

Statement of Research

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I would be lying if I said I was not enthralled to be observing Beyoncé's *Lemonade* as a work of poetry in English 2120. As a fan of *Lemonade* already, I understood – to a degree – the importance of *Lemonade* as a work of black excellence, aiming to represent the livelihoods of black women. However, I needed to make a larger connection between cultural impacts and poetry. With that in question, I began my research by searching “Beyoncé *Lemonade*” into the library database and reading as many peer-reviewed articles as possible. While this strategy may not have been the most time efficient, it certainly opened a multitude of gateways into bridging my research.

Through the library's extensive collection of articles concerning Beyoncé's *Lemonade*, I was exposed to several different angles including *Lemonade*'s use of queer slang and dance, all the way to theories of colorism present in the visual album. All of these were interesting, however, one very underrepresented topic seemed to catch my attention most: *Lemonade*'s portrayal of traditional black/African American storytelling. At the beginning of my research, I was only somewhat familiar with a tactic referred to as “call and response” that is widely used in early African American hymns/music. I decided to pivot off this keyword in hopes of finding articles within the UNM database to connect Beyoncé and Warsan Shire's work to this theory. This led me to refine my search terms to include ideas around “oral tradition”, “spoken word poetry”, and “African American storytelling.”

This initial research process led me to great sources such as *Spoken Word Poetry Among African-Americans in Baltimore* by Letisha Green and *African-American History and the Oral Tradition* by Darwin Turner. These findings laid out a foundation for connecting *Lemonade* to

critical race theory and historical, cultural, and artistic production. It was essential for me to take into consideration the background and academic position of the authors, as it is necessary to include black/African American scholars in research that deals with the African American diaspora and cultural history. I also aimed to include works from a variety of fields such as social sciences, history, and cultural studies in order to work my thesis from an interdisciplinary standpoint; which is necessary in exploring intersectionality within the scope of race theory and cultural production.

To say that I reached a few dead ends throughout my process would indeed be an understatement, as my research process felt much like I started at a dead end; my thesis was unrefined and did not offer new insight into *Lemonade*. I was lucky however, to have faculty that helped me expand on my thesis by introducing to me the topic of Yoruba culture, and how Beyoncé uses feminine aspects of this culture to inform her personal narrative in *Lemonade*. I also shifted to non-academic sources and articles to gain a basic starting-point of specific terms that could narrow my search. Terms that emerged from this research included “women in African folklore,” and “women in Yoruba culture,” to more specific cultural identifiers like “female deities in Yoruba culture,” and “Oshun.” Using the UNM Library’s focused database search engine with these new terms proved to be an invaluable step in my later research. This method pushed me to re-shape my thesis at the very end of my writing, settling upon a thesis that approaches *Lemonade* from a culmination of interdisciplinary perspectives. I could not have reached this unique conclusion without the excellent database resources provided to me through the UNM library – at least not in the timely manner that was necessary.

I learned a lot about the realities of academic research through this project. Research is not a linear process, but rather one that involves many setbacks and dead ends. If you play your

cards right, use intuitive research methods, and utilize the vast library resources at your disposal, it can all come together to generate new insights. Great research is more than well supported arguments that aim to add something new to the field of academia. It is an avenue to creating connections, defining and preserving cultural production, and broadening perspectives on the world. I am confident that my research attained this goal, and that the library resources provided me with a strong foundation for this achievement.