

The DL Phenomenon in Black Queer Culture and Identity

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The DL Phenomenon

The term DL, which is short for *on the down-low*, refers to men of colour who live their everyday lives as heterosexuals, often married to women, but also engage in discreet homosexual relationships (Scott, 2010). To retrace its background a bit, DL is a term with a complex history (Phillips, 2005). The first known person to use the term *down low* in a homosexual context was George Hanna, who used the phrase in the 1930 song *Boy in the Boat* about lesbians. The term was popularized in the late 1990s in the Black community and was used to describe any slick, secretive behaviour, including infidelity in heterosexual relationships (Boykin, 2005). The type of masculinity usually associated with DL is ultimately dangerously hyper-masculine and mirrors hip-hop culture. For example, Collins (2004) suggested in her book, *Issues of Black Masculinity* that the hyper-heterosexuality of Black men continues to be shaped by the media, morphing into images of pimps, hustlers, and players. Collins (2004) also suggests Black DL men avoid being labelled DL and are characterized as being dominated by Black women by becoming hyper-masculinized and hyper-aggressive. She further suggested that the media's representations of Black masculinity position Black men as aggressive thugs who refute being weak by being dominated by strong Black women. Collins went on to claim that stereotypes serve to preserve ideological oppression and stigmatize Black men's sexuality. As a result, Black DL men are not deemed to be truly Black because Black male sexuality, through the eyes of White-dominated media, is defined through the lens of promiscuity and heterosexuality. The stereotypes of and stigma around DL Black men continue to be connected to weakness, whiteness, and diseases.

DL Chronicles

The DL Chronicles, created by Quincy LeNear and Deondray Gossett in 2007, is a hard-hitting television series based on the DL. *The Chronicles* tells the stories of men of colour who live sexually deceitful and secretive lifestyles. The narrator of the series, the aspiring journalist Chadwick Williams, pursues his research for a book about DL men and in doing so, he enters into a provocative and intriguing world of sexual discovery. Each of the four episodes in this series delves into the different

lives and experiences of DL men of colour across social, cultural, and economic boundaries. The television series includes Black cultural, sociological, and political commentary. On the surface, the television series can be explicit and, at times, even offensive. For example, *The DL Chronicles* highlights cultural, contemporary, historical, racialized, and societal issues in the United States through the display of existing stereotypes of Black people, DL men, and Black gay men as portrayed through its characters. The research design section (see chapter 3) of this dissertation provides a brief interpretation of sample elements from the series, which include the episode “Boo” and the opening narrative of *The DL Chronicles*. I argue *The DL Chronicles* is one representation of DL identity within the landscape of Black visual culture and cultural behaviours. *The DL Chronicles* reveal the effects of oppression and disenfranchisement are still in effect in Black culture, as exhibited through the characters’ interactions with one another in this controversial television series. Additionally, this series provides an unapologetic view of intimacy between men of colour and explores these scintillating stories with honesty and integrity (here! TV Network, 2008). The series received the 2008 GLAAD Media Award in the category of Outstanding Television Movie or Mini-Series. It is the first cable television show to centre on Black Americans and the DL phenomenon in the gay community.

Deeper insight into the background of the creators of *The DL Chronicles* might fall into the history and experience of its creators. LeNear and Gossett met through mutual friends. One of their friends was trying to link them up for creative and business reasons. He had no idea that they were DL and gay. They were both actors and very closeted. Fearing their sexuality would ruin their chances of success in Hollywood. Over time, they gave love a try, and for seven years, they loved each other in a DL relationship. Many of their friendships suffered because of their fear. They felt the pain of being unable to celebrate their love

(<http://www.glaad.org/blog/dl-chronicles-producers-quincy-and-deondray-gossfield-speak-glaad-about-being-married-live>) openly.

Disillusioned with the lack of people of colour in LGBTQ media and growing tired of the witch-hunt for DL, LeNear and Gossett created the indie anthology series *The DL Chronicles*. LeNear and Gossett decided together that when their short film came out at its first film festival, they would come out as gay with it. The success of the series set them on a new path. LeNear and Gossett’s exposure of the DL in Black U.S. culture compels my research on Black DL men and their relationship to Black visual culture in a broader context. The research is important because Black visual culture remains a rich and under-explored territory that, in general, has been under-appreciated in the field of art education and African American studies. To date, there have not been any dissertations or studies done using *The DL Chronicles* as a primary source of examination to offer critical insight into the Black visual culture. My purpose in this dissertation is (a) to assess the *stereotypes* of Black male identity, (b) to identify and interpret the *stigmas* related to representations of DL, and (c) to examine *subjugations* of DL that are interconnected to the curricular and pedagogical implications for art education and African American studies.

Research Questions

- *In what ways are brothers on the DL represented in Black visual culture?*
- *In what ways can the discourse of brothers on the DL in Black visual culture be used to inform and guide curriculum in art education and African American and Diaspora studies?*

To begin with, Snorton (2014) provided a working theoretical definition of DL and critiqued DL identity in the literature. My study extends Snorton's (2014) analysis of the Black visual culture. Analyzing DL identity within the space of Black visual culture represents a merging of art education and African American studies through Black visual culture(Snorton, 2014).

Black Visual Culture

Today, Black visual culture remains a rich and overlooked territory that, in general, has been disconcertingly fragmented. Some scholars have examined Black visual culture. However, none of these scholars has sufficiently examined DL identity within Black visual culture. For example, some scholars that have interpreted Black visual culture in their scholarship have not engaged in interpretations of Black visual culture informed by the pragmatic view of Black identity. Pieterse (1992) revealed, for example, that the Omnipresence of prejudice against Black people throughout the Western world is conveyed through racist imagery(Pieterse, 1992). Interestingly, Bearden and Henderson (1993) observed the lives and careers of some Black American artists and juxtaposed their work against fundamental artistic, societal, and political trends both in the United States and throughout the world. Hooks (1995) replied to the continuing discourse about constructing, unveiling, and evaluating art and aesthetics in an art world consistently concerned with social justice and Black identity politics(Hook, *Art on my mind: Visual politics.* , 1995). Doy (2002) took a global perspective in discussing how Black artists have been and continue to be slanted by the politics, cultures, societies, economies, and histories in which they live and work. Lewis (2003) looked at the works and lives of Black artists from the eighteenth century to the present and revealed the rich legacy of work by Black American artists(Lewis, 1993). Powell (2003) concentrated on the works of art themselves and on how these works, created during a time of major social disturbance and transformation, use Black culture as both subject and context. Lastly, Bolden (2004) highlighted influential and important Black American artists from the early part of the twentieth century who were actively discouraged from pursuing their artistic talent(Powell, 2008; Bolden, 2004).

The vast amount of visual culture produced, consumed, collected, and interpreted over the centuries includes images, performances, films, and other visual artefacts in which Black people are stereotyped, stigmatized, and subjugated. These examples might be considered Black visual culture. Additionally, the destabilization of Black visual culture in the United States comes from negative connotations about Black people reified by dominant Eurocentric and White American cultural ideology—that is, anyone who is non-White is inferior to anyone who is White, or what I signify as a *Whiteness*. That said, Gray's (2004)*assimilation and the discourse of invisibility concept* assists with

destabilizing Whiteness in *The DL Chronicles* “as complex social and political issues (p. 85)” that questions “race, gender, class, and power” (p. 85). Therefore, Gray’s (2004) concept assists with the understanding of Blackness on television and helps me link the historical to the contemporary within the realm of visual culture.

Visual Culture

Visual culture “refers to a plethora of ways in which the visual is a part of social life” (Rose, 2012, p. 4). Additionally, according to Mitchell (1972), “images and language are inextricably entangled” (p. 12). Some scholars make arguments for representation and non-representation of visual culture (Mitchell, 1986). Rose (2012) explained that “this diversity obviously makes generalizing about studies of visibility a difficult task” (p. 11), and continued to state that “the literature on (or against) ‘visual culture’ is its concern for the way in which images visualize (or render visible) social difference” (p. 11). In this context, Rose looked carefully at images and how they represent or portray distinctive separation in class, gender, race, and sexual orientation. For example, images of whiteness in Black masculinity are also situated within a conflicted affiliation with problematic representations of identity and masculinity within Blackness. Therefore, images are very powerful, and the meanings they convey can be explicit or implicit depending on the context in which they are being delivered or viewed. Writers on visual culture are concerned about how images look and how they are being looked at, a major component focused on by visual studies scholars such as Sturken and Cartwright (2009). They argued that the importance of images is not simply the image itself but how certain spectators see and look at it in particular ways. Ultimately, visual culture is unquestionably an interdisciplinary subject.

