Masculinity in *The Wire*

The representation of masculinity and its intersection with race

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ABSTRACT

There are varied and diverse gender representations in TV today. Over the years as society's attitude towards gender change, the representations of gender have evolved as well. *The Wire* is a quality TV show that is widely regarded as one of the most progressive shows that tackles the issues of race, criminality, and justice in America. The series is one of the most critically acclaimed shows that has been a popular subject of academic inquiry. Furthermore, *The Wire* provides fluid representations of gender in the series through its diverse and numerous characters. However, the series does not suppose fixed positions in terms of gender identity. The series rearticulates fluid identities through the deconstruction of widely employed stereotypes in films and television. Enabling a nuanced understanding of the social factors that affect everyday life. Masculinity by itself, however, has been subject to limited academic attention. Since, masculinity is often studied in comparison to femininity. Moreover, the African American and male dominated cast of the series makes *The Wire* and interesting case for the study concerning the representation of masculinity. Therefore, the research question answered in this study is, *"How is masculinity represented in season 3 of The Wire?"* In order to answer this question intersectionality is used as an analytical tool to study the representation of gender in its intersection with race. With the help of Goffman's codes on gender display in congruence with a thematic analysis of the third season, this study illuminates the racial differences in the representation of masculinity in context to race. The analysis of the third season of *The Wire,* consisting of 12, hour long episodes revealed that African American male identity is expressed through physicality. Furthermore, a few of Goffman's gender displays that are utilized to represent femininity are utilized in *The Wire* to represent masculinity without any insinuations of inferiority. Calling into question the relevance of those displays in a contemporary context. *The Wire* through its portrayals of masculinity abstains from reifying stereotypes that are widely employed in visual media by contextualizing these stereotypes in a social, economic, and political context. Furthermore, the series represents masculinity through a heteronormative lens.

KEYWORDS: Masculinity, Race, Intersectionality, Goffman, *The Wire*

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1. Introduction

After videos of George Floyd's death, an African American male, at the hands of Minneapolis police officers went viral, America is seeing the Black Lives Matter movement taking center stage with renewed vigor (Chotiner, 2020; Wortham, 2020). Cofounder of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, Alicia Garza, claims that numerous mass protests in support of BLM all around America is due to Americans finally recognizing the validity of the movement, that is to challenge the systemic injustice caused by racial biases (Wortham, 2020). From social media movements to mass street protests, the BLM movement has received support from many parts of the world (Rahim & Picheta, 2020; Wortham, 2020). A phrase first coined in 2013, BLM, is a seven-year-old social reform movement highlighting the issues of race and the relational systemic racial injustices prevalent in American society (Chotiner, 2020; Wortham, 2020). Furthermore, mass street protests in a time warranting social distancing due to the Covid-19 pandemic signifies the urgency of the BLM movement (Wortham, 2020). However, this movement has been largely publicized by the police brutality faced by black men in America, even though the implications of this police brutality has not been limited to black men alone (Carrega, 2020; Thompson, 2020; Wortham, 2020). Black women and transgender people have been victims of police violence as well (Carrega, 2020; Thompson, 2020). Race, gender, and sexual orientation have long been used to distinguish and organize human relations (De Kosnik & Feldman, 2019). The practice of narrowcasting in the US television industry, based on the above-mentioned categories showcases one of the implications of these systems of distinction (Kuipers, 2011). Numerous sociologists have given credence to the claim that gender roles or norms are socially constructed, thus, dynamic (Moss, 2011; Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015; Croteau & Hoynes, 2017; Eagly, 2018). This ontological standpoint helps put human behavior in context rather than just considering it a result of human biology (Goffman, 1979). However, one may wonder how gender conventions came into being and it can be pointed out that satisfying biological and evolutionary primal needs are at the heart of these acts of communication (Goffman, 1979).

