural politics and, by virtue, myself as a Beyhive member. To that same regard, my positionality as a

Beyhive member and advocate for art that is ‘for the culture’ makes me a prime choice for conducting this research.

It is important that I state that I self-identify as a dark skinned Black American, heterosexual, cis-gendered, able-bodied, millennial woman from an urban city on the east coast who also happens to be a ‘pop culture junky,’ lover of all things related to Black culture, music enthusiast and have been a fan of Beyoncé and Beyoncé concert attendee prior to conducting this research. Additionally, I was raised to be proud of my cultural Blackness and heritage, especially when, “America is a motherfucker to us” (Carter, Carter, Cobbs Jr., Lyon & Valenzano, 2018). In terms of my educational background, I earned my high school diploma as one of the top five of my graduating class from a charter school in Philadelphia, PA and received a Bachelor of Arts degree three years ago in Sociology and Africana Studies from the top women’s college in the country today. My positionality has allotted me interest and potential biases with Beyoncé’s 2018 Coachella performance as its messages and her commercial success are valuable to me. Moreover, my role in this study will undoubtedly shape the findings, “the conclusions and the interpretations drawn in this study” (Creswell, 2016, p. 223), which, for qualitative research, is not necessarily a bad thing.

The next chapter will provide an explanation of the encoded themes after analyzing all collected Beychella texts in relation to Black placemaking in Beychella and, thus, US media.

## Chapter Four - Results

This chapter will provide an in-depth explanation with rich examples of this ideological textual analysis in relation to its research question. *RQ1* asked *How is Black placemaking encoded in “Beychella” through representations of Black cultural practices, dialogue and/or traditions?* It is evident that Beyoncé is placemaking her version of Black culture onto the Coachella stage. Findings suggest that Beyoncé is establishing her interpretations of Black cultural practices, dialogue and traditions through these five themes placed in Beychella: (1) The Beyoncé University, (2) celebration of identity, (3) Beyoncé’s place, (4) representation of Black popular culture and (5) resistance.

### The Beyoncé University

***HBCU Homecoming.*** The show opens with a Black woman dressed as an orchestra band member playing the drums. Her uniform is a yellow suit with a crest on the front of the suit jacket with white shoes and a black hat with a feather attached. She blows a whistle seven times and twirls out of the way revealing three Black men in black leather pants, yellow hoodies with the same crest, white gloves and black hats. They are holding flags with the Greek letters B, Δ and K on them. A large orchestra is heard playing the drums and blowing other whistles as the men display and remove their flags. They reveal a single line of predominately Black female dancers dressed in one-legged long-sleeved catsuits with King Tutankhamen’s bust on them with white gloves, black barrettes, black sunglasses and black heeled ankle boots. They spin out of the line forming a straight path towards Beyoncé, standing with her back turned to them.

After Beyoncé struts and exits the smaller stage in the middle of the crowd, the dancers get in position on the main stage and the dancer in the center of the stage begins to dance alone. After she finishes her dance routine, the other dancers begin her dance routine while she leads.

As they dance, the entire set is revealed while an orchestra plays the chords to, “Higher” by Beyoncé and JAY Z. On the stage are the orchestra in matching crested yellow hoodies and suits while the rest of the female dancers are in solid yellow bodysuits, yellow crested barrettes, white gloves and white thigh-high heeled boots. All are sitting on the stage as if sitting on football stadium bleachers. The orchestra plays a different set of fast-paced drumming chords with whistles as the King Tut dancers dance off the stage. The music stops, bright lights flash and settle and the horns play chords that sound like they are announcing something. Beyoncé suddenly appears at the top of the bleachers in a yellow hoodie with bedazzled BΔK letters, mid-rise, ripped, light blue, jean booty shorts, iridescent tinsel knee-high heeled boots with her hair blowing in the wind. She attempts to hide a smile as the crowd erupts in applause and cheers before the orchestra plays the opening chords. Then, she replicates the opening choreography from the King Tut dancers as sparks and lights flash and flare during every dance accent. Afterwards, Beyoncé asks, “Coachella, y’all ready?” (2019, 4:22) and signals for the orchestra to begin “Crazy in Love,” her debut song as a solo artist. She descends the stairs aided by Black men in yellow crested uniforms. Everyone rises, the dancers get into position, Beyoncé walks to the front and center point of the stage and begins to sing – Beychella has officially begun.

From the opening moment of the show onwards, Beyoncé immediately establishes the theme of the night. We are at a show during what would be a homecoming-like football game at a historically Black college or university, or HBCU, - a hub of Black culture and intellectualism. For the purposes of this research, this HBCU experience will be called the Beyoncé University. Homecoming at the Beyoncé University includes a large orchestra, like those who cover popular Black songs during their performances, The Buzz, or “the only drumline certified by the Queen Bey” (2019, 1:17:50), dancers who do choreography reminiscent of traditional HBCU majorette

choreography (for this research, they will be referred to as the Buzzettes), a baton girl, Beyoncé's own Greek letters and university crest (with Beyoncé's bust, similar to the bust of Nefertiti sculpture, a black panther, her painted hand balled into a Black power fist and a bumble bee) that appears on many of the costumes, her own university colors of yellow and black and various HBCU-like football homecoming party moments which function as a costume change for her.

*The Bugaboos.* During "Sorry," a song about moving on from an unfaithful man, a line of eight Black and brown men in matching soft yellow BAK jumpsuits march onto the stage. After Beyoncé shouts the lyrics, "suck on my balls - pause" (2019, 17:04) into the camera and pushes it down, the music stops and she and her Buzzettes begin to haze the men. Beyoncé states, "Bugaboos. I need a good laugh. You. Make me laugh" (2019, 17:06). The ace, or first and shortest person in the line, calls on the rest of the Bugaboos to laugh as Beyoncé and the Buzzettes pretend to laugh. Beyoncé signals for the Bugaboos to stop laughing and they stop while the audience is heard laughing. Beyoncé asks the Buzzettes, "Ladies, did that make us laugh" (2019, 17:15) which they reply negatively. The Bugaboos buzz into a larger line and drop to the ground. Beyoncé tells the Bugaboos to "think about it" (2019, 17:18) and orders them to fall in line, causing them to rise and form a horizontal line. Beyoncé, then, asks, "Ladies, are we smart? Are we strong? Have we had enough? Show them" (2019, 18:05). Beyoncé and the Buzzettes perform a stepping routine to "Suck on my balls, bitch" (2019, 18:20), which is joined by the Bugaboos. The Bugaboos exit the stage and Beyoncé states, "let's go," before the women perform an additional step routine to the words, "tell 'em, 'boy, bye'" accompanied by the orchestra. The routine ends with the words, "I ain't thinkin' about you" (2019, 19:07). The women let out a loud grunt and end their routine at attention.