When referencing *visual culture art education* (VCAE), Dorn (2005) stated, “What some consider most radical about the VCAE approach is its attempt to shift the Art Education field from its traditional emphasis on studio art into a dialogue about art as a socially constructed object, devoid of expressive meaning” (p. 47). Similarly, Michelle Kamhi (2010) is another scholar who believes the future of art education is in jeopardy. She argued, for example, that if students are oppressed, it is due to their ignorance and that of their immediate family and community. She referenced the film *Precious* as a “moving testimony to that truth” (Kamhi, 2010); however, she failed to account for the fact that the film *Precious* is a representation of a Black visual culture that breeches the limitations of whiteness. Looking at VCAE as socially constructed allows students to learn outside and inside of the classroom. Nonetheless, Duncum (2003) summarized how art educators visualize what the study of visual culture could mean to students in their classrooms. Duncum (2003) showed precedence in his study to another reason why art educators should care about the information in this study. Duncan argued that visual culture focuses on the ways culture can be represented through visual connotations, and he wrote about how culture is manifested through reproduction and presentation of visibility. Therefore, visual culture is the visual interpretation of culture, philosophy, and ethos by using images to communicate with society (Grant, 2013). *The DL Chronicles* is an example of a Black visual culture that relies on this framework to examine the phenomena of Black DL men. Studying this series is

important because, historically, there has been a lack of critical cultural engagement with DL identity. The ignorance of it has been pervasive and embedded deeply within U.S. culture.

Inter-sectionality

For Crenshaw (1995) and Collins (2000), “‘Intersectionality’ means the examination of race, sex, national origin and sexual orientation, and how their combination plays out in various settings” (p. 57). These authors argued that the intersection, or what Collins (2000) termed “the interlocking nature of identities,” (p. 57) is inseparable, and one must consider how these multiple identities simultaneously reproduce particular sites of oppression and exclusion. Crenshaw (1995) inquired as to why and how Black people are always at multiple intersections that are always crossing. Scott (1997), along with Crenshaw (1995) and Collins (2000), echoed Beauvoir (1949) in suggesting that gender is not born but made, thus providing a sociological critique not of the body but rather of cultural specifics such as social roles, cultural functions, and representations of femininity and masculinity.

For Hooks (2004), ethnic and racial differences within masculinity are important to diversity in African American studies. Framing these issues within the context of intersectionality provides ways in which masculinity is experienced, accepted, negotiated, and interpreted. For example, hooks further suggested that “masculinity, as practised by Black Americans, plays upon and, at times, calls into question culturally dominant projections of Black masculinity, which these scholars define and described as restrictive interpretations” (p. 36). Additionally, to this point I argue, Black men are seen as a highly commoditized in the cultural domains of entertainment. They are positioned as a sexual fantasy. Areas such as sports and music also reveal the extreme difficulties and possibilities of being a Black man. Another factor in constructing Black male identity is social stigma and penalties, which can include community isolation, violence, and prejudice when Black men do not conform to the expected masculine performance or narrative. For example, (Potoczniak, 2007) posts such attempts are undermined rather than celebrated. For instance, Johnson (2008) and Alexander (2006) used intersectionality to explore how Black gay men navigate cultural and social spaces. More specifically, Johnson (2008) focused on the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality and how Black gay men situate their lives within groups and geographic regions in the United States that marginalize their ethnicity, masculinity, and sexuality. In focusing on competing notions of Black masculinity, Alexander (2006) documented how White and Black communities can differ in their interpretations of moral versus immoral embodiments of Black masculinity (Johnson, 2003; Alexander, 2006). For Alexander (2006), qualities of the moral Black man in solidarity with whiteness include being articulate, polite, and intelligent; however, such qualities can be considered bad in some facets of Black culture. Therefore, someone who embodies character traits that are moral can simultaneously be understood as immoral (Alexander, 2006) when situated in heteronormativity and homonormativity. In short, Johnson (2008) and Alexander (2006) concluded that intersectionality is constructed in heterosexism and thus is homophobic. There is little room for its construction of Black masculinity to imagine a Black man who is attracted to men or both men and women.

Queer Theory

Queer theory renders identity multiple and unstable. Queer theory celebrates the difference that contributes to a non-threatening truth, but queer theory also deconstructs identity as much as it does gender and its accompaniments, such as power, social roles, and hierarchical locations. Queer theory also critically analyses social dynamics and power structures regarding sexual identity and social power by challenging and deconstructing normativity, especially as supported by essentialist notions of identity. Informed by a constructionist agenda, queer theory has moved from explaining the modern homosexual to questions of the operation of the hetero/homosexual binary. Queer theory moves from an exclusive preoccupation with homosexuality to a focus on heterosexuality as a social and political organizing principle. And queer theory moves from a politics of minority interest to a politics of knowledge and difference (Ferguson, 2004). Here, my use of queer theory ends up asking questions similar to those raised in the discourse around intersectionality, even if the questions resonate differently and are located within other fields of inquiry. That said, queer theory denounces sexuality as universal while affirming it as a social construct. Even though queer theory effectively examines the role of sexuality in the lives of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people, and other sexual and gender minorities, the research repeatedly centres on White people as subjects of inquiry to the exclusion of queers of colour. For example, the queer theory was constructed in whiteness instead of including the differing racialized experiences amid homonormative people.

Queer of Color Critique

Ferguson (2004) looked at the way heteronormative culture has functioned in constructing citizenship through whiteness. Which has historically excluded people of colour based on race, gender, and sexual orientation? He went against societal norms and used sociological theory to expound on his concepts. Ferguson (2004) defined queer of colour critique as “social formations at the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class, with a particular interest in how these formations correspond with and diverge from nationalist ideals and practices” (p. 48). Ferguson identified the historical imbrication of discourses that must be disjointed in a queer of colour critique. Ferguson further asserted that with the reliance on whiteness in seminal queer theory texts, the manufacturing of coming out as a liberatory act reflects a hegemonic narrative that further instigates epistemological bias that does not necessarily represent queer subjects divided by racial distinction. This framework has a similar overarching theme for facets of the LGBT&Q community.

Moreover, Ferguson (2004) eloquently distinguished between how queers of colour resist interpellation into these controlled categories of Black American identity established by canonical sociology and dominant literary representations. He questions how in an already marginalized context, White queer narratives are placed on Black queers or queers of colour and asserts that these expectations do not fully address the issues faced by these further marginalized groups. Similarly, Cohen (1997) stated, “In many instances, instead of destabilizing the assumed categories and binaries of sexuality, queer politics has served to reinforce simple dichotomies between heterosexual

and everything ‘queer’” (p. 438). As a result, queers of colour are asking questions that are non-conforming and seen as deviant from whiteness. Queeris, therefore, is not an essentialist category of identity but rather a set of critiques of White homosexuality and patriarchy. In short, queer of colour critique is a heterogeneous enterprise made up of women of colour feminism, materialist analysis, poststructuralist theory, and queer critique. And therefore, queer of colour critique does not focus on the identity constructs of DL men.

Intersectionality, queer theory, and a queer of colour critique question the idea of fixed sexual identities. Jagose (1996), for example, contended that queer theory’s challenge is to construct fresh ways of thinking about fixed single variable conceptual ideas of sexual identities such as gender, heteronormativity, and homonormativity. Additionally, Johnson and Henderson (2005) stated, “Lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered people of colour who are committed to the demise of oppression in its various forms cannot afford to theorize their lives based on ‘single-variable’ politics” (p. 5). In short, oppression is typically experienced on various fronts; therefore, raising one identity above others as the primary focus of analysis potentially reinforces the power of whiteness instead of destabilizing its dominance. Although research in art education, African-American studies, and queer and gender studies is improving in terms of including Black gay men beyond an implied and anecdotal comment, there is still little research with a specific focus on how DL men grasp and experience their masculinities; this, in turn, directly affects how brothers on the down low navigate the narration of their lives.

In the late twentieth century, tensions arose when subpopulations of Black Americans were confronted with crosscutting issues affecting multiple identities, such as those suggested by differences in class, gender, or sexuality (Cohen, 1999). When this occurred, a racial hierarchy developed in which those in the subpopulation were expected to defer their differing interests to the interests of those sharing their presumed primary racial identification.

Stereotypes, Stigmas, and Subjugations: Crosscutting Issues in Black Identities

Furthermore, I must restate that my purpose in this dissertation is(a) to examine the *stereotypes* of Black male identity, (b) to identify and interpret the *stigmas* related to representations of DL, and (c) to discuss the *subjugation* of DL that are interconnected to the curricular and pedagogical implications for art education and African American studies. That said, I argue that the hegemonic American construction of identity and images of Black men in the United States are filled with stereotypes of hypersexuality, savagery, primitivism, and docility. These images have become infused into the Black community. As a consequence of identity constructs that result from whiteness, Black men who classify themselves as homosexual are seen as a cross-cutting issue, which is a cultural line that creates further ostracism within an already marginalized Black community. For example, Black gay sexual identity has been seen in Black communities as mitigating one’s racial identity and deflating one’s community standing. In short, Black men that identify as bisexual, homosexual, queer,

or gay are belittled because they are seen as being like women under the stereotypical white cultural positioning of white gay men as being sissies, faggots, or effeminate.

