

Feminist Narrative and *Lemonade*

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Abstract

This essay uses feminist and narrative criticism to analyze the multiple messages produced in the popular culture visual album *Lemonade*. The relevance of these messages and their distinct interpretations to current sociopolitical problems in American society are addressed and the sociohistorical context, specifically in terms of race relations in the United States, is established. Intersectionality is explored as an aid to established critical theories such as those employed in this analysis. Key features of the cultural artifact such as the central narrative, Black feminism, and empowerment are analyzed in depth. Metaphors are established as a way of allowing for multiple interpretations of different aspects of the artifact such as lyrics and visuals. Finally, implications for the current and future state of American society are discussed.

During the Super Bowl L halftime show, American singer Beyoncé incorporated many visual elements referencing Malcolm X and the Black Panther Party in the performance of her song, “Formation.” The shock, discomfort, and outrage expressed by the public in response to this performance was later echoed following the release of the album, *Lemonade*. This reaction was most notably seen in the #boycottBeyoncé movement and hashtag which overtook social media for weeks after her performance. This response demonstrated that an alarming segment of the American public, including Beyoncé’s own fan base, had been contentedly ignoring her racial identity. This was highlighted in the now infamous *Saturday Night Live* skit entitled “The Day Beyoncé Turned Black,” which parodied all the adverse reactions demonstrated when she so blatantly acknowledged her race in her music more than she had previously. Beyoncé is a well-known performer with an incredibly large fan base, appealing to and being loved by a very diverse group of people. However, reflective of the current American demographics, White Americans constitute a sizeable portion of her fan base, and they did not appreciate an entire album that forced them to acknowledge that the object of their long-term devotion did not share their racial identity.

Beyoncé’s visual album *Lemonade*: a compilation of songs in the form of music videos that are connected by scenes overlaid with spoken-word poetry, was surprise-released in the spring of 2016. This visual album suggests overt and underlying themes, encompassing a broad range of human emotion and presenting the human experience in general terms and largely from the perspective of a personal narrative. The main themes present in the album are the Black experience in White America and, more specifically, the Black woman’s experience in White America. When it was released, *Lemonade* proclaimed to be “a conceptual project based on every woman’s journey of self-knowledge and healing” and quickly reached an incredibly large

and diverse audience (Pinkard). The album received significant media attention within days of its release and “provoked an intense worldwide discussion” on race and feminism, highlighting its importance and impact (Carpentier). Due to its dominant themes and far reach, *Lemonade* has established itself as a critical episode in the ongoing dialogue concerning race and justice in the United States.

Still, much of the conversation surrounding the album has concerned the veracity of the narrative which flows through the songs, tying the album together and thereby becoming its central aspect. This narrative is one of betrayal and infidelity, implying that Beyoncé’s husband and fellow celebrity, Jay Z, had been unfaithful to her. A simple Google search for the album shows many examples of this focus on the infidelity aspects of the narrative, including but not limited to the CNN article on the album entitled “Beyoncé’s *Lemonade* fuels rumors of cheating.” The fact that much of the conversation surrounding the album focuses on this possible case of infidelity rather than the clear race and gender-charged messages, despite the prior recognition of such messages in her Super Bowl performance of “Formation,” could be a demonstration on behalf of the White population of the intense and possibly subconscious desire to avoid these topics. This narrative is clearly an incredibly important aspect of this artifact not only because it is present in nearly every song, including the opening lines of the album, but also because it was provided despite its ability to facilitate an escape or distraction from the harder, more critical topics present. This presence of incredibly varied reactions and interpretations of the artifact is precisely what merits its analysis.

What, then, is the function of this text? What are audiences invited by this artifact to think, feel, or do? And why might interpretations differ between audiences? To investigate these questions, I draw on both feminist and narrative theories to analyze the album. I begin by

reviewing intersectionality, a crucial concept to this investigation and analysis. I then provide a brief overview of feminist critical theories as related to this investigation. Next, I connect narrative criticism to feminist critical perspectives and Beyoncé's work. I then proceed with the analysis, demonstrating the themes and messages of Black feminism in the album. I also analyze the specific and broad aspects of the central narrative, as well as their function, including but not limited to Black female empowerment. To end my analysis, I will offer readings of the deeper, political meaning underlying aspects of the album and narrative.