After metaphorically completing their fraternal process, the Bugaboos come back for, what can be considered, their probate and introduce themselves as their official Bugaboo line names: (1) Me, Myself and I, (2) Upgrade U or Shinin', (3) Sweet Dreams or Blow, (4) Disappear or Ave Maria, (5) Rocket or If I Were a Boy and (6) Work it Out or Party. In unison, the Bugaboos state, "all together now," and perform their first step routine as the Bugaboos (2019, 45:08). The entire stage begins to dance, and the orchestra plays "Party." The baton girl performs while the men cheer her on. She finishes her routine and the men dance until the party ends (2019, 47:35).

The National Pan-Hellenic Council, also known as the Divine 9 Black Greek Fraternities and Sororities, are a vital aspect of Black intellectualism, culture and philanthropy. Some of the most notable Black American leaders are a part of Divine 9 organizations such as the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated, Minister Louis Farrakhan, an honorary member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated, the late Aretha Franklin, an honorary member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated and Phylicia Rashad, a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. Traditionally, after a new line of initiates become official members of a Divine 9 organization, a new member presentation, or probate, is held where each line member announces their line name and performs each organization and chapter specific dance routine and song in the presence of older Divine 9 members and supporters. Likewise, successful probates often turn into celebrations to commemorate the new members' achievements and because most Black events end in a party anyway. The Beyoncé University is no exception to this cultural tradition as The Bugaboos are named after popular Beyoncé songs and after their probate, a party ensues.

Additionally, the importance of this theme is supported by the intertext as the second, fourth, fifth, seventh and ninth posts on Beyoncé’s Instagram account on the date of her first performance exclusively feature photos of her dressed in her university regalia or accompanied by her orchestra and Buzzettes (Beyoncé, n.d.). Beyoncé also features a video montage of the entire HBCU themed performance on her Instagram account (Beyoncé, n.d.).

Theme one, *The Beyoncé University*, references the explicit theming of Beyoncé’s Coachella performance. Black placemaking necessitates a celebration of cultural traditions, practices and identities, whether that be defiantly participating in cultural traditions to throwing a literal party. Honoring Blackness through song, dance, food or gathering in any capacity in any space is, essentially, what Black placemaking is about. Likewise, providing the space for cultural enrichment and education is key to identity formation and being a well-rounded individual, in general. Beyoncé vividly displays this practice through coloring her entire performance as the places that produce some of the best and brightest the Black community has to offer.

### **Celebration of Identity: Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter aka Queen Bey**

*“Since 15, Comin’ Down Reppin’ Texas.”* Towards the end of the show, Beyoncé states, “Alright, I want y’all to get loose to this one” (2019, 1:34:50). She shimmies her shoulders a little and the opening chords to “Single Ladies” begins, followed by cheers from the crowd. Beyoncé instructs the audience to sing the “oh, oh, oh,” segment of the song accompanied with the song’s signature left hand turn dance, reminiscent of ‘putting a ring on it.’ Beyoncé, then, states, “Now wait,” the music cuts and she continues with, “y’all ain’t stankin’ enough for me” (2019, 1:36:06). The orchestra remixes the chords to “Single Ladies” into a jubilee-styled remix, popular amongst big jazz bands in New Orleans, LA. Beyoncé continues, “you see, where I’m from, we make things nice and funky. Can y’all make it funky for me? Can y’all make it stanky

for me? I want y'all to repeat after me" (2019, 1:36:06), and she sings the "hey" segment of the live version of "Single Ladies" in sync with its jubilee-styled remix. She beckons the audience to participate in her call and response, while she swings her hips and dances around the second stage in the middle of the crowd.

When Beyoncé references where she is from, she is talking about Houston, TX, where she was born and raised. More specifically, she is referring to the traditions of Southern Black people of making things "funky" and "stanky," or adding a little extra 'oomph,' 'pizzazz' or 'spice' to everything they do in terms of music with singing, dancing and playing their instruments. Similarly, the jubilee remix to "Single Ladies" is more than likely an ode to her Louisiana Creole heritage from her mother, who is also referenced in a song she sings earlier in the performance called, "Formation," when she stated, "You mix that Negro with that Creole, Make a Texas-Bamma" (2019, 12:45). Beyoncé also references her hometown and pride in her upbringing during the lyrics, "Since 15, comin' down reppin' Texas," (2019, 22:30) from the song "Kitty Kat" she mashes up with "Sorry" earlier in the performance.

While some aspects of Black American culture are shared across the country such as soul food and religious practices, a key aspect of Black identity is geographical location and its regionally specific traditions, dialect and practices. For instance, Philadelphian Blacks will have cultural differences from Houston Blacks such as dress and mannerisms. However, some of these traditions and practices will cross state lines and be remixed according to the styles of Black people in that region such as the use of African American Vernacular English, or AAVE, with words such as 'stankin' and 'funky.' Another example of the regional differences amongst Black culture is found in hip hop and rap music, which began in New York City in the 1970's, but quickly traveled all across the country, and world for that matter. Rap music can be differentiated



by the production, flow, content and styles popular amongst those regions such as trap rap music that started in the South and ‘conscious’ rap which was made popular on the east coast.

Beyoncé’s pride in her Southern Black heritage is evident throughout this performance in terms of the songs she samples, the way she dances and speaks to the audience and the overall HBCU theme of the performance.

***Queen Bey.*** The first glimpse of Beyoncé during Beychella is with her back facing the camera with drums announcing her entrance. On her is a black and gold headdress with a large diamond and a black feather attached, like the crowns worn by the queens of Ancient Egypt, and a bedazzled black, gold and silver cape with her rendition of Nefertiti’s bust and her name on it. The music starts and Beyoncé turns to face the camera with her sultry stare and begins to walk down the aisle in a matching jeweled black, gold and silver body suit, large silver earrings, black stilettos and a jeweled black and gold cane – Queen Bey has arrived at Coachella.

Beyoncé’s heavily sparkled and jeweled body suits, her long flowing hair, painted nails, purposefully overlined nude lips and matching heels have become a signature look for her live performances and Coachella is no exception. Beyoncé’s first outfit, which signifies ancient Egyptian royalty, makes a clear statement about who Beyoncé knows she is; she is not only the queen of performing, but of popular culture, in general. Being the queen and boldly declaring so encompasses a sense of power and agency. Queen Bey is a title which was given to her by the public, which she now claims proudly, bedazzled and on stage at Coachella. This is also supported by the intertext of this study as the first post related to the Coachella performance on Beyoncé’s Instagram account is of her in her Queen Bey attire (Beyoncé, 2018) and the second picture of the first post on the Coachella Instagram account related to her performance is of her in the same outfit (Coachella, 2018).