Until now, the considerations I have suggested in this dissertation are not just for understanding the question about multifaceted notions of Black DL identities or Black lived experiences. Nor are they only about the distinctive Black masculinity identities of the self from a particular perspective. They are here to establish an understanding of how some Black people learn Black consciousness and the unfathomable interactions Black consciousness compels some Black people to take certain actions. Interconnected to discussions of sexuality are discussions of masculinity. Black (2000) and Hooks (2004) argued that by the end of slavery, “patriarchal masculinity had become an accepted ideal for most Black men, an ideal that would be reinforced by twentieth-century norms” (p. 4). Collins (2004), in a similar vein, suggested that Black masculinity was negotiated through an understanding of the economic and political climate during the Jim Crow era when Black men were emasculated yet depicted as being naturally hyper-heterosexual (Collins, *Black Sexual Politics*, 2004). The next chapter is a review of the literature that surrounds key concepts and areas of importance in this study. Chapter 2 also builds on the discourse in Chapter 1 surrounding destabilizing Whiteness in representations of DL in Black visual culture.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter is a review of the literature that surrounds the key concepts and areas of this study. This chapter also builds on the discourse in Chapter 1 surrounding destabilizing Whiteness in the representation of the brother on the down low (DL) in Black visual culture. In the intersection of Black male emasculation and queer theory, I focus on the sustained interaction of these two concepts with contemporary politics of identity, masculinity, and media representation. In this dissertation, I also reflect on the categorization and institutionalization of Black men in visual culture. Then, I discuss the knowledge and power play of hegemonic U.S. culture and how people are structured and regulated using social dynamics. I ultimately provide insights into these things by investigating them and looking closely at their social constructs. I also focus on the social critique of power and marginality regarding U.S. Black male culture at the intersection above. Using the existing literature, I identify and examine some important connections within the discussion of U.S. Black male culture in general and DL culture specifically to emphasize epistemological considerations, difference, marginality, and agency. These considerations have been instrumental in critiquing the relationships of Black man emasculation and queer theory. Although some of this has already been written about, the relationships among these other aspects have not. I investigate the relationship between heteronormativity, homonormativity, patriarchy, whiteness and blackness, and queerness and the DL. I focus on how the DL navigates this complex space within the African American diaspora and also within the underexplored curricular and pedagogical implications of visual images of the DL man for

art education and African American studies.

Black's Image via Television

Due to technological advancements in the previous and current century, media is considered a vital instrument of an individual's insight and elucidation of African American cultural and chronological image. This tool can be used to develop positive or negative perceptions, depending upon the administrators of the industry. Studies found that the American media, with few exceptions, always tried to portray an impoverished, aggressive, and negative stereotypic image of black American culture (Wallace J. B., 2005). These perceptions and conceptions in Western society persist as portrayed by the TV and film due to the unawareness of people about African American culture and values. Very little knowledge is granted about them in schools and colleges, so the leading source of figures and statistics is the media and its all forms (Hawk, 1992). It was mentioned in research that the use of African Americans purposely by media to select the characters for their participation was always an important factor in portraying the impacts of their culture negatively. As a result, it prohibited the flourishing and advancements in African American culture (Davis & Gandy, 1999).

Gorney and Love enforced the idea that the world is exhibited with the help of social media, and social media mirrors the world. American social media move through a revolution in the rear of changes and advancements occurring in American culture. Starting from the theatre and now the Internet, American social media is continuously rising and struggling to hit its position in the world. Through every single alteration in media, the pictures and emails they forward are significant. Due to the widespread use of social media, it is essential to check all the emails and images they forward. It is estimated that the single activity of American people is watching TV along with taking naps and doing jobs (Gorney & Loye, 1978). The TV serves as an educationalist, entertainer, baby minder and companion. The Command and Control of television programs in societies, especially in American society, is commendable (Blystone & Ryan, 1978).

A study done with the help of about two hundred African American participants determined the link between the images of African American culture portrayed by the media and the public view of these exposed images. It described the threats to the cultural identity of African Americans due to media presentations and management of these intimidations in detail. It was declared by the study that black youngsters want to eradicate these images. A negative perception of the respondents was discussed in the study, with the role of media in the misrepresentation of minority culture (Fujioka, 2010).

In another study, different ways of cultural condemnation were used to evaluate the picture of African American entertainers in the American media. It focused on the probable links between the limited, prefixed, biased and misleading images of Black Americans, particularly those who were predominant in the American industry. The conduct those entertainers receive from the developing society was elaborated on in the study, stating how racism and facts were influencing the daily life of the

American population. The African American picture was represented as a masked image of their culture by the media in the study, and the television, film and music industry performances of Black entertainers were mentioned to be incapable of clearing the exploited image of their culture (Turner, 1994).

Another study focused on the stereotypical cultural images of African American entertainers and their judgment by society. Specifically, the crime-related stereotypic images were discussed, and it was found that they had a deep impact on the audience and society. The members of the society perceive that image to be a cultural characteristic of the specified race. So, these portrayed images develop groups in the population with favouritism and hatred toward specific races (Mastro, 2003). The study by Wilson (1999) described how adolescents react to the media portrayals of Black culture through its entertainers. As the entertainers could be perceived as role models for the young generation, the impact of these images was studied in detail. It was reported that certain areas need to be focused on to develop a better image of the African American culture and society, like awareness about race, stereotypes, social interactions and racial discrimination in media (Wilson, 1999).

The concepts related to nations and culture propagated by social media lead African American females to face a tough time. The time of the Reagan government started with an ideal appearance, pushing towards vulgarity in present films. On a daily basis, people talk about the nations, genders, and groups which consistently procreate the prevailing and unfair outlooks of African American women and vulgarity. The character and personality of African American females are greatly damaged due to the excessive representation of their bad image in different nations, mainly due to assorted sexual activities. These widespread images of African American culture, as portrayed by the female and male entertainers, are accepted by superior civilizations and by African American society. The study of Littlefield deliberated the mass media as an organization and suggested fighting against this organization regarding collective integrity for the Cultural Revolution of the Black community. (Littlefield, 2008).

A new trend of consent has been developed towards the popularity of destructive pictures of Black culture in media, as well as evaluation of the impacts of these demonstrations and youth dismissal or confirmation of these pictures for the welfare and individuality of black youngsters. This research was planned to assess the restrictions generated by mass media on the road to the success of black youth. Concerned people were directed along with black youngsters between the ages of 14 and 21. Efforts proved that some modifications played an important role in presenting an optimistic picture of blacks; on the other hand, the approval of the destructive culture of blacks on social media gave rise to huge distinctions of age, gender, and values (Adams-Bass & Stevenson, 2014).

Chronological Literature about Masculinity and Bi-Sexuality of African Americans

So much literature has been published about Black Americans and their issues, and so there are so

many publications about Black Gay Men. One such publication is "Brother to Brother" by Essex Hemphill (1991). In this book, the word "Black" refers to African Americans and the book is written especially for the black gay men who face so many social issues regarding their existence as 'Gay.' *This book shows how a black gay man cannot have a normal life and what home is actually for him.* There is no place for gay men on earth, and so their parents do not accept them as what they are and who they are. Their friends do not like them for their existence as gay in society (Mercer, Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies, 1994). They cannot express what they feel and what they want to have in their lives. In fact, society takes them as doing sin by loving another male and by which to care for him. Gay men have no place if they do things according to their will; thus, this book has been written to highlight that there is a high requirement for civil rights for gay men to have a peaceful life in society, and they must be accepted as what they are (Hemphill, 1991).

Reid-Pharr (2001) also published his book to represent the issues faced by African American gay men. According to him, the gay is the one who cannot tell their identity with confidence because no one accepts them because their identity cannot be possibly summed up by the society. Moreover, when they tell the people about what they are and who they are, then society not only denies their personality but also considers that they are attempting any sin by being gay. The purpose of this publication is to capture black masculinity's complexity, and it expresses the views of black masculinity to show how society has fractured the gays in African American society by not accepting their identities. Throughout the literature, Reid-Pharr has provided great insights into the gay life that are original and provocative (Reid-Pharr, 2001).

In 2005, McBride published his work regarding sexuality and race in African American gay men. This literature offers contemporary cultural criticism to the African American Society for not accepting the gay as part of their society. The book has been divided into three sections, "Race and Sexuality on Occasion, queer Black Thought, Straight Black Talk." These sections of the book explore intersections of gender, class, sexuality, and race issues. Part one of the book, "Queer Black Thought," reveal the truths of race and sexuality in America. The essays in this section point out specific flaws in the racist organization and enlighten how Black Americans have been neglected by Americans at their workplaces (Scott D., 2010). In the second portion, "Race and Sexuality on Occasion," he represented how gay men and lesbians have become part of comedy and fun rather than political realities and civil rights. In the last part of the book, "Straight Black Talk," the writer placed the subjects of sexuality and race into the lens of theory and intellectualism. Thus, the collection of these essays creates awareness of inequality in the Black Society of America and represents how gays have been neglected and have been facing harsh realities due to their identity as homosexual (McBride, 2005).