Overall, I hope to demonstrate that the polyvocality of *Lemonade* suggests different readings to different audiences. Specifically, some viewers have an "out" provided by the narrative thread of infidelity when interpreting *Lemonade*, an interpretation more convenient and comfortable for White audiences blind to the experiences of Black women. By telling a story with both universal resonance and a special meaning to women of color, Beyoncé has created a sophisticated text that appeals to women's common interests while simultaneously speaking to the unique oppression, cultural markers, and sisterhood that women of color share. Perhaps unsurprisingly, that subtle message was lost on much of Beyoncé's audience thanks to White privilege.

Perspective

Intersectionality

Different critical theories, be they feminist, postcolonial, Marxist, or some combination thereof, suggest different readings. Brummett explains that various approaches can be thought of as "different sets of questions...different categories within which to think...different kinds of meanings...and different ideas of what to study in a text" (158). While not a theory *per se*, intersectionality serves a similar critical purpose. In "The Complexity of Intersectionality,"

McCall defines intersectionality as “the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations.” Intersectionality is most often used to refer to the intersection of identities, for example, black womanhood. In *The Politics of Black Feminist Thought*, Collins writes, “Intersectionality refers to particular forms of intersecting oppressions, for example, intersections of race and gender...Intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type” (18).

Intersectionality focuses attention on the broader picture of overlapping social roles and assumes that people make and understand rhetoric on the grounds of multiple identities; therefore, an analysis based on only one identity when multiple are present and fundamental to the rhetorical act would be a mis-reading. Black feminism is the prime example of intersectionality. The identity of being a black woman is significantly different from that of a White woman or that of a Black man. Therefore, one cannot analyze an artifact of Black feminism through only an Afrocentric lens or only a feminist lens and hope to achieve a reading that well-captures the social dynamics in play; for acting on the Black woman in America are both institutionalized racism and institutional sexism. As Collins writes, “If intersecting oppressions did not exist, Black feminist thought...would be unnecessary” (22). Intersectionality is often avoided as a critical perspective or methodology because of its difficulty, and there is “little discussion of how to study intersectionality” due to “the complexity that arises when the subject of analysis expands to include multiple dimensions of social life and categories of analysis” (McCall). However, intersectionality is vital to understanding a good portion of rhetorical artifacts such as *Lemonade*.

Feminist Critical Theories

Fortunately, feminist critical theories do not focus only on gender inequality. Rather, they explain and seek to ameliorate all forms of oppression and inequality: gender, racial, socioeconomic, etc. In fact, feminist theorists such as bell hooks have been using feminism to investigate the intersectional world for multiple decades. Hooks uses feminism in her study of “the culture of domination that characterizes Western culture” (Foss, Foss, & Griffin, 76). Through her work, “hooks calls the current system that promotes domination and subjugation *white supremacist capitalist patriarchy*, a label that suggests interlocking structures of sexism, racism, class elitism, capitalism, and heterosexism” (76). This demonstrates the use of feminist theories as an intersectional approach, acknowledging oppression not only of gender but of race, class, sexual orientation, and more. Hooks further shows this intersectionality, saying feminism “directs our attention to systems of domination and the interrelatedness of sex, race, and class oppression” (78). In this way, feminism and feminist critical theories can be used to analyze both the gender and race themes found in Beyoncé’s *Lemonade*.

Feminist criticism is incredibly varied in approaches, but “all feminist critical thinking begins from the assumption that there is gender inequality between men and women...[and] tries to explain how such inequality is created and perpetuated through popular texts” (Brummett 180). Based on this definition alone, the appropriateness of a feminist criticism of *Lemonade*, which I argue works to combat gender inequality, is unclear. However, another means by which feminist criticism is employed is in examining texts “to discover sources of female empowerment, to explore ways in which inequalities may be refused and overthrown” (180). This is a much more appropriate use of feminist criticism for this album, which, as previously stated, is “based on every woman’s journey of self-knowledge and healing” (Pinkard).

Feminist critics identify the existence of the patriarchy, meaning the male-dominant system of power in place in much of the world including the United States, and attempt to intervene and level the playing field (180). The two questions feminist critics often employ include, “How do patriarchal language and images perpetuate inequality?” and “How can texts empower women?” (Brummett 185). In the case of *Lemonade*, the second question is far more applicable: How can/does *Lemonade* empower women? What aspects of *Lemonade* empower women?