Like many performers, Beyoncé's costumes, makeup and hair during performances are carefully designed and crafted for each performance. Each costume change is designed to both correspond with the theme of the section of the performance and make a statement. This is true for all looks from celebrities, especially Black artists who often flaunt their affluence with designer clothes, shoes and jewelry. Some Black celebrities, however, deliberately do not display such fashions as a statement against such consumerist behaviors like J. Cole. Nevertheless, style is a very important aspect of Black identity expression, where Black people take much pride in their outfits, hair styles and accessories and attempt to inform people about themselves through what they wear and how they wear it.

Theme two, *Celebration of Identity*, discusses the ways Beyoncé puts her intersectional identity politics on display during Beychella. Black placemaking illustrates the celebratory practices of Black people in urban spaces through forming micro-communities in relation to intersectional identity politics. During Coachella, Beyoncé uses the main stage to proudly display her identity as Queen Bey, who is also Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter, a Black feminine Texan woman, wife and mother who is a singer, dancer and performer schooled in Black performative traditions.

### **Beyoncé's Place**

***“New Name Alert.”*** After performing a ‘chopped and screwed’ version of “Flawless,” Beyoncé instructs the audience to repeat after her by saying, “I’m feelin’ myself. I’m feelin’ myself. I’m feelin’ my, feelin’ my, feelin’ myself,” and segues into the traditional choreography for the song. During the song, the dancers clear the stage and Beyoncé rap-sings the lyrics, “I stopped the world. World, stop” (2019, 40:25). The music and lights cut, leaving a soft silhouette of Beyoncé’s classic one-hip-sticking-out pose, and DJ Khaled makes an announcement over the

loud speaker, “Check this out. After Beyoncé performs, after she done the dance, Coachella gotta rename Coachella ‘The Beychella!’ New name alert! Beychella!” (2019, 40:28). The crowd cheers, the classic hip-hop airhorns blow and “Top Off,” produced by DJ Khaled and featuring Beyoncé, JAY Z and Future begins. Beyoncé, then, skips the other verses in the song and goes straight to hers singing, “I’m the only lady here - still the realest nigga in the room. I break the internet. Top two and I ain’t number two...” (2019, 40:34).

When Beyoncé sang, “I stopped the world,” in, “Feeling Myself,” she is referring to the way she ‘broke the internet’ when she released her fifth studio album *Beyoncé* completely unannounced, thus, sparking the trend of artists suddenly releasing albums without promotion. Here, Beyoncé follows her method of sudden announcements and uses DJ, producer, social media personality and pop cultural icon DJ Khaled, who also toured with Beyoncé and JAY Z in the past, to announce that Beyoncé’s performance at Coachella would revolutionize what it means and looks like to headline the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival. With one performance, Beyoncé made the Coachella main stage, traditionally occupied by less theatrical performers apart from Lady Gaga and Ariana Grande, her own stage. DJ Khaled made it clear that Coachella would never be the same after Beyoncé. This ‘new name alert’ is supported by Coachella’s official Instagram account who posted two photos of Beyoncé after her performance captioned, “BEYCHELLA” (Coachella, 2018), making it undebatable.

***Home is Where the Heart is.*** During the introduction of, “Bow Down,” Beyoncé states, “Coachella, thank you for having us tonight. This is a very special night for me. I’m happy to be back home on the stage with you guys. Do we have any queens in the house tonight? If we have any queens, I want y’all to help me sing this next song. It’s called, ‘Bow Down’” (2019, 23:15). “Bow Down” is a song which aggressively tells her haters that, “this my shit – bow down,

bitches!” (2019, 23:25), which she invites fellow queens to sing with her. Later in the show, Beyoncé brings out her husband, rapper and businessman JAY Z, her close friends and former Destiny’s Child band members, Kelly Rowland and Michelle Williams and, lastly, her biological sister, singer, producer and director Solange Knowles. During these special guest performances, Beyoncé is seen embracing, reaching for, running to, laughing with and gleefully gazing at them all. Specifically, while JAY Z is rapping his verse to “Déjà vu,” he briefly messes up the lyrics and Beyoncé stops dancing, glances at him, chuckles and resumes dancing (2019, 1:15:40). Similarly, Beyoncé is seen missing several cues and dance steps while on stage with Destiny’s Child and Solange but smiles and continues the performances.

Beyoncé’s statement that she is happy to be back home on the stage to the audience as the instrumental to “Bow Down” plays in the background is a subtle statement which marks her territory of the performance stage and her claim as the queen of it. This also indicates a deep, almost cozy, connection and comfort that Beyoncé has with occupying the space of the performance stage. Moreover, Beyoncé bringing out her husband and the women she calls her sisters (2019, 1:30:00; 2019, 1:32:36) demonstrates another level of Beyoncé’s comfortability on the performative stage as she uncharacteristically lets her guard down while her loved ones are on the stage with her. It seems that she genuinely had fun with them while they performed with her and let go, ever so slightly, of the ‘Queen Bey’ guise. Beyoncé was able to be herself with her family doing what they do and invited us to witness it. It is significant that during what is, essentially, Beyoncé’s moment, she invites these specific people to occupy her space with her, making the stage her own and ‘homey’ for her.

Theme three, *Beyoncé’s Place*, highlights the ways Beyoncé makes the Coachella stage home, a place for nurturing, comforting and celebrating one’s identity with their family or

community. A key element of Black placemaking is the physical and metaphorical occupation of space that was not originally designated for Black people or Black culture and making it our own. While on the Coachella stage, a place previously occupied by [predominately white] pop cultural artists, it was not only occupied by Beyoncé, but engulfed by her presence and what she wanted that space to represent, so much so that it has led many to question whether or not future artists will be able to live up to the new expectations of Coachella headliners (France, 2019). Likewise, while on this stage, which can be considered rather intimidating, Beyoncé made it her own and made it home, filled with Black people singing Black songs, doing Black dances, speaking Black English and talking about Black things.