Woodard (2014) also published his book in which he discussed the homoeroticism within the slavery culture of the United States. This literature shows how the masculinity and sex of African Americans have been affected by the Americans. It has been the trend that Americans consider them as power, and thus, they consider Black Americans as their slaves. Black Americans have not only been treated as slaves but also have been the victim of harassment and psychological torture (FLAHERTY, 2012). The White Americans have made the situations for the Black, in which they will face sexual

harassment, slavery, hunger, and starvation, to break them. From this study, it can be concluded that Black Americans have been facing great social challenges, and it proves that still, in this twenty-first century, there exist so many social evils in society, due to which the existence of Black Americans is quite difficult (Woodard, 2014).

Neal (2013) also wrote about black masculinity in his book, "*Looking for Leroy: Illegible Black Masculinity*," in which he discussed that African American men are bound into their bodies which are legible only as hip-hop thugs, petty criminals, and pimps. He questioned the public and the media to queer black masculinity and to show how black men's bodies are often thought to be the body in need of policing or a criminal body. He highlights that the black bodies are not actually how they are portrayed. Rather, they have been playing out in every institutional arena, from the healthcare sector to the education sector (Capehart, 2012). He challenged that if one analyses the black men's bodies, then he will find that the realities are different than the image created by black males. In fact, in this literature, Neal discussed that Black Americans are exactly opposite to the image created about African Americans in America and are serving in different fields just like the Whites, and it would be ethically wrong to tag them as criminal bodies (Neal, 2013).

Bordwell and Thompson's Theory

Background:

David Bordwell is a well-known film critic who discusses the formal properties of film on his blog, *Observations on Film Art*. His wife, *Kirstin Thompson*, has also shared this blog. He had been writing so many books on films and had also edited a book in 1996 with the philosopher Noel, *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*. Bordwell and Thompson also published a book with the name *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* which was published in 1989 and is still in use. This book is helpful in understanding how to critique the movie. In this book, he introduced a theory which is helpful in understanding the best way to critique a movie or film.

Bordwell, in his theory, distinguishes between comprehension and interpretation of the movie. Comprehension is the minimum requirement to have literal understanding and interpretation is a technique to understand the uncovered or hidden meanings of the film. By comprehending and interpreting any film, play, or painting, one can easily understand the main message hidden in that film, play, or role; thus, it helps to understand the central role of the subject. Bordwell's theory describes all those steps which are essential to evaluate the film. Without having an understanding of those steps, no one can understand and analyze the theme, meaning, and hidden objectives of the film or movie (Animals, 2016).

Bordwell's Four Levels of Meaning

Bordwell published a book, *Making Meaning*, in 1989, and then by this book, he introduced a four-level theory in 2000 to understand the meaning of any film or movie. He introduced the four levels of theory, which are referential meaning, explicit meaning, implicit meaning, and symptomatic meaning. This means that to understand the film, we have to watch it from four perspectives, and then we will be able to understand all its terms and hidden meanings. In short, without understanding these four levels, we cannot make sense of a film. Now, it is essential to understand what are these four levels and to which terms they refer.

Referential Meaning:

It helps to understand the world of the film, which means that it helps to understand the environment defined in the movie, such as Chicago, which is a windy city. It also helps to understand the diegesis of the film, which defines the fictions and the spatial coordinates created by the film. It also provides knowledge of film conventions and the conceptions of time, space, and causality, such as cultural literacy. It means the referential meaning one can understand the film belongs to which city, country, or culture and how the people are living in that place and culture. It provides information about the weather, living style, and thinking of the place. In short, it provides the environmental information of the film (Animals, 2016).

Explicit Meaning:

It helps to understand the main message or theme of the film, such as an abstract. It means that with the help of explicit meaning, one can describe what message has been conveyed to the public by the movie. If the film wants to lead in a direction, then it requires a solid message or theme, and that theme is understood by the explicit meaning of the film. Explicit meaning is the main abstract of the film, but along with referential meaning, it makes up the literary meaning of the film which helps to understand that what is the purpose of the film (Miller, 2000).

Implicit Meaning:

Implicit meanings are the covert or symbolic meaning of the film. When the explicit and referential meaning defines the purpose and theme of the film, then implicit meanings help to understand the hidden meaning of the film. For example, if the movie is about psychological issues, then the referential meaning will highlight the culture of the environment of the movie, and explicit meaning will help the viewer to understand the main objective of the film, such as madness can overcome sanity, but the implicit meaning will actually define that what is the difference between madness and sanity. This means the most difficult thing is to understand the implicit meaning of the movie because it requires great attention and a deep knowledge of the film's theme.

The implicit meanings of the film help to understand the main problems, questions, and issues highlighted in the film. Sometimes, the implicit meanings contradict explicit meanings, but understanding both helps to understand the complete theme of the film.

Symptomatic Meaning:

Symptomatic meaning refers to the hidden objective of the film, which can be highlighted by any symbolic word or expression in the movie. Symptomatic meanings are different from the referential, implicit, and explicit meanings of the film and are sometimes difficult to understand. An example of such symptomatic meaning is if the father says to his son that the grass is so tall that he cannot see the cat walking on the grass, then the son will get the symptomatic meaning that the father is saying to mow the lawn. Similarly, in the film, there are some symbolic meanings of some expressions or phrases that need to be understood with attention and deep concentration (Animals, 2016).

Limitations of Theory:

Bordwell and Thompson's theory is no doubt of great importance and is helpful in understanding the film. It helps to understand the sketched environment, main objective, hidden theme, and symbolic meaning of the film. However, there are some limitations to this theory, too. When someone observes the film to critique it, then he/she will make his own implicit, explicit, thematic, and symbolic meaning. Maybe if one is observing one thing in the film, then it may also be possible that he is ignoring the other important thing about the movie. In this way, everyone makes his perceptions about the movie.

When the film is designed to highlight any social evil, then there may be many things highlighted in the film, and thus, sometimes it becomes difficult to understand the exact hidden theme of the film; in that case, it all depends on the viewer's mind level and observation of the film. This means that everyone will make his meaning regarding the film, and thus, the critics of everyone will differ from the other person. Some films just highlight the biography of any individual, and then it depends on the viewer whether he finds that film the representation of that individual or an over-representation of the individual. For example, many observers think that *Theory of Everything* is a movie which is based on the invention of the Black Hole Theory. However, other observers think that it is about Stephen Hawking. While observing the movie, some consider that it represents the actual life of Stephen, and some consider that the movie has somewhere over-represented the life of Stephen, and he was not actually how he has been represented. It proves that this all depends on the observation and approach towards the implicit, explicit, referential, and symptomatic meanings of Bordwell's theory.

Kobena Mercer's Comments About Theory

Kobena wrote a book about the photography of *Robert Mapplethorpe*, in which he discussed how the

people had used their lens to describe the culture and artefacts of Black Males. In his book, he discussed that Mapplethorpe had used his camera's lens in an amazing way by showing the pictures of Black males, by which he wants to describe the Black's vision in the eyes of Whites. Kobena wrote about the book *The Black Males*, about which he said that in this book, most of the males are nude, and the viewers consider that the black males have been represented as the symbol of sexuality and hypersexuality amongst them, but according to Mapplethorpe's representation, the Black Males are the representation of Erotic or Aesthetic Objects. According to Kobena, when the painter portrays a white female nude picture, then he portrays the picture in the way that a man wants to look at females; thus, feminist pictures act like passive and sexual objectification. However, when the same is done to portray a male's picture, then the consideration becomes different, and people take it as a threat to masculinity and traditions (Mercer, Reading racial fetishism: the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe, 1994).

Kobena says that Mapplethorpe has drawn the black male picture to show the male pictures as sexual objectification, the same as white females. He wants to highlight the shiny black body of the black males to attract the white gay men as well as to show the slavery of the African Americans. Moreover, Mapplethorpe's painting of the Black males also represents them as Heroes or as a symbol of Strength to threaten White rapists and terrorists. Through the painting, Mapplethorpe wanted to show that African Americans could no longer be treated as slaves. Rather, they can be used as Heroic symbols, and they may also use their power against Whites.

According to Bordwell and Thompson's theory, Mapplethorpe's painting's referential meaning represents the African American culture in which he wants to represent the slavery or beauty or strength of the African Americans. The explicit meaning of the painting represents the beauty and strength of the African Americans with the help of the shiny, muscular, and attractive body of the African Americans. The implicit meaning of this painting is that African Americans can no longer tolerate the slavery and sexual torture of the Whites. Finally, the Symptomatic meaning of the painting is that African Americans are so strong and beautiful that they can be used as the symbol of Heroism and Strength. They can be used as models because they have more attractive and strong bodies than the Whites (Mercer, 1994).