Feminism, both as a philosophy and a theory, also focuses on the importance of the personal narrative. The “personal” has long been of import to feminism movements, specifically, since 1969, when Carol Hanisch coined the slogan of the second wave of feminism in the United States, “the personal is political.” Catherine MacKinnon explains this slogan:

It means that women’s distinctive experience as women occurs within that sphere that has been socially lived as the personal – private, emotional, interiorized, particular, individuated, intimate – so that what it is to know the politics of women’s situation is to know women’s lives (535).

In fact, sharing personal experiences in the context of raising awareness was so crucial to the feminist project that it became a well-known aspect of feminism (Yu 873).

Personal narratives are essential to feminist movements because they help to give a voice to women who have long been silenced in a patriarchal society. These narratives “help to define and structure our moral universe...In telling stories...we both create and reveal who we think we are as moral agents and as persons...we help to mold and sustain the moral identities of others, as well as our own” (Gotlib). In this way, narratives aid not only in personal understanding and sharing of oneself but in creating and maintaining social norms, especially those related to

morality and identity. Personal narratives can serve the feminist agenda of combatting oppressive norms in many ways, “Vivid, empathy-producing examples that tend to engage the moral imagination are often used...to focus on specific problems in order to show – and not to simply argue – that issues of sexism, [and] oppression...must be recognized and addressed” (Gotlib). In his way, demonstrating through personal narrative in place of providing a structured argument, functions much the same way as fables: providing a lesson neatly wrapped and delivered in the form of a story. Therefore, a narrative approach to feminism can be helpful both on the personal level of victims as well as on the public level of the longstanding patriarchal society.

Narrative Criticism

Further, intersectional and narrative approaches complement each other. Walter Fisher establishes and defines the narrative paradigm as that which “synthesizes two strands in rhetorical theory: the argumentative, persuasive theme and the literary, aesthetic theme” (1). This paradigm:

challenges the notions that human communication – if it is to be considered rhetorical – must be an argumentative form, that reason is to be attributed only to discourse marked by clearly identifiable mode of interface and/or implication, and that the norms for evaluation of rhetorical communication must be rational standards taken essentially from informal or formal logic (2).

Here, Fisher proposes rhetoricians accept narration as a form of rhetorical communication worthy of study. This view of narration allows for the development and use of narrative criticism, which views creating narratives as a way of establishing coherence and creating “meaningful discursive structures that may be communicated and shared” (Foss 307).

Narratives suggest “intimacy, informality, and friendliness” to the audience and are “both a way of knowing about and a way of participating in the social world” (Foss 307, 308). The comfortable, familiar structure of a narrative helps the storyteller to successfully invite the listener to identify with and participate in the narrated world. Narratives are distinct from other rhetorical acts because the narrated world is a “joint achievement by the storyteller and the audience” (309). The storyteller and the audience co-create the meaning of the narrative.

Narrative is also always involved in the morality of an action, so “the narrator invites the audience members to share the moral evaluation being offered of the narrated world. When audience members enter this world, they have to respond in some ways to the evaluation of the world as it is presented by the narrator” (309). Narrative, then, argues the moral position of the narrator and causes the audience to evaluate that standing just as does any other form of rhetoric.

In this way, personal narratives are critical to feminist rhetorical acts, and such acts therefore ought to be understood through an intersectional lens which includes both feminist theories and the narrative paradigm. Therefore, I will employ an intersectional lens including both feminist and narrative critical perspectives in my analysis of Beyoncé’s *Lemonade* album because it, like many feminist rhetorical artifacts before it, is predominantly based in the use of personal narrative.

Analysis

Historical-Cultural Context

The historical-cultural context of this album is incredibly vital to understanding *Lemonade* because, among many other factors, Beyoncé was influenced and motivated by the highly publicized acts of police brutality towards Black individuals, mostly young Black men, across the country. This cultural influence is demonstrated by references in many lyrics and

visuals throughout the album, including, but not limited to, the images of some of the mothers of those who lost their lives to police brutality in the months and years leading up to the release of the album. The years 2015 and 2016 were ones of significant racial tension in the United States, which has continued until today. The *Black Lives Matter* movement gained notable traction and popularity in late 2014 and early 2015 with the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, by then police officer Darren Wilson. This event, combined with the lack of arraignment and prosecution for Wilson, led to large protests and riots in the city, which appeared in news worldwide.