### **Representation of Black Popular Culture**

*Sampling Black Popular Music and Dance.* Throughout the entire Beychella performance, popular songs from Black artists and bands are sampled into her own music. Likewise, popular dances created by Black people are incorporated into the choreography and freestyled by Beyoncé and her dancers. Three examples clearly demonstrate these findings. One example occurs during the performance of the opening song, “Crazy in Love,” when “Back That Azz Up,” the unofficial twerking anthem, is sampled during the “uh oh” section of the song. During this mash-up, Beyoncé and the Buzettes turn around and twerk, signifying the twerking song and her infamous “Uh oh” choreography from “Crazy in Love” (2019, 5:30). Another example occurs during the performance of “Drunk in Love,” when the music and main lights cut, focusing a spotlight on a shirtless Black man in black leather pants and a barefoot Black woman in a yellow crop top and matching high-waisted boy shorts. They perform a short interpretive dance to a verse in Nina Simone’s “Lilac Wine,” where she states that she drinks more than she needs to drink because being drunk, “brings me back you” (2019, 30:26). This example leads

into another which occurs when Beyoncé comes back onto the main stage and sings, “ride it with my surf board,” cuing the instrumental for “Swag Surfin’” by F.L.Y. to play as she continues to sing before signaling the entire stage to do the “Swag Surf,” a dance popular at Black American parties and events (2019, 31:40).

The examples listed in this study are amongst the numerous times other Black popular music is sampled during Beychella. These include several references to JAY Z lyrics and a dance break to OT Genesis’s “Everybody Mad” with the choreography to the live version of “Diva” (2019, 34:37), popularized on social media through the hashtag, #BeyonceAlwaysOnBeat, referring to how a lot of her choreography can match with many popular songs. Dancing is a key component of this performance, and Black culture as well. The importance of Black dancing is demonstrated through doing dances like the ‘motorcycle dance’ during Yung Joc’s “It’s Going Down” done by Beyoncé and Solange during the “Get Me Bodied” dance break (2019, 1:34:10) and twerking, a dancing style popularized by Black strippers which entails isolating the hips, butt and thighs by making them shake, jiggle and bounce in various poses, stances and positions. Beyoncé twerking during Coachella is particularly important because twerking is considered a provocative, inappropriate and deviant dance by mainstream society, while simultaneously being celebrated when white artists like Iggy Azalea can do it well. This display celebrates both conventional and deviant Black dances because they are a part of Black culture, in general. Beyoncé goes as far as to dare anyone to police her twerking as the camera frequently zooms into her butt as she bounces, jiggles and shakes.

***Celebration of the African Diaspora Through Popular Song and Dance.*** The next section of Beychella opens with Beyoncé shaking her hips to the rhythm of drum beats like West Indian Carnival-like drumming until it transitions into “Mi Gente” by J Balvin featuring Willy

William and Beyoncé. Beyoncé asks, “Are y’all ready, Coachella? I wanna see everybody from the front to the back. Put your hand up. Lemme see you jump” (2019, 1:04:04). The entire stage begins to dance, and Beyoncé sings her verse in “Mi Gente” with Les Twins, Afro-French twins and national dancing champions, performing solos. Beyoncé and Les Twins, then, do popular Jamaican dancehall moves and switch places with the Buzettes. The music transitions into “Mine” featuring Black and Jewish Canadian rapper Drake. Beyoncé and the Buzettes do the “Mine” dance break featuring popular West African dances while “Dancing in the Sun” is sampled within the song. The “Mine” and “Dancing in the Sun” mash-up transitions into “Baby Boy,” featuring Jamaican dancehall icon Sean Paul accompanied by the Caribbean inspired choreography from the live performances. The Buzettes exit the stage and two thick Black women in black leather catsuits with matching fanny packs, barrettes and ankle boots join Beyoncé while she states, “You know this dance. You know this dance – I’m watching you... Lemme see you” (2019, 1:07:07). The three women do the “Baby Boy” dance break, which is, then, sampled with, dancehall artist, Aidonia’s “Fever” and, dancehall icon, Vicious’ “Freaks” and transitions into the iconic reggae song, “No, No, No” by Dawn Penn. The entire stage comes back to their positions on the bleachers and gyrate and grind while Beyoncé sings the song, similar to the vibes felt in a reggae nightclub. After “No, No, No,” the song transitions into “Hold Up,” featuring choreography of Beyoncé turning her back to the camera and doing the Jamaican “One Drop” dance, where someone bounces their butt using one leg at a time.

Towards the middle of Beychella, Beyoncé performs her songs that are inspired by West African and West Indian/Caribbean music, despite not being West Indian or culturally West African herself. Hit songs from Caribbean artists are sampled throughout this segment and

popular dance moves from Jamaica and West Africa are done as well. Likewise, Drake's voice is featured during this segment and Les Twins get a moment to return to the stage with Beyoncé.

America is a land of immigrants who bring their own culture, traditions, languages and dialect with them and, thus, create their own place in the American cultural fabric and popular culture. Similarly, many aspects of popular Black American culture are influenced by African diasporic and 'mainland' communities including music, dance, spirituality, food, clothing, accessorizing and traditions. Examples include hair braiding, Beyoncé's Ancient Egyptian-inspired costumes and doing the "dutty wine," a Jamaican dancehall dance of quickly swinging one's head in a circle, while synchronously swinging one's body in a circle. This segment of Beyoncé illustrates Beyoncé's admiration and love for African diasporic music and dance with a nearly five-minute segment of the entire performance.

Theme four, *Representation of Black Popular Culture*, illustrates the multitudinous ways Beyoncé weaves Black popular music and dance into her entire hour and forty five-minute performance. Black placemaking is exclusively interested in the ways intersectional Black communities nurture their identities through communal gathering. Since the Black American community does not exist in isolation from other African diasporic communities, the traditions, practices and dialogue of our 'brothers and sisters' must be considered when discussing matters of cultural celebrations and enrichment.

## **Resistance**

***Beyoncé's Feminism.*** Beyoncé's final costume change is displayed as the orchestra plays a military-like arrangement as the orchestra and Buzzettes, now in army green oversized sweaters, matching green sequined boy shorts, black knee-high heeled boots and yellow barrettes, march into position for the final section of the performance. Beyoncé emerges from the



top of the stage in a sequins army fatigue one-shouldered body suit with matching thigh-high heeled boots as her 34” crimped blond full lace wig blows in the wind. Beyoncé states shadily, “Coachella, thank you for allowing me to be the first Black woman to headline Coachella... ain’t that about a bitch,” the music cuts and the horns erupt again, “This song is dedicated to all of the incredible women who opened the doors for me. Thank you so much, ladies. Do we have any strong women here tonight? Sing along!” (2019, 1:21:09). The crowd roars, Beyoncé shouts and “Who Run the World? (Girls)” begins – militant Bey is here to close the show.

After the song, Beyoncé swiftly hops off the stage and the segment of Chimamanda Adichie’s speech on feminism from “Flawless” is played over the loud speakers accompanied with military-like drumming while the Buzzettes do military-like poses. When Adichie says, “feminist,” the Buzzettes and orchestra sit up and do a dramatic gasp (2019, 1:24:13). Adichie’s voice is faded out after saying, “a person who believes in the social, political and economic equality of the sexes” and Destiny’s Child, posed as Charlie’s Angels in matching sequined army fatigue outfits, emerge from the middle of the other stage and the crowd goes insane (2019, 1:24:45). They shout, “Hit me,” and “Lose my Breath” begins, causing even the cameraman to lose control and fall over, forcing another camera to focus in (2019, 1:24:50). This moment is so impactful that the Coachella Instagram account features a picture of Destiny’s Child saluting during the performance as the first picture in their collage of “Highlights 2018: Day 2, Weekend 1: Link in bio” (Coachella, 2018).