Modification of Bordwell's and Thompson's Theory:

Bordwell's and Thompson's theory, *Four Levels of Meaning*, is designed to understand the hidden theme of the films and to have a critical analysis of the film, but in this study, our objective is to analyze the *DL Chronicles*, which is a television series. That is why we will modify Bordwell and Thompson's theory in a way that will help to understand the television series *DL Chronicles*. In this way, I will analyze the implicit, explicit, referential, and symptomatic meaning of this television series and will understand the hidden meaning of this series and its representation of African Americans.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to analyze the *DL Chronicles* and to understand how the representation of African Americans Gay men has been used in this television series. For this purpose, I will use Bordwell and Thompson's theory, according to which the understanding of film depends on four levels of meaning, which are referential meaning, implicit meaning, explicit meaning, and symptomatic meaning. Bordwell and Thompson have focused on their theory to understand the theme of the film, but my focus is to analyze the theme of television series, so I will modify the same theory to understand the meanings of the television series.

In this study, we will first observe the episodes of the *DL Chronicles*, then will find the four meanings of the episode and will analyze the hidden theme of the television series. In this chapter, I will present a sample analysis of my study which will help to understand the basic theme of my study.

Sample Analysis:

For this sample analysis, I have selected episode 2 of volume 1 of *DL Chronicles*. I will just present the analysis of a part of this episode, which starts at 3:50 and ends at 5:40.

Scene:

In this part of the episode, the character, *Robert*, and the food store manager, *Austin*, are chatting with each other via the Internet. They are chatting with each other and asking each other to use a webcam. Firstly Austin asked Robert to remove his shirt and then to stand up to show him full body on the webcam, later Robert asked Austin to show his body on the webcam. Both are interested in each other, and Robert feels that he is in love with Austin. He saw Austin and was highly impressed by his body, so he asked him to tell him about his address. In the meantime, the door knocks, and Robert's daughter is there.

Analysis:

This scene of this television series shows that two males, Robert and Austin, are getting interested in each other because they are gay men. According to Bordwell and Thompson's theory, the referential meaning of this scene shows that the television series is about African American gay men who are interested in each other and develop hidden relationships with each other. The explicit meaning represents that in the Black community, there are males who are gay men, and they love to have a relationship with each other and enjoy their relationship regardless of whether they are married or not

(Wallace, 2002). The implicit meaning of this scene represents that the Black males cannot highlight their relationships with other males because they are not allowed to show their bisexual relationship to society because it is considered a sin. However, the symptomatic meaning shows that both males are enjoying their bisexual relationship with each other in a closed room on a webcam because they are afraid of society and cannot expose their reality to the world (Chronicles, 2013).

Link to the Historical Antecedents

Collin (2004) published his literature about Black gay males and bisexuality in African Americans. In his literature, *The Black Power to Hip Hop*, he represented a group of six males who are interested in each other and are having a life as black gay men. They love each other's company and cannot imagine having a separate life. In his literature, he has shown the same theme as that of *DL Chronicles Episode 2 Volume 1*. He has also represented the same theme of how African American males are interested in each other, and they develop their relationship with each other in a hidden way (Collins, 2006).

Link to the Contemporary Readings

Collin also published his book in 2004, *Black Sexual Politics*, in which he represented that homosexuality and bi-sexuality have been common in Black Americans or African Americans. According to Collin, black males have been used as slaves by the Whites, and that is why they have become so frustrated with life, and they show their masculinity in several ways, either by having male-to-male sexual relationships or by raping the women to show their dominance and masculinity. According to him, it is Black males' politics to show their sexual strength through homosexuality, bi-sexuality, or masculinity behaviours. They use their bodies to get revenge on others and to have satisfaction (Collins, 2004).

Collin also discussed that there was a time when black women were the victim of white men's rapists, but now the issue is that they have been the victim of black male rapists. This is because black males have started to use rape as a powerful tool of their violence. They want to show their masculinity and dominance to the nation, and thus they have no other option but to use such ways in which either they develop homosexual relations or become rapists.

Chapter Four

Analysis Of Series

In this study, the primary focus of the review is a television series, *DL Chronicles*, which consists of four episodes. This series is about African American males who are gay men but are afraid of showing

the world their realities. In this series, each episode is about Black gay men who have hidden relationships with each other, and they don't want it to be exposed to their relatives and the World because society considers it a sin and doesn't like such males who enjoy homosexual relationships. The study will reveal how the *DL Chronicle* is showing the lives of the brothers on the down low.

For the analysis of *DL Chronicles*, I will use Bordwell and Thompson's theory, which will help me gain a thorough understanding of each episode of this television series. For this purpose, I will describe each episode, then its analysis, and then its link with the literature. The study will reveal how black males have homosexual relationships and how they face difficulties in having such relationships. The purpose of this television series is to highlight the importance of the civil rights of gay men and lesbians. Our society does not accept such people who are homosexual, and thus, they face difficulties and become fun of society. Sometimes, they get fed up with hiding their inner reality, and finally, they either commit suicide or become criminals.

The Chadwick Journals presented a television series, *DL Chronicles*, which was edited and directed by Quincy LeNear and Deondray Gossett. Each episode is the story of a gay black man. In this chapter, each episode will be analyzed by Bordwell's theory and by the literature published about black masculinity and homosexuality.

Episode 1: Wes

Scene:

The episode started when Wes Thomas, a real-estate banker, met the journalist. He had some commitments, and after finishing all his tasks, he reached home, where his wife was waiting for him. His wife told him that his brother-in-law, Trend, would be spending a few days with them at their home. Wes was not that much happy with the presence of Trend.

In the next scene, Trend is helping his sister in the kitchen when Wes arrives and asks his wife to help him manage his tie. She refused because her hands were wet. The trend went towards Wes and helped him in setting his tie and suit. With his help, he tried to touch Wes's body. Wes was not comfortable and stopped Trend. Wes and his wife had arranged a dinner for their friends. During the gathering, the guests were making love with their wives, but Wes was not comfortable with his wife, and he could not understand why his couple was not like the normal couple.

After the party, Wes's wife was washing the dishes when she saw Wes coming towards her; she left all the things and tried to make love to him. In response, Wes got annoyed and started telling his wife about his hard job and strict routine. Wes was the one who was guilty of not being able to satisfy his wife, and he just wanted to cover things by discussing his struggling life. When the conversation was going on between husband and wife then at the meantime Trend came and realized that there was something wrong. However, Wes left for his room without saying anything to Trend (*Chronicles*,

2013).

The trend went into Wes's room and asked him what was going on and why he was so depressed. Wes became frustrated, and finally, he discussed everything with Trend. During their discussion, Wes realized that he was much more comfortable with the Trend. They both had an incredible night together while Wes's wife was waiting for him on the bed. The next morning, when Wes woke up, he realized that he had done something wrong and damn he had done sex with his brother-in-law. He immediately came downstairs. He was afraid of losing his wife that Trend made him relax by saying, their relationship is a secret relationship, and Wes's wife won't have any idea about it.

The next day, Wes was guilty of what he had done, so he bought flowers for his wife and reached home to have a new start with his wife, but unfortunately, she was not at home. After knowing this, Wes sat in the kitchen and started waiting for his wife. When she reached home, she saw Wes sitting in the kitchen, so depressed and lonely. Wes said her sorry, and in response, she hugged him and forgave all his words and actions.

After going to the bedroom, Wes's wife wears a white night dress and applies fragrance and lotion on her body to attract Wes. But Wes was not at all comfortable with his wife, and so he went to bed. His wife came to him and started a serious discussion with Wes by saying that she knew everything about him and Trend. Wes got afraid and thought that Trend had told everything to her and asked what she knew about him and Trend. She said that she had a discussion with Trend about Wes's fight with the trend, and she had an idea that Wes was not comfortable with Trend's presence. This was a relief for Wes, and he replied that he had no issues with Trend, so he could stay at home as long as he wanted.

In the end, the narrator, Chadwick Williams, asks a question about him that many males are gay men, but just because they are afraid of society, they don't accept them as gay men, and they never understand their identity.

Analysis:

In this episode of *DL Chronicles*, the male, Wes, is on the down low and has a beautiful wife. He was the one who wanted to develop a very healthy relationship with his wife. The episode shows that Wes was never able to satisfy his wife. Wes's wife was also facing a great depression. Everything was not going well between the couple when Trend came to visit them. Wes was not happy with Trend's stay at their home because he was gay.

In the episode, the Chadwick journals represent how difficult it is for the brother on the down low to manage his relations and his desires. Wes was on the down low and did not want to let her wife know about his relationship with Trend. The episode helps the viewer to understand that most of the black gay males are facing depression and fear just because they want to maintain healthy relations just like the other males and don't want to let people know that they are having any hidden relationship with a male. We had a relationship with Trend, who was his brother-in-law, which gave him not only

relief but pleasure, too. On the other hand, Wes was trying his best to keep his wife happy, but for that, he had to fight with himself.