Unfortunately, this event was not the first or last of its kind. Significant attention had already been drawn to the prejudice and stereotyping that occurs toward young Black men in America when seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin was shot and killed by a neighborhood watch volunteer in Sanford, Florida, in 2012. However, after the murder of Michael Brown, police brutality towards the Black community seemed to appear in the news much more frequently nationwide. Specific events, such as the deaths of Freddie Gray in Baltimore, Maryland, and Sandra Bland in Hempstead, Texas, while in police custody; the killing of Eric Garner via chokehold by police in New York City; and the murder of twelve-year-old Tamir Rice by police in Cleveland, Ohio, stand out as justifications for the movement.

These events have had a significant impact across the country, with two very different climates of opinion emerging on the subject of police brutality towards the Black community: one of frustration and outrage toward the injustices, and one of support for police and other armed forces. One clear example of the existence and strength of these two groups of thought is the preponderance of the #blacklivesmatter and #bluelivesmatter hashtags on social media. These hashtags and respective movements have such a large support group that they may frequently be

seen in the forms of buttons and bumper stickers as well. *Lemonade* is an incredibly politically charged album ripe with references to current instances of social injustice regarding race and sex as it pertains to the Black community, and more specifically to black women, in America (Arzumanova). It is clear, then, as noted by National Public Radio, that “Lemonade has been made possible by the cultural, social and political upheaval we’re in the midst of” (Fitzgerald). The choice of topic for *Lemonade* was not simply well-timed in accordance with the current cultural events. Rather, the album was a direct result of its circumstance, a product of its environment.

Black Feminism

Black feminist thought “aims to empower African-American women within the context of social injustice sustained by intersecting oppressions...[and] supports broad principles of social justice that transcend U.S. Black women’s particular needs” (Collins 22). Beyoncé’s *Lemonade* album is one of the most prevailing examples of Black feminist thought in American popular culture today. The overarching message of the album is one of empowering Black women in modern America, with references to many current forms of injustice and oppression both from the White community and from Black men.

The need and justification for Black feminism is established early in the album, primarily through images of mistreatment as experienced by Black women. Examples of the neglect that befall Black women begin early in life, with references to a strong, admirable mother figure and an either absent or abusive father, or husband:

You find the black tube inside her beauty case where she keeps your father’s old prison letters, you desperately want to look like her. You look nothing like your mother. You look everything like your mother...Your mother is a woman. And

women like her cannot be contained...Mother dearest...Did he bend your reflection? Did he make you forget your own name? Did he convince you he was a god? Did you get on your knees daily? Do his eyes close like doors? Are you a slave to the back of his head? Am I talking about your husband or your father?

Immediately following this passage, a personal narrative regarding the relationship between a Black daughter and her father is presented lyrically. In the song, the daughter speaks of the warnings her father has given her throughout her life about “men like him.” The song is a stark testimony not only to the existence of toxic masculinity that oppresses women in the Black community, but to the acceptance of this type of masculinity as the preferred status quo. This narrative, though, is not the only one present in the album, though it does identify a related history.

Central Narrative

As previously mentioned, one of the common interpretations of this cultural artifact is that it is about spousal infidelity. This central feature of *Lemonade*, one that is likely poignant for many women, is the personal narrative of the experience of being married to an unfaithful husband. While it is true that spousal infidelity is the most obvious subject present, this all too common abuse is the representative, here, of all forms of mistreatment and injustice suffered by Black women. It is, however, important to note that the mistreatment of Black women is performed by the White community just as much, if not more, than by Black men. This is supported by the powerful Malcolm X quotation inserted in the middle of the song entitled “Don’t Hurt Yourself”: “The most disrespected person in America is the Black women. The most unprotected person in the America is the Black women. The most neglected person in

America is the Black women.” Here, one ought to note that the agency of the disrespect, lack of protection, and neglect is not stated, implying the fault of more than one group of people.

The personal narrative of spousal infidelity provides the audience, regardless of gender or race, with the opportunity to enter the narrated world and empathize or at least sympathize with the storyteller. Establishing this common ground of understanding, acceptance, and shared emotion is vital to the rhetorical process because it opens the audience to being more likely to listen to and possibly accept the moral evaluation presented in the story.