As previously stated, Beyoncé’s feminism is not the feminism of earlier feminist scholars. Many prominent feminist scholars argue that Beyoncé facilitates in the maintenance of the “patriarchal white supremacist society” (hooks, 1990, p. 42) with ample displays of her

affluence through gaudy outfits, celebrating her Eurocentric features and light skin privilege with lyrics like, “I stunt, yellow-bone it” (2019, 38:05) and objectifying herself with outfits designed to suit the male gaze. While no defense will be offered for the ways Beyoncé participates in colorism practices and dialogue because colorism is destructive, problematic and unproductive, one thing is certain – feminism means different things for different feminists. Beyoncé’s feminism includes makeup, hair, high heels and things that sparkle. Beyoncé’s feminism also includes celebrating and displaying her (hetero)sexuality, which she proudly expresses with her husband, and her curvaceous body that she has gone on record for working very hard to maintain in a way she prefers after giving birth to three children. In other words, Beyoncé’s feminism is very feminine. True feminism though, as defined by Adichie, is not concerned about the ways feminism is expressed. True feminism is only concerned with “the social, political and economic equality of the sexes” (2019, 1:24:40). Whether or not the person claiming this is in a baseball cap and tennis shoes or a full face of makeup and expensive pumps is irrelevant.

**“Now, Let’s Get in Formation.”** After the first song, “Crazy in Love,” is performed, it transitions into “Freedom.” Beyoncé walks up the bleachers and stands in the middle of them, amongst her orchestra and dancers as she begins to sing. “Freedom” fades into choreography with rhythmic stomping and shouting as flames burst from the sides of the stage. After every shout, Beyoncé sings a verse from “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” also known as the Black National Anthem. A fog clouds over the stage as Beyoncé continues to sing the verses higher and higher. As Beyoncé lowly sings the final verse, “Let us march on ‘til victory is won,” the introduction to “Formation” begins (2019, 11:04). Beyoncé and her Buzzettes perform the song and move towards the middle of the secondary stage. Beyoncé raises her fist when she says the lyrics, “I just might be a Black Bill Gates in the making!” (2019, 14:30). In addition, while

performing “Don’t Hurt Yourself,” the Buzzettes form a line and stand at attention while Beyoncé, now in a black spandex body suit, walks past them as the music cuts to the late Malcolm X’s speech on Black women being the most disrespected people in America (2019, 53:23).

The fifth and final theme, *Resistance*, reflects on the ways Beyoncé subtly and blatantly expresses her political ideologies on the Coachella stage. During the beginning of the show, Beyoncé performs her most political and controversial songs, to date, mashed up with the Black national anthem. This may be one of her most blatant displays of Pro-Black sentiments and ideologies since her “Formation” performance at the Superbowl. In addition, Beyoncé standing amongst her orchestra and dancers rather than atop or in front of them is a clear symbol of her standing with the Black community on Black issues. A sadder aspect of Black culture is the fact that America has not been a space which has positively facilitated in the wellbeing of Black lives and culture. In fact, America’s harshness and destruction of Black bodies and culture has ushered in the need for something like Black placemaking. Black placemaking in physical spaces and in mass media only exists because of the constant assault, attempted erasure and disvalue of Black cultural traditions, practices and dialogue. Beyoncé taking up the time and space at Coachella, a very privileged space, to explicitly declare her cultural pride and exasperation with its oppression is extremely important.

This chapter has explained the findings for *RQ1* which asked how is the concept of Black placemaking in American pop culture encoded in Beyoncé’s first Coachella performance through representations of Black cultural practices, dialogue and traditions? Findings suggest an HBCU themed performance, a clear display of identity politics, a declaration of space and agency, an explicit display of Black popular culture through song and dance and displays of resistance

through identity-specific feminism and Pro-Black ideologies. The final chapter will include an explanation of the findings in relation to Black placemaking in Beychella, considerations of the limitations of this study, suggestions for future research and a summation of the study.

## **Chapter Five – Discussion and Conclusion**

This concluding chapter will discuss the findings of this research in relation to the concepts of placemaking, Black placemaking, utopianism, homeplacing and representation. Then, considerations for the limitations of this research will be provided, in addition to ideas for future research. This chapter will conclude with a summation of Black placemaking of Black culture in Beychella.

### **Placemaking, Utopianism, Homeplacing, Representation and Beychella**

There are two types of popular American music festivals: (1) those in large sections of a city that is closed off specifically for the festival, i.e. the Made in America Festival in Philadelphia, PA, and (2) those in large sections of grass, dirt, mud or sand rented or bought out for festival space, i.e. Coachella. Both types of festivals occupy geographic space for the sole purpose of engaging with live music and festival activities. However, these spaces are not open to the public as these festivals typically cost an admission fee or attendance package fee. The Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in the middle of the Indio desert costs \$429 for general admission to \$9,500 for a “Safari Camping” package which includes a luxury tent, a golf cart for transportation, private parking, full bathrooms and breakfast in an air-conditioned lounge (Coachella, n.d.). Coachella undeniably carves out a space for their two-weekend long festival in the middle of the desert. For about \$10,000, you can attend Coachella in your own, personal oasis.

The work Beychella does is present a very privileged audience, and those with internet access, with a crash course into her interpretation of Black culture with a display of her Southern, Black feminine world embellished in the world of the HBCU. Likewise, Beychella celebrates the National Pan-Hellenic Council through the fantasy of her own. The Coachella audience and

American popular culture understands college and Greek life to be little more than mansions, parties, beer kegs, red cups, pointless hazing, drunken 19-year-olds, Plan B pills, ‘all-nighter’ study sessions and the occasional car wash fundraiser. While all of these are definite aspects of Black college and Greek life as well, that is not its purpose. HBCU’s and Black Greek organizations were a direct response to predominantly white institutions, or PWI’s, and organizations that purposely excluded Black people from these spaces. There can be a deep philanthropic, spiritual and cultural weight and pride to being a member of a Black Greek organization and/or student/alumni of a historically Black college or university. What Beychella does not get to tap into is the concept that these memberships, whether active or not, are a life commitment. In other words, once a Bugaboo, Buzz or Buzzette, always a Bugaboo, Buzz or Buzzette. The HBCU and National Pan-Hellenic Council are like homeplaces because their purpose is to be a truly safe space for Black cultural exploration, enrichment, intellectualism and celebration. This is unlike the PWI and Greek organizations who have been historically and contemporarily anti-Black.