The situation becomes clearer when his wife gets ready to have sex at night, but he goes to bed and refuses to have sex with her. He was uncomfortable with having sex with his wife because his body was not accepting of having a relationship with a female. He was fighting with his inner and with his body just because he did not want to reveal his reality. This shows how the gay men of the African American community face a difficult time hiding their facts. He could not tell his wife about his homosexual relationship, and thus, he had no other option but to live as a person on the down low.

When analyzing the episode according to Bordwell's theory then, the four levels of meaning become so apparent. The referential meanings are that in African Americans, gay men are facing depression in their lives and relationships. The explicit meaning is that there is no place for Gay men in society, and thus, they are afraid of having homosexual relations. The implicit meaning is that homosexual males can never have a satisfactory relationship with a female, but just because society does not accept them as gay, they have to marry a woman and have to spend a life which is not designed for them. The symptomatic meanings show that Wes was so uncomfortable with his wife because he could not give his best while having sex with his wife, whereas he was so comfortable and satisfied while having sex with Trend. This shows that brothers on the down low are the victims of depression and anxiety because they are fed up with hiding their secret relations from society.

Link to the Historical Antecedents

Since 1982, researchers have been more concerned with analyzing the social issues faced by gay men. If we see the historical point of view, then so much literature has been published to describe the lives of different gay men with different perspectives. Kimmel and Brod (1996) also presented their research in which they examined the masculinity of the mid-1980s within the literary and cultural studies movement. This action situated male masculinity in the context of politics and sought to answer how men positioned themselves in or about feminism, especially when they are gay men (Kimmel, 2003). The same has been discussed in this episode that when the man is identified as gay, then society makes him a victim of humour and challenges his masculinity.

In this episode, Wes was afraid of facing the community, and to show his masculinity and strength as a man, he got married to a woman. Wes was trying his best to make his marriage life ideal and charming just because he wanted to show the world that he was the man who knew how to keep his wife happy. This indicates that just to keep his masculinity a priority, he decided to live on the down low.

The same has also been discussed by Boone (1990). In his research, he suggested that if men wish to engage in feminist approaches to social critique, they would have to turn the critical lens on themselves and their original bodies. Such a critique, according to Boon (1990) provides analysis and conceptualizes male masculinity and sexuality from both historical and cultural contexts. This new

context redirected the focus from gender to differences between men and manhood (Boone, 1990).

Link to the Contemporary Readings

In 2001, Reid-Pharr published his work regarding sexuality and race in African American gay men. This literature offers contemporary cultural criticism of African American Society for not accepting gays as part of their society, due to which they have no other option but to live a life with a lie. The book McBride is also about the masculinity of black gay men, which has been divided into three sections, "Race and Sexuality on Occasion, queer Black Thought, Straight Black Talk." These sections of the book explore intersections of gender, class, sexuality, and race issues. Part one of the book, "Queer Black Thought," reveals the truths of race and sexuality in America and enlightens how Black Americans have been neglected by Americans at their workplaces. In the second portion, "Race and Sexuality on Occasion," he represented how gay men and lesbians have become part of comedy and fun rather than political realities and civil rights. In the last part of the book, "Straight Black Talk," the writer placed the subjects of sexuality and race into the lens of theory and intellectualism.

Episode 2: Robert

In this episode, the character, *Robert*, and the food store manager, *Austin*, meet each other in the food store when Robert is searching for a food item. During their meeting, they had a great conversation, and both exchanged each other's contact number. In the night, Robert messaged Austin via the internet and asked Austin to join him on the webcam. Both had video chats one by one, during which they saw Austin and were highly impressed by his body. Once both were done with video chat, Robert asked Austin about his home address. In the meantime, Robert's daughter knocked on his door.

Robert got so confused and opened the door. Robert's daughter asked him what he was doing and why he was so confused, and he replied that he was just checking emails. Later, he reached Austin's place and told him that he liked him. Robert was living on the down low and was interested in developing a secret relationship with Austin. In return, Austin said that he is openly gay, and they both can have a relationship if they want (Chronicles, 2013).

The next day, Robert went to the food store to meet Austin, and they both spent quality time with each other. Robert did not inform Austin about his daughter. In the evening, Austin and his colleague were going to the market when Austin saw Robert with his daughter. He called Robert to ask who is that lady; in return, Robert pretended that Austin was his client and introduced his daughter, *Rhonda*, to Austin.

At night, Robert went to Austin's place to explain to him about his relationship with his wife and his daughter. Robert said that he cannot tell his daughter about his reality because he is afraid of losing her. Austin understood his situation and made him comfortable by saying that he wouldn't let

anybody know about their relationship. Robert also invited Austin for dinner at home.

The next day, Austin had dinner at Robert's home. After having dinner, Austin said thanks to Rhonda and left the house. Robert also accompanied him to the gate. Robert and Austin were kissing each other goodnight when Rhonda saw them. Rhonda was surprised and could not accept what she had seen. The next morning, she went to the food store and had a conversation with Austin. She asked him if her father lived on the down low. Is he having a relationship with Austin? In response, Austin told the reality to Rhonda. The reality was very painful for her because it was difficult for her to accept that her father was gay.

When Robert finds out that Austin has told Rhonda the truth, he gets angry at Austin and breaks his relationship with him. Austin tried to make him understand that it was normal and that his daughter would accept him for who he was. Robert replied that now his daughter will never look at him with respect and it will be quite difficult for her to accept that her father is living on the down low. He said that being gay is not proud of him; rather, he is embarrassed by what he is actually.

Finally, Robert decided to go to the home and to talk to his daughter. But Rhonda was not ready to understand Robert. Rather, she did not accept his apology. In response, Robert said so helplessly that this is what all he is, and he cannot do anything with it. He told Rhonda that he is not having any disease which can be cured, so he cannot do anything with it. Rhonda realized that she should understand her father's feelings, and so she hugged him. Finally, Robert went to the food store and said sorry to Austin and started a happy and relaxed life afterwards.

Analysis:

In this episode, the story is about two males, *Robert and Austin*; one is openly gay, and the other is living on the down low. Robert is the one who is afraid of facing his daughter and the society. They both started having a secret relationship with each other at Austin's place. With this episode, it is easier to realize that African American gay men prefer to live on the down low just because they are afraid of losing their relations. They are afraid of facing society; they get married to women and pretend to have a life like straight men, but this results in depression and anxiety in the brothers living on the down low.

The brothers on the down low have to face so many social challenges. Especially in Robert's case, he could not tolerate losing his daughter. But when Rhonda came to know about Robert's reality, it was challenging for her to understand the situation. But here, Chadwick shows that living on the down low is not an option; rather, gay men have to communicate their feelings and realities. This is what is proved by Robert's conversation with his daughter. When Robert describes Rhonda and lets her understand that nothing is in his hand, then she realises that whatever the case is, Robert is her father, and she has to accept him as he is.

The end of the episode is great and a lesson for all that if we accept gay men, then they will be able

to have a better and more relaxed life. When Rhonda accepted her father for what he was and allowed him to have a relationship with Austin, then Robert was so comfortable and achieved peace in his life. This means that society must accept gay men and let them spend their lives freely.

According to Bordwell's theory, the referential meaning of the episode is that in African Americans, gay men are facing depression in their lives and relationships, and they prefer to live on the down low just because they are afraid of losing their relations. The explicit meaning is that society must accept them for what they are and must allow them to have a free and open life. The implicit meaning of the episode is that black gay men are always afraid of facing society, and thus, they marry women and develop their families, but they are always unable to keep their wives happy, which results in divorce. The gay men do not show what they are because they have no courage to face society; thus, they pretend to be as masculine males. The symptomatic meaning of the episode is that the brothers on the down low take the support of lies to protect their relations. If the society will allow them to live life freely, they will be more satisfied with their lives and will be happier.

Link to the Historical Antecedents

According to society, the masculinity of a man can be defined as his physical strength. If the male is successful in keeping his wife and relations satisfied, then he is the real man; otherwise, his masculinity is challenged. This is what has been shown in the episode. Robert wanted to keep his image as an active father in the sight of his daughter, and that is why he preferred to live on the down low. He was afraid that his daughter would not understand his position, and then he would become humour society, and his masculinity would be challenged. Such discourse on manhood, masculinities, male identities, and the emergence of gay studies, men's studies, and queer theory have also been part of literature since the nineteenth century.

Collin, Richard, and Pinar have published so much literature about gay men that they have discussed different gay men who have faced many social challenges because of their identity (Collins, 2000). Richard also published literature in 2001, in which he discussed the critical theory to understand the situation of gay men and the challenges faced by the brothers on the down low (Richard Delgado, 2001; Pinar, 2004).