Just like Dyer (1997) argues that whiteness is visible in its invisibility, Krijnen and Van Bauwel (2015) argue that masculinity is omnipresent. Although masculinity is omnipresent, the standard masculinity that men must aspire to that is hegemonic masculinity, remains unquestioned (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). Hegemonic masculinity is

the most dominant perception of standards that define masculinity (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). It ideologically legitimates the domination of men over women (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). However, hegemonic masculinity is historically, culturally, and geographically specific (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). The original concept of hegemonic masculinity is characterized by Western ideals of masculinity which were white, middle-class, middle-aged, and heterosexual men (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). But Western discourse on gender is not always applicable when transported to other geographic regions. Although western conceptions of gender are perceived as favorable, regional conceptions of gender identity are equally important, suggesting the multiplicity in the forms of hegemonic masculinity (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). Hegemonic masculinity is not the most prevalent form of masculinity but the model of masculinity that is most desirable in a certain society (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). However, representations of hegemonic masculinity have been a subject of limited academic research. Often gender studies are conflated with women's studies. Information on representation of masculinity is often derived from studies discussing the representation of women and femininity (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). Moreover, research on masculinity primarily focuses on masculinity deemed 'abnormal' or on differences between masculinity and femininity (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). While alternate forms of masculinity have been a topic of inquiry and analysis, representation of hegemonic masculinity remains unchallenged and warrants investigation (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). This paper aims to contribute to this field of representation by analyzing how masculinity, in intersection with race, is represented in TV series, and in particular *The Wire*.

Even though gender dynamics in society have changed a great deal over the years, gender representations continue to reflect power differences between genders (Kuipers, Laan & Arfini, 2017). Furthermore, gender is understood along with factors such as class, race, sexuality, since, these factors help in shaping gender identity and are relational (Gill, 2009). For instance, sexualization of gender in the visual economy is influenced by age, race, and class (Gill, 2009; Kuipers, Laan & Arfini, 2017). In advertisements, for example, older women are never represented as sexy, the midriff is emphasized exclusively for Caucasian women to sexualize their bodies, and African American men's bodies are represented as erotic and associated with sports. Furthermore, advertisements representing black men always make use of celebrities (Gill, 2009). This understanding of

gender in relation to other power dynamics is called 'intersectionality'. Intersectionality makes the multi-faceted and complex positioning of gender identity visible. It also emphasizes that social dimensions, such as gender cannot be isolated into exact segments for examination (Connell, 2005; Gill, 2009; Das Nair & Butler, 2012; Kuipers, Laan & Arfini, 2017). Social life is shaped by a variety of factors all interdependent of each other and equal in their influence on people's lives (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Collins and Bilge (2016) suggest that Intersectionality is a tool that helps one understand the nuances in society and thus the lives of people therein. Intersectionality has been useful in many ways. It has helped universities build inclusive environments to ensure no student faces any institutional discrimination (Collins & Bilge, 2016). It also helped in restructuring, civil rights or equal rights movements to address the additional discrimination being faced by women and minorities alike. Collins and Bilge (2016) point out that intersectionality is neither novel nor a location specific phenomenon by citing the example of Savitribai Phule, an Indian activist from the nineteenth century (1831-1897). Credited with starting the first girls' school in India (Collins & Bilge, 2016), her work on anti-caste ideology and women's rights has inspired many contemporary social movements today, like the Kabir Kala Manch (Dam, 2020). Phule tackled multiple axes of social division influencing socio-economic life of individuals such as caste and sexual discrimination, women empowerment, etcetera (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Savitribai's activism has transcended into Indian politics so much so that the Constitution of India drafted by Dr. BR Ambedkar has her philosophies of intersectionality ingrained into it (Haq, 2013). The above-mentioned instances prove that Intersectionality can be used as an analytical tool to address a multitude of issues in society (Collins & Bilge, 2016). This makes an intersectional approach towards gender essential for the purpose of understanding masculinity in a social context.