However, HBCU’s and the National Pan-Hellenic Council do have a history of exclusionary practices. It is known that colorism and skin tone bias exist within the Black community and, thus, Black organizations, including the Divine 9 (Bryant, 2013, p. 95). Many Black sororities and fraternities have been known to be partial to lighter skinned Black people historically (Russell, Wilson & Hall, 1992, p. 25 as cited in Bryant, 2013, p. 26), including Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated. This phenomenon is worth noting because the colors yellow/gold and black chosen for The Beyoncé University are also the organizational colors for Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated.

If one is to believe that every detail about Beychella was intentional, then one can also assume that the connection to the history of Black Greek organizations and colorism was not lost on Beyoncé and her team. If this is the case, the colors for The Beyoncé University could be signifying the first Black Greek organizations, who were known to be exclusionary to darker skinned Black people, which Beyoncé does not fit the profile of. Moreover, this would support the critiques that Beyoncé participates in exclusionary practices of colorism. As previously stated, I can support the likeliness of this connection because of the points of colorist dialogue that Beyoncé engages with in her music. However, I do not believe, or want to believe for that matter, that this connection was Beyoncé's intent. Yellow/gold and black also happen to be the colors of bumble bees, which is signified in the name of her fanbase, the Beyhive, the bumble bee on her university crest and the name of her drumline, The Buzz. Therefore, I believe yellow/gold and black are an homage to her connection with the bumble bee/Bey rather than a subtle nod to light skin privilege and exclusion.

I believe the genius of Beychella is in the notion that Beychella is not truly for the Coachella audience or average consumers of popular media – it is for Black people. Beychella does not take the time to introduce the song sung with “Freedom” as the Black National Anthem – you either know what it is and know the words or you don't. Beychella does not offer a dance tutorial for the “Swag Surf” – you either know how to swag surf or you don't. Beychella does not take the time to explain the tradition of Black Greeks stomping, strolling, stepping or hopping – you either know what it is and where it comes from or you don't. Beychella does not explain that five-ish minutes of the performance is inspired by the African diaspora, you either know that there are other Black people besides Black Americans and Africans throughout the world or you don't. Beyoncé does not have to state that she is Queen Bey, she just puts on an

Ancient Egyptian-inspired royal headdress and lets you figure it out. Cultural studies posit that culture is language and practice-in-use (Schwandt, 2001, p.49) and Beychella demonstrates how song and dance can be used to display and celebrate the cultural practices of a marginalized group whose cultural contributions frequently go unrecognized by mainstream American society.

### **Limitations**

Attempting to prove that a concept that has very little to do with mass media has something to do with the type of content we see in American popular culture is tricky because it is like tracking uncharted territory. There is no easy way to determine whether the ways the concepts are explained and connected (1) make sense and (2) seem applicable until, essentially, someone else reads these explanations. There are other concepts and theories that discuss similar occurrences in representation of marginalized groups in mass media simpler. Therefore, this study is not an exhaustive analysis of the various ways Black entertainers, artists and content creators are placemaking their Blackness into American mass media and popular culture. However, it is my hope that this study offers an entry point for alternatively explaining how Black content creators and artists are making content for themselves and their communities. More importantly, I hope this research makes it irrefutably obvious that good representation of marginalized groups is important in mass media.

Using texts created by Beyoncé present a different challenge as it is known that she is very protective of her brand and content. This performance occurred in the spring a year ago and there were no reliable sources for being able to regularly access the performance for the average person until April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019 with the release of *HOMECOMING*, Beyoncé's docu-concert on Netflix about the creation of her Coachella performances. The analysis for this study was completed a month before its release. During data collection and analysis, conducting this



research was difficult because Beychella was literally a pop cultural *moment* in time in which, if you missed it, you missed it. Chasing after footage of the performances during the earlier stages of this research presented some difficulties as I had to continuously search for enough footage that would equate to a substantial sample for my claims. I was lucky enough to find and save the footage from YouTube once, but it is no longer there. Regardless of these struggles, there is still no better way to analyze the encoded messages in Beychella than to analyze Beychella, whether that is images, 30-second videos, videos taken from within the crowd or on Netflix.

### **Future Research**

There are a plethora of ways to continue and further this concept and research. First, Black placemaking can be analyzed through any mass media text, from song lyrics to television shows and movies. Likewise, the ways Black audiences place-make in terms of occupying space in media settings from social media like Black Twitter to inside of movie theaters with a predominately Black audience could present very interesting findings. A study comparing the ways Black artists attempt to insert their culture into American popular culture and the ways white artists do so could be an interesting study. Studying audience sentiments of that study could be an even more interesting study. Black artists and content creators are not the only marginalized group attempting to make a place for themselves in mass media and American popular culture. Therefore, the ways any marginalized group place-makes in American popular culture can be studied.

After analyzing the findings from this research, new questions arise in terms of what Beyoncé was doing with her Coachella performance. A comparative study could be conducted which compares the findings of this study with a study with an identical methodology, but with *HOMECOMING* (2019) serving as the primary text. Additionally, Beyoncé created several

explicit symbols during this performance including her university crest and Greek letters. Beyoncé also subtly symbolized her ideological framework through the performance costumes. A closer analysis of the symbolism weaved into Beychella could warrant a fascinating study, especially in response to critics of Beyoncé as a person and a brand. *HOMECOMING* (2019) supports that every detail during this performance was carefully crafted. This means that there were not only no coincidences or accidents with the musical arrangements or choreography of Beychella, but also no coincidences or accidents with the symbolism in Beychella. Lastly, an edited book titled, *Queen Bey: A Celebration of the Power and Creativity of Beyoncé Knowles-Carter* (2019) was released in March 2019 by Veronica Chambers. Some of the cultural critics and scholars in the text specifically discuss the impact and meaning of Beychella. Therefore, a comparative analysis of the claims from this study could be analyzed with the claims from that book.

### **Summary**

In conclusion, this qualitative study sought to take an architectural concept and apply it to popular culture. Specifically, this research implemented a cultural studies framework to explain what placemaking is, how Black placemaking is different and how the American entertainment industry functions like constructed space, thus, requiring marginalized groups to force and/or occupy space within it for themselves in a way that is true to themselves and their community. While other texts produced by Black artists could have been chosen for the analysis of this study, Beychella is one of the best contemporary examples of a pop cultural moment that transcends race, gender, class and even Beyoncé herself. It was iconic and revolutionary in terms of how one should put on a show from that moment forward. The five themes that emerged in Beychella in relation to Black cultural traditions, practices and dialogue were: (1) The Beyoncé University,

(2) celebration of identity, (3) Beyoncé's place, (4) representation of Black popular culture and (5) resistance. These themes highlight that what Beyoncé did while on that stage in Coachella Valley a year ago was, undoubtedly, for the culture.