Christopher, in 2015, also published his article in which he discussed the military men who prefer to live down low just because they cannot face society and cannot tolerate the questions about their masculinity. Military men are considered to be highly physically fit and strong, and thus, society cannot accept them as gay. He discussed that African Americans especially prefer to live on the down low just because they have already been facing social challenges due to discrimination. Now, they are afraid of facing more social issues and questions about their masculinity (Alt, 2015).

Link to the Contemporary Readings

The episode is about the brother on the down low. Robert's daughter used to make him the hero, and thus, he did not want to break her pride. He was worried that if he told his daughter about his relationship with Austin, then maybe she would stop considering him as her hero. He could not see disrespect in Rhonda's eyes and could not tolerate questions about his masculinity, which is why he preferred to live on the down low. Neal (2013) also wrote about black masculinity in his book, *"Looking for Leroy: Illegible Black Masculinity,"* in which he discussed that African American men are bound into their bodies which are legible only as hip-hop thugs, petty criminals, and pimps. He questioned the public and the media to queer black masculinity and to show how black men's bodies are often thought to be the body attempting sin. He highlights that Black bodies have the right to live their lives either as bisexual or homosexual. In fact, Black gay men have no place in society, and they are considered to produce sin in society, but actually, this is not the case. The society must allow them to live their lives freely. In this way, they will be able to achieve their inner peace.

Episode 3:

The episode started when Boo had a harsh discussion with a lady. The lady, *Kesha*, was his girlfriend, and actually, she was fed up with his cheating habit, and thus, she wanted to kick him out of her house. Boo had many girlfriends as well as boyfriends. He had some friends with whom he liked to spend his time. He was living on the down low, but in front of his friend, he used to pretend that he was highly interested in females. He was having relations with girls as well as boys. He was afraid of facing the world and relations after exposure to his reality because his mother, as well as people from the society, did not like gay men.

When Boo went home, his mother was watching television, on which an interview about gay men was going on. The people were discussing the show that gay men have no life because they cannot have family or children and they are useless to society. Boo's mother started discussing the same topic with Boo and asked him about his plans to settle his life. Boo was less interested in discussing his settlement. Rather, only one thing was going on in his mind: that society and his mother would never accept him if they came to know about his secret relations with boys. After feeling fed up with this all he went to Kesha's apartment and asked her to forget everything and to have time with him.

Boo was a bit frustrated, and thus after spending time with Kesha, he went to his boyfriend. When he came back to Kesha, then she asked him why he had left and where he had gone. Boo was unable to give her satisfactory answer, which made her annoyed, and she again kicked him out of her home. This made Boo hell frustrated. He tried to contact Kesha several times, but she did not respond. Finally, Boo went to one of his boyfriends and spent some time with him.

Two weeks later, Boo again went to Kesha's home and asked her why she was not attending his call? After having the discussion with Kesha and knowing that she is no longer interested in him, he goes

back home and sits alone in a room where he thinks about why he can't have a peaceful life like others. Why is he living on the down low, and why can't he expose his reality to the world? This made him more frustrated. He could not tell society that he was gay, so he decided to have multiple relationships just to satisfy himself and to kill his frustration.

Analysis:

This episode shows how gay men get frustrated with their lives, and then they form multiple relationships. Boo is one of the brothers on the down low who cannot tell the society that they are more interested in homosexual relations. He pretends to be a strong man who has so many girlfriends. In the episode, Boo is, again and again, going to Kesha and trying to maintain his relationship with her just because he wants to show the world that he has a girlfriend just to prove his masculinity and identity as an able-bodied male.

The Boo had secret relations with the boys, and he could not expose those relationships because he was afraid of facing his mother. According to her mother and society, gay men are useless, and their lives have no meaning because neither they can satisfy the woman nor can they have babies. Such considerations of society have somewhere made gay men depressed and unacceptable to society and made their lives frustrating. Finally, gay men become hypersexual just to kill their frustration. The Down Low personalities always live with lies, and this increases the level of depression and frustration in them.

According to Bordwell's and Thompson's theory, the episode's referential meanings describe that the episode is about the African American gay men who get frustrated with their society and depressed by continuing the lie of their life. The explicit meaning of the episode is that frustrated gay men love to have relationships with several women and men just for their pleasure and to overcome their frustration. The implicit meaning of the episode is that gay men are afraid of facing society because they know that there is no place for them, which never lets them towards success and a peaceful life. The symptomatic meanings show that gay men are never satisfied. Rather, they are guilty and frustrated, and they just want to get rid of everything. They can only achieve pleasure, satisfaction, and peace by having a homosexual relationship with other males.

Link to the Historical Antecedents

In this episode, Boo is living on the down low and proving his masculinity; he tries to maintain his relationship with Kesha. She was the one who used to treat him as a slave and used to kick him off every day, but even then, he was in relation with her just to prove to society that he was having a healthy relationship with a female. Boo had been facing significant social challenges because he was unable to tell his mom about his reality, and by having a support of a lie, he could not achieve a satisfaction level in his life. Finally, Boo becomes hypersexual to get rid of his frustration. As Hooks (2004) argued, hegemonic ideologies about gender and sexuality continue to construct an

environment that condones and connects hyper-masculinity with heterosexuality while stigmatizing queerness by connecting it to maligned femininity (Hook, 2004). Connected to the Black identity struggle is the devaluation of the feminine.

Black men who exhibit feminine traits are demeaned, disparaged, and excluded from pure, authentic Black spaces or Blackness, thus linking homosexuality with effeminacy. Such links to femininity suggest inferiority rather than empowerment (Hook, 2004). Collins (2004) also argued that gay men become surrogate women. She continued to suggest that femininity as a performance of queer identity reinforces Black masculinity as an unfeminine narrative. To protect Black masculinity, the feminine performance becomes widely accepted as the identifier of homosexuality, and being effeminate excludes African American gay men from Black manhood. Such negative discourse about homosexuality can be seen in Black music. Some facets of the hip-hop genre, for example, Collins (2004) suggested, are hyper-masculine and filled with negative discourses. Such spaces normalize violence against LGBTQ communities (Collin, 2004).

Link to the Contemporary Readings

Woodard (2014) published his book in which he discussed homoeroticism within the African American culture of the United States. It has been the trend that Black gay men are considered to be attempting a sin in society, and thus, they have no place in society and are treated as useless objects of the community. They are treated like slaves and have been the victim of harassment and psychological torture, which causes an increase in frustration and depression in gay men. The same has shown in the episode that Boo was hell frustrated by society's views about gay men, and thus, he used to kill his frustration by adopting hypersexuality.

Episode 4: Mark

Mark was living with his boyfriend, named Donte. Mark has a good relationship with Donte, but he is also afraid of losing his relationship, which is why he is living on the down low. Both Mark and Donte were setting their home when Mark's cousin Terrell reached home. Mark greeted Terrell and then asked him if he would be living with his girlfriends or with Mark. In response, Terrell said that he would stay with Mark for a few days.

Donte is not comfortable with the presence of Terrell, so he warns Mark that when he is back from work, he does not want Terrell at their home. Mark could not tell Terrell to leave. Instead, he decided to change his room setting so that Terrell would have no idea about his relationship with Donte. After reaching home, Donte found a change in Mark's room. While watching in the room, Donte tries to make Mark understand why he is afraid of facing society and why he prefers to live on the down low rather than an open gay. But Mark replied that he is not scared of facing society. Rather, he is afraid of losing relations and thus cannot tell the world that he is gay.

In the night, Terrell and Donte had a discussion about the relationship with Mark. Terrell asked a different question, but Donte continued to pretend that Mark and he were just roommates. In the night, Terrell pretends that he is sleeping when Mark goes into Donte's room. Terrell immediately woke up and began to trace Mark and secretly watched what Mark was doing in Donte's room. When Mark opened the door, he found that Terrell was outside the room. They all pretend to show that everything is normal, and then all leave for their beds.

The next evening, Mark and all went to a bar where Terrell and his friend had great fun with Mark, which made Donte highly jealous. In the meantime, two ladies came into the club. Terrell encouraged Mark to join those girls. When Mark left for those women, Terrell and Donte had a long discussion in which Terrell told Donte that he was also in a relationship with Mark, and he knew that Mark was gay.

Donte got insecure. After reaching home, Donte asked Mark about his relationship with Terrell. He also asked Terrell to tell the truth and told him to tell whatever he told Donte in the club. Terrell pretended to be innocent and said that he did not know what he was talking about.

During the discussion, Reginald Stokes entered the home and told everyone about his relationship with Terrell. This made the situation funny and full of humour. Mark was hiding that he was gay, but he did not know that Terrell was also gay. Finally, Terrell left home. Mark and Donte started to live together as an open gay. They understand that the only way to win the game is to stop playing, and thus, they have to accept that they are gay men, and society also needs to accept them as who they are.