However, past the point of being able to empathize with the feeling of betrayal is where the experience of the White audience ceases to be useful in their interpretation of the album. It becomes clear early on that the personal narrative being described is not meant only to be a personal narrative but a community narrative, one with which many Black women can identify, whether that be through first- or second-hand experience. Men, regardless of race, are statistically more likely to cheat in a marriage than women (Wang). The same study, however, showed that marital infidelity is much more common in the Black community than in any other racial community in America (Wang). By the time the audience is three-minutes into the album, Beyoncé is speaking of her husband’s infidelity, saying “you come home at three am and lie to me” but adds that this is “in the tradition of men in my blood...the past and the future merge to meet us here,” implying that this problem of spousal infidelity in the Black community is longstanding and not anticipated to disappear any time soon, at least not on its own. This notion of infidelity being a communal narrative is also implied in the transformation of an age-old adage, “ashes to ashes, dust to dust” into “ashes to ashes, dust to side chicks,” in that transforming such a well-known saying, which applies to all people, signifies that this transformation, which implies spousal infidelity, also applies to all within the community.

Empowerment

This concept of spousal infidelity being a communal narrative among Black women is supported later in the visual album in the song “Sorry” in which the experience of having an unfaithful partner incites anger rather than feelings of sadness or betrayal. Here, though, the audience receives a message of empowerment: the storyteller, and any other woman, do not need men to be happy and successful. In the visuals of this song, Beyoncé is surrounded by many other Black women appearing to feel similar emotions; she and all the women surrounding her are dressed in traditional southern clothing, which would have been worn by the elite in the Old South, and are on a plantation. This visual carries even more significance because of its historical setting, one in which Black women had no power but here are being represented as having control of their situation, with Beyoncé even sitting on a throne in the foyer. This image empowers the Black female audience by reclaiming a historical situation in which they had no power and giving them not only autonomy but control.

Other signs of Black female empowerment in this narrative include images of unity, such as the visual of Black women standing in a line, shoulder to shoulder, holding their hands together, high, evoking power and solidarity. In her song entitled “Freedom,” Beyoncé sings “I break chains all by myself, won’t let my freedom rot in hell. Imma keep running cause a winner don’t quit on themselves” while showing Black women again in formal, traditional southern dress beside old southern shanties. However, in this scene they all stand together, eyes fixed on the camera, with a few of them, including Beyoncé herself, seated or standing in the trees doing the same. This image is not only a powerful unifier, using the common experience of past discrimination and the prevention of freedom, but as an incredibly powerful redefinition of the

image of Black people in trees, especially in the Old South. In this way, Beyoncé suggests a unified community, using themes from the present and the shared past.

Beyond direct images, *Lemonade* also suggests unity through the representation of common shared emotions, for example, the fear of losing a loved one to police violence. The mothers of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown are visible, holding pictures of their sons in a montage featuring many other black women holding pictures of their lost loved ones, presumably to similar circumstances.

Empowerment also comes through receiving the message that Black women are just as powerful in their romantic relationship as their male counterparts. Through the song “Sandcastles,” Beyoncé sings about her choice to forgive her husband. However, importantly, she portrays it as an agentic choice that she made through a process of self-reflection, saying “show me your scars and I won’t walk away.” She seems to say, “this is my choice, and it was mine to make, and we are all free to make our own.” This statement is immediately followed by the song entitled “Freedom,” in which she says, “My grandma said nothing real can be threatened.” Then, in “All Night,” she says, “trade your broken wings for mine” and “my love was stronger than your pride, behind your darkness I’m your light.” Here, she suggests that women have power in their relationships and are, arguably, the stronger half in their relationship, willing to fight for their relationship, and their freedom, and win.

The two most overtly empowering songs on the album are “6 Inch” and “Formation,” which directly address the power of Black women within or outside of a relationship and the lack of need or even want of a man. As Beyoncé states, “She stack her money, money everywhere she goes...she don’t gotta give it up cause she professional,” “I came to slay,” “I dream it I work hard I grind til I own it,” “I go hard, take what’s mine, I’m a star, cause I slay,” and even “if he

hit it right I might take him on a flight in my choppa, drop him off at the mall let him buy some shades let him shoppa.” All of these statements convey personal success, self-pride, perseverance, ownership, or any combination of these. The frequent use of the word “slay” is also inherently empowering in its ability to give the Black individual the power to “slay” in a nation in which they are often the disproportionately common victim of that verb.

This message of empowerment is reflected, too, in the title of the album, *Lemonade*. During one of the breaks between songs in the album which are usually devoted to spoken-word poetry, *Lemonade* includes a personal video from the 90th birthday celebration of Jay-Z’s grandmother, Hattie. In this video, Hattie is shown saying she was served lemons, but made lemonade. Other than a recipe for lemonade referenced earlier in the album, this is the only mention of lemonade, making it the likely source of inspiration for the album title. Applying this message of taking the lemons that life gives you and turning them into lemonade to the greater album themes shows a very clear metaphorical statement in which we can see that Black women, and the Black community as a whole, is served “lemons” by the current social system. The message here, though, speaks to those same individuals and tells them they have the power to make something good, “lemonade.” This image takes the negative and helpless image of being served “lemons” and turns it into a positive, powerful one of autonomy and self-liberation. Empowerment for Black women and the greater Black community must be a central feature of the album if it is the basis for the title.