Intersectionality is essential in understanding how factors of social division such as race, class, sex lead to social inequality. Not everyone benefits or is disadvantaged proportionately due to the above-mentioned factors. Therefore, intersectionality helps understand the behavior of the disenfranchised by focusing on their daily lives and experiences (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Children, teenagers, and young adults are the first to recognize social inequalities prevalent in society. They know that race, class, and gender categories deprive some people of benefits enjoyed by others because age is a persistent intersection that influences all those categories (Collins & Bilge, 2016). They recognize

through class or economic prosperity, institutional drawbacks such as different neighborhoods experiencing different levels of policing, or access to education, and educational facilities. In their intersection with race and gender they recognize the economic and social disadvantages of available job opportunities. Proving that any examination of social life requires an intersectional analysis to truly capture the intricacies of society and its power structures (Das Nair & Butler, 2012; Collins & Bilge, 2016).

Similar to gender conventions, race is seen as socially constructed as well. From historic depictions in paintings to representations in films, media are filled with connotations of racial identity, be it the symbolic or manifest (Dyer, 1997). The ideas of white as good and pure, and black as evil or undesirable have permeated in society to such an extent that it is impossible to define white without defining black. This distinction through the means of color, specifically, skin color has become one of the most important factors in creating and developing one's racial identity (Dyer, 1997). Racial identities are shaped and grounded in discourse around Whiteness and Blackness (Fraley, 2009). Whiteness, historically, has largely been associated with beauty. This also applies to non-white people, where lighter skin is considered more beautiful than darker skin (Dyer, 1997). For example, from the most popular African American stars in film and music, all the women had lighter skin and men had facial features that were seen as Caucasian (Dyer, 1997). However, ideals about beauty are not fixed, and change over time as more nuanced and diverse representations enter the field of news and entertainment. Especially, representations that challenge heteronormative ideals on gender in media help in the reconstructing and renegotiating gender identities (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). Representations in popular culture, thus, become an important discursive resource that helps communicate and understand racial and gendered identities (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). These representations either conform or resist binary or heteronormative ideals in society. Furthermore, Robbie (2009) argues that representations mirror the mindset of the majority in society.

All media products are socially important, since they are the arena where meanings are communicated, interpreted, and negotiated (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015; Croteau & Hoynes, 2017). These products convey important socio-political commentary which is often reflective of the time that it was made in (Croteau & Hoynes, 2017). In terms of viewing experience, the viewer and their sense of self cannot be isolated. The visual imagery is not

just being watched but at the same time also being comprehended indicating a complex cognitive function (Oxenhandlerand Sobchack, 1993). Furthermore, it is argued that audiences view fiction as rooted in reality (Mar & Oatley, 2008). Fictional narratives simulate social experiences and provide knowledge for navigating society. Narratives also allow readers to experience situations which would rarely be possible to experience first-hand (Mar & Oatley, 2008; Krijnen & Verboord, 2016). Moreover, fictional stories are considered to be persuasive modes of instruction for social understanding (Mar & Oatley, 2008). TV specifically is also widely considered to impart moral values to its audiences (Krijnen & Verboord, 2016). Arguably, TV, film and magazines are the first to gather these fluid gender identities that develop as they cater to a rapidly diversifying audience (Moss, 2011). They are filled with changing narratives of masculine identity. These representations work more towards legitimizing these identities than a simple reflection of these renegotiated identities in society (Beynon, 2002). At the same time, popular media have the ability to contest these identities as well (Dhaenens & Van Bauwel, 2012). Thus, potentially challenging the prevalent discourse of hegemonic masculinity. However, oftentimes dramatization of media programs leads to digression from complex structural issues (Fraley, 2009).