Analysis:

This episode shows that Black gay men spend their lives hiding their realities just because they are afraid of losing relations. In this episode, Mark and Donte have a homosexual relationship in which both are concerned about each other's happiness and are possessive about each other. Mark is afraid of losing his relations, his mother, and his friend, so he decides to live on the down low. However, Terrell's entry made the episode funny, entertaining, and suspicious. Terrell understood at first sight that Mark and Donte are about each other because he was gay too, but he tried to find the reality humorously.

The episode showed that gay men don't need to live on the Down Low. Rather, they can tell everyone openly that they are gay men, and the people will accept them for what they are. The episode has a theme that it is somewhere not the society which opposes gay men but somewhere gay men themselves are afraid of losing relations. In the end, when Mark announced that he was gay and his mother, friends, and society accepted him as gay then, he became so relaxed and happy and started living as an open gay. This showed that it is not the people who make the lives of gay men difficult; rather, sometimes, they make their lives difficult by their thinking.

According to Bordwell and Thompson's theory, the referential meanings of the episodes are that in

African American society, gay men live together, but they are afraid of losing relations, so they enjoy their secret relationship. The explicit meaning is that gay men don't need to live on the down low. Rather, they can tell the world openly about themselves, and society will accept them for what they are. The implicit meaning is that it is gay men have to stand up for their rights, and they don't need to hide their realities. The symptomatic meaning is that gay men also feel possessiveness for their partners in the same way as the partners in normal relations do.

Link to Historical Antecedents

Mark was afraid of losing his relations, and that is why he preferred to live on the down low. The same situation was discussed in "Brother to Brother" by Essex Hemphill (1991), which is written primarily for the black gay men who face so many social issues regarding their existence as 'Gay.' *This book shows how a black gay man cannot have a normal life and what home is actually for him.* There is no place for gay people on earth, and so their parents do not accept them as what they are and who they are. Their friends do not like them for their existence as gay in society. They cannot express what they feel and what they want to have in their lives. In fact, society takes them as doing sin by loving another male and by which to care for him. Gay men have no place if they do things according to their will. Thus, this book has been written to highlight that there is a high requirement for civil rights for gay men to have a peaceful life in society, and they must be accepted as what they are

Link to the Contemporary Readings

Mark was an African American who was living on the down low. He could not tell his family about his relationship with Donte because he knew that society and his family would not accept him. Reid-Pharr (2001), in his book, also discussed the issues faced by African American gay men. According to him, the gay is the one who cannot tell their identity with confidence because no one accepts them because their identity cannot be possibly summed up by the society. Moreover, when they tell the people about what they are and who they are, then society not only denies their personality but also considers that they are attempting any sin by being gay. The purpose of this publication is to capture black masculinity's complexity, and it expresses the views of black masculinity to show how society has fractured the gays in African American society by not accepting their identities (Scott, 2010). Throughout the literature, Reid-Pharr has provided great original and provocative insights into gay life.

Chapter Five

Discussion

In this study, the major focus was to analyze the television series *DL Chronicles*, which is about the

brothers on the down low. The series consists of a total of four episodes. Each episode presents the story of an African American brother on the down low. In each episode, different circumstances have been discussed. The first episode is about the marital relations of brothers on the down low; the second episode is about the fathers who are living on the down low; the third episode is about the frustrated brothers on the down low who become hypersexual due to social issues, and fourth episode is about the unmarried brothers on the down low who are afraid of society.

From this television series, it becomes apparent that the series wants to convey a message to society that gays must have the right to live a normal life. Hiding their reality and telling a lie to people makes them frustrated and depressed. Moreover, African American gay men have to face so many negative social attitudes which are based on sexual orientation, colour, or culture. African Americans have always been the target of harassment due to their colour and ethnicity, and especially gay men consider that there is no place for them.

This means that in the African American community, there is no place for gay men, and people consider that gay men are useless people who are creating sins in our society and making our culture dirty. This makes people hate gay men, and in fact, the relations leave the males after knowing that they are gay. That is why gay men are always afraid of facing the truth, and so they prefer to develop hidden or secret relationships with other males.

In the four episodes of the series, we analyzed that there exist a different kind of gay men; some have wives, some have daughters, some are single, and some have relationships with other girls and boys. Each story is about a different gay, which shows that gay men face great challenges even if they are married, unmarried, or alone. They are afraid of facing the people and letting them know about their body's reality (Collins, 2004).

When analyzing each episode separately, In episode 1 of the *DL Chronicles*, Wes is unable to satisfy his wife because he is not the man to have sex with a woman. Instead of telling his wife the reality, he preferred to be on the down low because, somewhere, he was guilty of being gay. This episode shows that just because of fear of society, gay men not only give pain to their self but also their wives and families. Thus, there must be social rights for gay men. Society must allow gay men to have a free life and to have a homosexual relationship because it is not their fault that they are gay men, but they are naturally created as gay men.

In the second episode of *DL Chronicles*, the story is about Robert, who is well aware of his reality and having a relationship with Austin. Robert developed a secret relation with Austin because he was afraid of losing his daughter. He thought that his daughter had always considered him a hero, and if she came to know that he was gay, then everything would be destroyed, and she would no longer look at him with respect. But in the end, his daughter understood the pain and reality of her father and allowed him to have a free life as gay. This shows how gay men are afraid of losing their relations in actuality, if they will communicate their situation with their relatives in a clear and straight way, then it is possible that their relatives will accept them for who they are. Hiding anything is not a

solution; rather, facing the realities is the only solution to have a space in society as gay.

In episode 3 of the *DL Chronicles*, Boo is on the down low, and to hide his reality from society, he was having a relationship with so many girls and boys. This episode shows that Boo was profoundly affected by the conversations of society about gay men, and thus, he pretended to be a straight boy, but he was frustrated. This frustration develops hyper-sexuality in Boo. The episode shows that gay men also become criminals or frustrated just because society does not accept them as gay. They become frustrated with society and start finding a place where they can have a free life to achieve their satisfaction level. When they fail to find such a place then, they become hyper and frustrated, and then they adopt anyway; either they start killing people, raping women, having multiple sexual relationships, or attempting other kinds of crime. It is our society which makes them criminals from gay men.

Finally, in the fourth episode, the story is about Mark, who has a secret relationship with his friend Donte, but when his cousin Terrell comes to visit him, he is afraid of letting his family know the reality, and thus he says to Donte to act as his roommate in front of Terrell. This made them realize that living as Down Low is useless. Rather, they need to tell the world that they are gay men and they will live like gay men freely. This shows that until and unless the gay men will not raise their voices, no one is going to listen to their voices. The gay men must stand for their civil rights, and they must not hide their reality from the people. This will make them able to have a peaceful and perfect life as gay men. Although society does not accept them and starts hating them when they show society that they exist and they don't care what others think about them, then directly society will accept them. When they raise their voices, then automatically, the government will develop civil rights for them, and in this way, they will be able to have a happy and healthy life as gay.

Analysis of Research Questions

The research questions for this study are;

- *In what ways are brothers on the DL represented in Black visual culture?*
- *In what ways can the discourse of brothers on the DL in Black visual culture be used to inform and guide curriculum in art education and African American and Diaspora studies?*

Thus, by this research analysis of *DL Chronicles*, it can easily be concluded that in Black Visual Culture, gay men are facing significant social challenges just because society does not accept them as gay men and considers that they are the reason for the sins in the society. Gay men are not allowed to live a free life, and if they expose the world that they are gay men, then they not only become part of society's humour but also lose their relations. Nobody is ready to give them a place in the society.

The African American gay men on down low face great stress and anxiety due to several body challenges. They marry or keep girlfriends to prove their masculinity, but in actuality, they face great

difficulty in satisfying a woman. They cannot achieve peace, and thus, this makes them depressed. Another issue which is faced by gay men is that they understand they are not acceptable to society, which makes them hypersexual, so they love to have sexual relations with multiple people, and they release their stress by keeping hypersexual relations with either girls or boys. In this way, the first question has been answered. However, the answer to the second question is very clear. The brothers on the DL in Black Visual Culture are discussed in this research analysis and the *DL Chronicles* just to make people aware of how gay men in African American society are facing significant social challenges and why it is important to maintain the Civil Rights for the Black gay men. This also helps the students of art and education and African Americans to understand that it is ethically wrong to make boundaries for gay men. They also have the right to live a free life, and thus, they must be allowed to have a free relationship with their partners. They must not be considered sinners. Rather, the people should accept them for who they are. In this way, this research will also be helpful for the readers to understand how difficult life is for Black gay men just because society does not accept them.

Future Recommendations:

In this study, I have analyzed a television series to understand the social challenges faced by Gay men in the African American community. Further research can be done to have an understanding of how psychologically gay men have been affected due to facing social challenges and not being allowed to have open relationships with their male partners. It is recommended that gay men be analyzed and discussed from different perspectives to show society how important it is to give space to gay men in society. There must be Civil Rights for gay men so that they will be allowed to live their lives in the way they want, and nobody will dare to point at gay men. Proper legislation must be maintained for gay men's rights, in which they must be allowed to have a normal life like others.

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