The Political

Much of the extra, more politically charged meaning in Beyoncé’s personal narrative is conveyed metaphorically. Indeed, her lyrics and spoken words can be taken at face value as only being about infidelity. This allows the previously identified oblivious White audience to continue

to refuse to acknowledge the racial status, or at least the importance of that racial status, of the storyteller and the deeper meanings present in the album, which would almost definitely cause them discomfort. However, the underlying messages of racial tension, both historically and currently, in America and the subjugation of Black women give cause to look more deeply. For example, after the first song of the album, in which the sense of betrayal, assumedly due to an unfaithful husband, has been established, the visual changes from a contemporary scene of rural America to the Old South and what appears to be the rudimentary front porch of a shanty. The audience then hears a voice-over saying, “I tried to make a home out of you, but doors lead to trapdoors. A stairway leads to nothing.” If only listening to the songs and not seeing the presented visuals, it would be easy for a listener to assume the storyteller is speaking of the unfaithful husband when she says “you,” herself when she says “I,” and infidelity and unhappiness when she says “trapdoors” and “nothing.” However, given the visuals and the alternate messages within the album, it is equally if not more likely that the interpretation ought to be: I, the black community, tried to make home out of you, America, but “opportunities” are denied and progress shows little change.

A similar metaphor can be seen in the following song, “Hold Up,” in which Beyoncé is shown walking down a block of what appears to be a predominately Black neighborhood in America in what is likely the 50s or 60s, destroying cars and windows and fire hydrants alike with a bat labeled “Hot Sauce,” singing about how she has been “walked all over lately.” Due to the setting, as well as the fact that Beyoncé, instead of destroying Jay Z’s personal things as so many artists do in music videos about an unfaithful lover, is instead destroying what are now considered vintage American cars, windows of shops, and more, it is reasonable to read her comments as being directed to not just an unfaithful husband, but by American society. The

visual of destroying all of this with a bat labeled “Hot Sauce” adds more significance as the Black community has frequently been stereotyped as putting hot sauce on everything. Beyoncé seems to be destroying an America that walks all over her with an aspect of her culture which is easily identified as frequently ridiculed by the larger American, White society.

Implications

The one-dimensional reading that focuses solely on the infidelity aspect of the narrative is equally as valid as the intersectional reading which identifies the larger messages present. However, the one-dimensional reading is included in the intersectional reading as simply one of the many aspects of the artifact. This shows that while the one-dimensional reading is valid, it is incomplete.

These two readings and the popularity of both show an extremely divided nation. Here we can clearly see that not only are there two distinct populations with rather polarized views, but these groups are so separate and distinct that they can watch the same artifact, see and listen to the same message, yet interpret that message very differently. This is important to note because it gives insight into what is needed to address the strained and tense race relations in America today. If these two populations are interpreting the same artifact so differently, it follows that this is likely to happen with many messages they receive. In order to convey a desired message to both populations, that same message may likely need to be expressed and delivered in two very different ways in order for the desired message to be the same as that which is received by both audiences. The intended message is meaningless in comparison to that which is received, especially in the case of far-reaching cultural artifacts such as *Lemonade*.

Conclusion

Beyoncé's visual album, *Lemonade*, is a stellar example of intersectionality in a popular culture artifact and demonstrates the necessity for further investigation into how best to adapt intersectionality into a recognized, scholarly critical perspective. The influence and presence *Lemonade* has had in popular culture since its release has been significant and clearly demonstrates the power of personal narrative in unifying a community, empowering said community, and even somewhat educating those outside of the community. Unfortunately, *Lemonade* also demonstrates the power of the personal narrative to mask multi-dimensional meanings through its ability to distract through entertainment. The fuller, multi-dimensional, intersectional reading of the artifact is lost on some audiences because of the ability provided through the personal narrative to simply focus on the one-dimensional clearly stated action sequence or story. Further research into the use of narrative in conveying multi-dimensional, often political meanings is necessary, especially in regard to how this speech form may need to be adapted to different audiences.

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