Collins and Bilge (2016) argue that live events on media serve a political purpose alongside its entertainment purpose. The same could be applied to quality television. For instance, with the commodification of televisions in 1958, live broadcasts of Civil Rights protests in America in the 60's were some of the first instances of black resistance on live television (Tyler, 2008). They were representative of the social realities faced by African Americans and also the direction in which racial discourse in American society as a whole was progressing. Similarly, quality TV deals with complex contemporary issues of race, sexuality, etcetera that are prevalent in society and functions as an important discursive tool providing cultural information (Dhoest, 2014). It is argued that quality TV, as opposed to regular TV, is complex, has multiple storylines, and a large number of prominent characters (DeClue, 2011). It also explores controversial subjects and is realistic in their portrayals. Quality TV shows are often associated with highbrow culture akin to art films (Thompson, 1997). Quality TV is thought provoking, illuminating and explores nuances that are mimetic of lived realities (Thompson, 1997), similar to auteur cinema (Imre, 2009). Quality TV is writer centric and through its complex narrative and high-end production

aesthetic quality TV juxtaposes perceived reality with its constructed one (Thompson, 1997; Imre, 2009). Quality TV series were some of the first to explore subject matters of sexuality and race, thus, setting a precedent in television programming (Thompson, 1997). They are also characterized by ensemble casts navigating through multiple storylines, offering diverse perspectives. Interestingly, *The Wire* is one such TV series. Moreover, *The Wire* is one of the first few shows that is diverse in its representation of race, gender, and sexuality (DeClue, 2011; Dhaenens & Van Bauwel, 2012). At the same time, not all shows with higher production value are considered quality TV, rarely is *Sex and the City* spoken about in the same manner as *The Sopranos*. Leading some to argue that the traditional notions of TV as a gendered medium and by extension, quality TV, still apply (Imre, 2009). Even with all its transgressions from regular TV, by virtue of the medium, quality TV exists in the realm of entertainment.

As mentioned earlier, one popular quality TV show that has been lauded for its representation of gendered racial identities is the TV show, *The Wire* (DeClue, 2011; Dhaenens & Van Bauwel, 2012). The authenticity of *The Wire*, and its intelligible discourse lay bare the institutional problems in society making it a scathing critique of real life (Dhaenens & Van Bauwel, 2012). This praxis of the subjugation of African Americans through the criminal justice system is evident in most crime shows we see today. Often dehumanizing black men and making them victims of their own undoing (Anderson, 2009). *The Wire*, thus, finds itself in a precarious position that operates within the confines of this supposed reality. While other shows shy away from the intersectional representations of social life, *The Wire*, posits its complexities and offers different perspectives without enforcing any fixed positions on its social commentary (Fuggle, 2009). *The Wire* acknowledges the inherent inequalities which manifest through the various indignations of its characters and their subject positions (Anderson, 2009). Therefore, making it an interesting series for examination of masculinity and its interplay with race and sexuality. *The Wire* is largely about the institutional failures of the political, media, education, and justice systems in solving problems of poverty, crime, and corruption (DeClue, 2011; Waldron & Chambers, 2012; Lopez & Bucholtz, 2017). It is lauded as one of the best TV shows to have aired on television but has surprisingly not won any Emmy awards (Rushek, 2019). Furthermore, *The Wire* has a predominantly male and African American cast making

the series an important and interesting subject of inquiry on race and gender (Waldron & Chambers, 2012).

The Wire is different from its previous counterparts in its portrayal of African Americans. If previous portrayals of race have been in the binary, such as, good vs evil, *The Wire* rejects that notion (Rushek, 2019). Questioning the construction of criminality and race. *The Wire*'s subversive portrayal of society challenges the stereotypes typically traditionally seen on television. It does not fetishize non-heteronormative relationships presenting nuances without divulging in binary rhetoric (Robbie, 2009). Not only hegemonic models of masculinity but also racial and gender stereotypes are recognized and challenged to highlight the complexities and inherent correlation between the different intersections of gender, race, and sexuality (Fraley, 2009). *The Wire* in its representation of institutional and individual failure shines the spotlight on the complicated relationship between structure and agency (Fraley, 2009). The series represents society's idea of racial stereotypes and vehemently resists them at the same time. Past representations of race, in this case African Americans, have often been associated with criminality without questioning the ideology that leads to that conclusion (Grey, 1989; Fraley, 2009). Leading to biased or one-sided positions in the hegemonic matrix of power and identity. *The Wire* questions the tenets of these racial prejudices and their interplay with gender and sexuality (Fraley, 2009). Where previous shows like *Julia* and *The Cosby Show* failed to represent the realisms of African Americans (Bodroghkozy, 1992), *The Wire* succeeds through its authentic navigation of crime, justice, and structural socio-economic realities (Fraley, 2009). *The Wire* blurs the boundaries of previously understood racial codes and provides vital context to interpret stereotypes prevalent in present discourse (Fraley, 2009). Therefore, the series' social importance is compounded by its gender representations and their intersections with race and sexuality which poses the question,