## References

- Bailey, M. M., & Shabazz, R. (2014). Gender and sexual geographies of blackness: New black cartographies of resistance and survival (part 2). *Gender, Place & Culture*, 21(4), 449-452. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0966369X.2013.786303>
- Beyoncé [@beyonce]. (n.d.). Posts [Instagram profile]. Retrieved on April 3, 2019, from <https://www.instagram.com/beyonce/>
- Breakfast Club Power 105.1 FM. (2019). Michael eric dyson explains his beef with cancel culture, kamala harris backlash + more. Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nJq\\_s4cj3s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nJq_s4cj3s)
- Brennen, B. (2013). *Qualitative Research Methods for Media Studies*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bryant, P.D. (2013). *The Impact of Colorism on Historically Black Fraternities and Sororities*. Doctoral Dissertation. Nova Southeastern University. Retrieved from [https://nsuworks.nova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.bing.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1019&context=shss\\_dcar\\_etd](https://nsuworks.nova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.bing.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1019&context=shss_dcar_etd)
- Butler, T. T. (2018). Black girl cartography: Black girlhood and place-making in education research. *Review of Research in Education*, 42(1), 28-45. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/doi/full/10.3102/0091732X187621>
- Campbell, R., Martin, C.R. & Fabos, B. (2017). *Media & Culture: Mass Communication in a Digital Age*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Caramanica, J. (2018). Review: Beyoncé is bigger than coachella. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/15/arts/music/beyonce-coachella-review.html>

Carter, B., Carter S., Cobbs Jr., R., Lyon, A.C. & Valenzano, M. (Songwriters). (2018). 713 [Recorded by Beyonce and Jay Z]. On EVERYTHING IS LOVE [TIDAL Streaming Service]. New York, NY: Parkwood Entertainment, Roc Nation, LLC & Columbia Records

Carter, R. L. (2014). Valued lives in violent places: Black urban placemaking at a civil rights memorial in new orleans. *City & Society*, 26(2), 239-261. Retrieved from <https://anthrosource-onlinelibrary-wiley-com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/doi/full/10.1111/ciso.12042>

CBSNews. (2019). Coachella 2019 headliners include ariana grande, childish gambino. Retrieved from <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/coachella-2019-headliners-include-ariana-grande-childish-gambino/>

Chavez, N. (2018). Beyoncé makes history with Coachella performance. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/15/entertainment/beyonce-coachella-performance/index.html>

Coachella [@coachella]. (2018). BEYCHELLA 📷: @lbusacca, @ravieb [Instagram photograph]. Retrieved on April 6, 2019, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bh1VC4KltAM/>

Coachella [@coachella]. (2018). Highlights 2018: Day 2, Weekend 1: Link in bio [Instagram post]. Retrieved on April 5, 2019, from [https://www.instagram.com/p/BhmdyVxFEZ\\_/](https://www.instagram.com/p/BhmdyVxFEZ_/)

Coachella [@coachella]. (n.d.). Posts [Instagram profile]. Retrieved on April 4, 2019, from <https://www.instagram.com/coachella/>

Coachella. (n.d.). 2019 festival passes. Retrieved from <https://coachella.com/passes/>

- Cohen, P. (1972). Subcultural conflict and working-class community. In Stuart Hall (Ed.), *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79* (78-87). Crescent, London: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham.
- Cole, J. & Farner, M. (2014). Fire squad [Recorded by J. Cole]. On 2014 Forest hills drive [MP3 File]. New York, NY: Dreamville Records/Roc Nation/Columbia Music
- Coscarelli, J. (2019). Country or Not, Lil Nas X's 'Old Town Road' Hits No. 1 on the Billboard Chart. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/09/arts/music/lil-nas-x-old-town-road.html>
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241-1299. Retrieved from [https://www-jstor-org.libezproxy2.syr.edu/stable/1229039?pq-origsite=summon&seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www-jstor-org.libezproxy2.syr.edu/stable/1229039?pq-origsite=summon&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)
- Creswell, J.W. (2016). *30 Essential Skills for the Qualitative Researcher*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications
- Dickerson, D.J. (2004). *The End of Blackness: Returning the Souls of Black Folk to Their Rightful Owners*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Fisher, R. (2017). The real story of the destruction of black wall street. Retrieved from <https://blackthen.com/the-real-story-of-the-destruction-of-black-wall-street/>
- France, L.R. (2019). Coachella will never be the same after beyoncé. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2019/01/04/entertainment/coachella-ariana-grande-beyonce/index.html>

- Friedmann, J. (2010). Place and place-making in cities: A global perspective. *Planning Theory and Practice*, 11(2), 149-165. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org.libezproxy2.syr.edu/10.1080/14649351003759573>
- Fürsich, E. (2009). In defense of textual analysis: Restoring a challenged method for journalism and media studies. *Journalism Studies*, 10(2), 238-252. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14616700802374050>
- Gerbner, G., & Gross, L. (1976). Living with television: The violence profile. *Journal of communication*, 26(2), 172-194. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1976.tb01397.x
- Hall, S. (1989). Cultural identity and cinematic representation. *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, (36), 68-81.
- Hartman, S. (2007). *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Transatlantic Slave Route*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Hobson, J. (n.d.). Feminists debate beyoncé. In A. Trier-Bieniek (Ed.), *The Beyoncé Effect: Essays on Sexuality, Race and Feminism* (pp. 11 – 26). Jefferson, NC: MacFarland & Company, Inc.
- hooks, b. (1990). *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Howard, A., Patterson, A., Kinloch, V., Burkhard, T., & Randall, R. (2016). The black women's gathering place: Reconceptualising a curriculum of place/space. *Gender and Education*, 28(6), 756. Retrieved from <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=08645455-4051-4336-931e-0785e21129d2%40sessionmgr4007>