RQ: *"How is masculinity represented in season 3 of The Wire?"*

To address the intersections of masculinity with race one sub questions is raised:

Sub RQ: *"How is masculinity represented in its intersection with race in season 3 of The Wire?"*

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These questions will be answered by a qualitative content analysis that will be explained in the method section. However, before discussing the research design, some concepts will be fleshed out in the theoretical framework. First, the notion of gender will be discussed. Gender with a focus on masculinity in particular is elaborated upon. Second, the concept of representation and how mediated representations of gender give us insights into the power dynamics in society is discussed. The power dynamics in relation to gender are discussed with the help of Goffman's (1979) work on gender display. Third, the notion of black masculinity in contention with the stereotypes utilized in the representation of race in visual media are discussed. Next, the methodology section entails all the decisions taken in order to conduct the research. Steps taken for the Goffmanian analysis and the thematic analysis to maintain reliability and validity of the research are elaborated upon in the methods section. Furthermore, the systematic procedure by which the research was conducted is discussed in the methods section as well. Following the methodology section, the results of the qualitative content analyses are discussed in the results section. The results from the Goffmanian analysis are elaborated upon first and then the results of the thematic analysis. The results section is then concluded with a synthesis of the results of both the analyses giving us insights into how race and gender are represented on *The Wire* in contention with what they reveal about the power dynamics inherent in the series. Finally, in the conclusion section the research question and sub-question are answered in relation to the results of the analyses. Furthermore, the limitations of this study and the future directions that could be taken in terms of research on gender and *The Wire* are also discussed in the conclusion section.

2. Theoretical framework

In this section, the concept of gender is explained. Specifically, the construction of gender in terms of race is elaborated upon. Next the notions of masculinity and hegemonic masculinity are explained progressing to the concept of representation and how they define gender relations. Particularly, through Goffman's (1979) framework of gender display and the implications of those displays in everyday life. Finally, mediated representations of masculinity, particularly, black masculinity are discussed, and the stereotypes employed in the representation of race in contemporary cinema.

2.1. Gender

To understand gender, one must forgo the notion of human anatomy as the only factor influencing human behavior (Bucholtz, 1999; Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). Sex is merely a biological feature but gender, however, is a socially constructed concept meant for the classification of behavior, characteristics, and attributes (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). A social constructivist approach makes biological determinism, which emphasizes biology as the source of gender behavior, a redundant approach for gender studies (Bucholtz, 1999; Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). Bucholtz (1999) suggests that the term social gender would be a more accurate description for gender. Furthermore, Bucholtz (1999) argues that "grammatical gender" in a linguistic sense does not coincide with "natural" gender and these classifications in linguistics are not fixed but are indexical (Bucholtz, 1999). Language itself does not provide information about gender through its gendered lexicon but through the repeated use and association of this vocabulary to position oneself on the gender continuum (Bucholtz, 1999). For instance, the German word *Fraulein,* a grammatically neutral term, has come to mean young woman by its repeated association with young women (Bucholtz, 1999). De Saussure believed that the semantics of language enables one to communicate because they use the same rules and conventions agreed upon by others (Hall & Nixon, 2013; Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). Words or images do not produce meaning by themselves, we require discursive resources such as language, cultural codes, etcetera to create meaning. Furthermore, De Saussure argues that words or signs produce meaning when they are structured in relation to its opposite, also known as 'a system of differences' (Hall & Nixon, 2013). This approach, however, assumes differences in a limited and binary sense. White and black are starkly different but they can be

understood in relation to many colors such as grey, off-white, etcetera (Hall & Nixon, 2013). Moreover, meaning is created through verbal exchange with another emphasizing the importance of 'shared meaning' in discourse. It also underlines the role of the reader or audience as active, where interaction aids interpretation (Hall & Nixon, 2013).