- Hunter, M. A., Pattillo, M., Robinson, Z. F., & Taylor, K. (2016). Black placemaking: Celebration, play, and poetry. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 33(7-8), 31-56.  
<http://journals.sagepub.com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/doi/full/10.1177/0263276416635259>
- Jones, A. (2013). High culture versus pop culture: which is best for engaging students? Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/feb/20/pop-culture-teaching-learning-engaging-students>
- Kaplan, D. H. (2018). *Navigating ethnicity: Segregation, placemaking, and difference*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kellner, D. (2002). Cultural studies, multiculturalism, and media culture. 1-15.
- Knopper, S. (2017). 5 reasons why adele won album of the year instead of beyonce. Retrieved from <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/5-reasons-why-adele-won-album-of-the-year-instead-of-beyonce-w466751>
- Kumar, K. (1991). *Utopianism: Concepts in Social Thought*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lacy, K. R. (2004). Black spaces, black places: Strategic assimilation and identity construction in middle-class suburbia. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 27(6), 908-930. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0141987042000268521>
- Lee, L.A. (2017). Black twitter: A response to bias in mainstream media. *Social Sciences*, 6(1), 26.
- Leventman, S., & Ebrary, I. (2008). *American Popular Culture: Historical and Pedagogical Perspectives*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press. Retrieved from <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/ZTAwMHhuY>



[V9fNTM5NDc2X19BTg2?sid=06f65e2b-41a6-4552-b143-500ac2a5982a@sessionmgr103&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1](http://www.vulture.com/2018/04/coachella-2018-beyonce-everything-that-happened.html)

Lockett, D. (2018). Coachella 2018: Everything that happened during beyonce's coachella performance. Retrieved from <http://www.vulture.com/2018/04/coachella-2018-beyonce-everything-that-happened.html>

Macmillian. (n.d.). Queen bey: A celebration of the power and creativity of beyoncé knowles-carter. Veronica chambers. St. Martin's Press. Retrieved from <https://us.macmillan.com/books/9781250200525>

McRobbie, A. (2016). Stuart hall: Art and the politics of black cultural production. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 115(4), 665-683. doi:10.1215/00382876-3656081

Montgomery, A. (2016). Reappearance of the public: Placemaking, minoritization and resistance in detroit. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 40(4), 776-799. <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/doi/abs/10.1111/1468-2427.12417>

Moody-Ramirez, M. (2017). Gender and black feminist theory: Examining difference. In C.P. Campbell (Ed.), *The routledge companion to media and race* (pp. 289 - 303). New York, NY: Routledge.

n.a. (2018). Beyoncé Coachella Performance Weekend One [Video File]. Retrieved on January 2019, from youtube.com

Parker, H.N. (2012). Toward a definition of popular culture. *History and Theory*, 50. 147-170. Retrieved from [http://www.academia.edu/709858/Toward\\_a\\_Definition\\_of\\_Popular\\_Culture](http://www.academia.edu/709858/Toward_a_Definition_of_Popular_Culture)

Patterson, A. N., Howard, A., & Kinloch, V. (2016). Black feminism and critical media literacy: Moving from the margin to the center. *Meridians*, 15(1), 40-64. Retrieved from

<https://search-proquest-com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/docview/1881722976?pq-origsite=summon&accountid=14214>

- Peretti, B. W. (2009). *Lift every voice: The history of african american music*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Peters, M. (2018). Adele, iggy azalea and more celebs react to beyonce's historic coachella performance. Retrieved from <https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/hip-hop/8335321/adele-iggy-azalea-celebs-react-beyonce-coachella-performance-destinys-child-jay-z-solance-beyhive>
- Phillipov, M. (2013). In defense of textual analysis: Resisting methodological hegemony in media and cultural studies. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 30(3), 209-223. Retrieved from <https://www-tandfonline-com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/doi/full/10.1080/15295036.2011.639380?src=recsys>
- Project for Public Spaces. (2009). What is placemaking? Retrieved from [http://www.pps.org/articles/what\\_is\\_placemaking](http://www.pps.org/articles/what_is_placemaking)
- Ross, K. (1996). *Black and white media: Black images in popular film and television*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Schwandt, T.A. (2001). *Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- TIME. (2017). Nicki minaj on cultural appropriation, becoming a boss, being unapologetic & more | TIME 100 | TIME. Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olWWhr\\_bstNU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olWWhr_bstNU)

- Theresa tha S.O.N.G.B.I.R.D. [@thasongbird]. (2019). YOU SO BLACK Theresa tha SONGBIRD 2019 trumpet awards bounce tv [Instagram post]. Retrieved on April 21, 2019, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/BuaUS7eByj2/>
- Tinsley, O. (2018). *Beyoncé in Formation: Remixing Black Feminism*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Trier-Bieniek, A. (Ed.). (2016). *The Beyoncé Effect: Essays on Sexuality, Race and Feminism*. Jefferson, NC: MacFarland & Company, Inc.
- Ward, M. F. (2017). Queen bey and the new niggerati: Ethics of individualism in the appropriation of black radicalism. *Black Camera*, 9(1), 146-163.  
doi:10.2979/blackcamera.9.1.09
- Yuen, N.W. (2017). *Reel inequality: Hollywood actors and racism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

## N'DEA I. DRAYTON

ndeadrayton@gmail.com | [www.linkedin.com/in/ndeadrayton](http://www.linkedin.com/in/ndeadrayton)

---

### EDUCATION

**MA in Media Studies** **May 2019**

S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University

*Thesis Title:* “For the Culture: A Textual Analysis of Black Placemaking of Black Culture in Beychella”

*Advisor:* Carolyn Davis Hedges

**BA in Africana/African American Studies & Sociology** **May 2016**

Smith College

### RESEARCH INTERESTS

Black culture, cultural studies, entertainment media, intersectionality, power, representation and US popular culture

### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**Instructional Assistant** **2018**

- Maintain records, assignments, attendance and grade book
- Grade various assignments for 75 undergraduate students
- Hold office hours and appointments to meet with students to discuss their class related and personal issues
- Conduct study sessions to review the material that may appear on their exams
- Attend class sessions and take notes in preparation for exam creation
- Run various class-related errands for the professor during, after and before class time

### RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

**Research Assistant** **2019**

**S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University**

- Draft a literature review on the concepts of intersectionality, access and career mobility in higher education and employment opportunities with a focus on the experiences of racialized and gendered minorities in post-secondary education and employment, particularly in journalism, news and public relations.

**Research Assistant** **2018**

**S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University**

- Research and incorporate gatekeeping theory into a research paper about U.S. local law enforcement’s use of social media and its impact on the newsgathering strategies of local broadcast television newsrooms across the country
- Edit and condense the paper, in its entirety, in preparation for publication

### CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Drayton, N., Haynes, A., Mucedola, A., & Sun, L. (2019, May). #RelationshipGoals: *The influence of parasocial relationships on body satisfaction and consumer habits*. 69<sup>th</sup> Annual International Communications Association Conference, Washington, D.C.

#### **MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSIONS**

Drayton, N. (2019, April). *More than a movie: A textual analysis of black power and black identity in marvel studios' black panther (2018)*. Paper submitted for consideration of publication in *The Review of Communications, Black Panther in Widescreen: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on a Pioneering, Paradoxical Film*