Although meaning making is complex, De Saussure's approach is essential in understanding the Othering done through the way of language, and media representations. Othering is the process of creating an identity to represent a group of people in a binary and oppositional sense to establish differences from the "Us" (Said, 1995). This identity creation emphasizes the influence of power relations in identity building (Said, 1995). For instance, Said (1995) argues that the "Occidents" construction of the "Orient" is based on the Occidents' perceptions, projections, and impressions about the "Orient" and much less on empirical evidence. Furthermore, the Occidents' position in the power matrix becomes clear by their ability to define the Orient and not the other way around (Said, 1995). The Orient has no agency in the process. Moreover, by defining the Orient, the Occident defines themselves as well but through a system of differences unlike the manner in which the Orient is constructed (Said, 1995; Hall & Nixon, 2013). Therefore, the Other is always being constructed, interpreted, and re-interpreted whereas the "Us" is subject to far less scrutiny. Furthermore, Othering is a dynamic process that requires historical, social, intellectual, and political context (Said, 1995). Thus, differences with the Other in the form of comprehension and interpretation are crucial to the meaning making process (Hall & Nixon, 2013).

In this study a constructionist approach with regards to gender is taken. Since, a thorough understanding of gender requires a careful analysis of the lives of a diverse group of people (Madden & Hyde 1998). Moreover, these diverse groups of people define their identities through their experiences and different positions in society. For this research gender representations are analyzed in their intersectionality with race and sexuality. Furthermore, concepts such as gender, race, sexuality should be understood in relation to each other and not in isolation (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). As discussed in the introduction, this is known as intersectionality. Crenshaw (1989) argues that an analysis of gender without considering its intersectionality with race does not provide a nuanced or comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted concept of gender. Furthermore, ignoring intersectionalities of gender, race and sexuality is rooted in discrimination and

marginalizes those that cannot place themselves on a single-axis paradigm (Crenshaw, 1989). For instance, the analysis of masculinity in South African TV advertisements would be unreliable if masculinity was not examined with its intersectionality with race (Luyt, 2011), as the representation of race is also reflective of the social inequalities within the country (Luyt, 2011). Moreover, race has been constructed in its distinction between white and black or its distinction between the East and the West (Said, 1995; Dyer, 1997). Black masculinity is often represented in relation to the Other and this Other is usually represented as undesirable and bad (Said, 1995; Dyer, 1997; Khatib, 2006). Like in the case of Jewish people, who were considered black in Nazi Germany and their Germanness was questioned (Dyer, 1997), or in Hollywood's depiction of Islamic fundamentalism depicting Arab countries as evil (Khatib, 2006), or in the West's construction of the Orient (Said, 1995). Therefore, to analyze the representation of masculinity in *The Wire,* masculinity must be understood in its intersectionality with race. Since, *The Wire* has a predominantly African American cast (Waldron & Chambers, 2012). Furthermore, a thorough examination of the representation of masculinity requires a careful analysis of the multiple models of masculinity situated in relation to the hegemonic models of masculinity. Since, hegemonic masculinity also helps in the construction and renegotiation of varied forms of masculinity (Banjoko, 2011; Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015).

2.1.1. Masculinity

This study is concerned with the representation of masculinity in *The Wire*, therefore this study focuses on masculinity and not gender in general. Varied forms of masculinity can and do exist in the media (Moss, 2011). The traditional models of hegemonic masculinity are constantly being challenged as people's perspectives about gender evolve. Hegemonic masculinity is "the dominant understanding of what 'normal' masculinity is in a certain society." (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015, p.179). The traditional perception of hegemonic masculinity is defined by Western ideals of masculinity in relation to race, class, and sexuality (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). Hegemonic masculinity was characterized by its Whiteness and heterosexuality (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). However, hegemonic masculinity is now understood as the most influential form of masculinity that is dominant and defines masculine ideals that one must aspire to in society (Banjoko, 2011). Luyt (2011) argues that hegemonic masculinity is the 'configuration of gender

practice' that maintains dominance over women and other men of lower social standing. Furthermore, Krijnen and Van Bauwel (2015) argue that hegemonic masculinity is the 'most wanted' type of masculinity. However, it can be argued that the traditional models of masculinity are fixed and do not leave room for multiple or diverse perspectives (Moss, 2011). Additionally, the traditional models of hegemonic masculinity are represented by their physicality, aggression, and violence (Banjoko, 2011). However, masculinity is constantly negotiated and historical perceptions about masculinity still influence contemporary attitudes in society. Moss (2011) describes various masculine archetypes such as the cowboy, the adventurer, the big game hunter, etcetera that exist in discourse and maintaining aggression is often considered a natural characteristic for men. For instance, vanity was considered a feminine attribute and was reserved for "women or gay men", however, Moss (2011) argues that this is not the case anymore. Like mentioned earlier, meaning stems from differences but these differences can often be binary and extreme (Hall and Nixon, 2013). With a focus on binary differences there is a danger of the oversimplification of the multiplicity of masculinities because it implies that meaning can be fixed. Therefore, for this study, it is important to consider gender, particularly masculinity, as a continuum (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015).

The long held dogmatic perspective of a hegemonic white male as a benchmark for defining masculine behavior has often been used to discriminate amongst people of different sexes, race and sexuality (Madden & Hyde 1998). The term hegemonic masculinity suggests that there are many forms of masculinity and not all of them are equal (Beasley, 2008). Hegemonic masculinity is defined by characteristics such as authoritativeness, competitiveness, boldness, and emotional detachment (Moss, 2011). Furthermore, hegemonic masculinity does not necessarily imply that it is a singular or fixed form of masculinity, there may be multiple types of hegemonic masculinity as well (Beasley, 2008). For instance, in the media clothes such as suits are no longer associated with the dominant forms of hegemonic masculinity and a variety of clothing options and cosmetic products are utilized in the portrayal of masculinity such as coats and cologne (Moss, 2011). However, models of masculinity prevalent in advertising do hold a position of authority over other masculinities and have always been socially and historically dominant forms of masculinity (Beasley, 2008). Hegemonic portrayals of masculinity have dominated

the media landscape and they are the standard that boys and men aspire to achieve (Gill, 2007; Moss, 2011).

Not only advertising defines what counts as hegemonic masculinity in society, movies and TV series function alike. Movies contribute substantially to construction of gender identity as well, especially Hollywood movies (Sexton, 2017). Sexton (2017) suggests that the leading man or the protagonist in Hollywood movies is the premier site for the cultural production of the meanings of race and masculinity. For instance, Moss (2011) claims that models of masculinity are influenced by film culture and actors such as James Dean, Harrison Ford, Clint Eastwood and many more have all been immortalized in popular culture for their performances in a variety of male roles in film. Therefore, a focus on how masculinity is represented in visual media is essential in understanding perceptions about gender and how they contribute to the discourse on gender identity (Gill, 2007; Moss, 2011).

2.2. Representation

Representation has two meanings; one is the frequency of appearance in the media and the second is the implications of the meaning and ideas associated with gender and how they are created by society over time (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). Gender does not only signify biological differences but also the social expectations bound with those differences, that have been constructed and co-constructed by society and our mental maps (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015; Eagly, 2018). Many scholars have studied mediated representations of gender over the years (Coltrane & Adams, 1997; Kang, 1997; Rettie, 2009; Baumann & De Laat, 2012; Kuipers, Van der Laan & Arfini, 2017). Moreover, often the framework developed by Erving Goffman in 1979 for studying gender representations is utilized, as it still provides a strong foundation for understanding human behavior and its construction.

2.2.1 Goffman's gender display

Ethologically, displays are acts of communication that are easily understandable by an observer (Goffman, 1979). Humans comprehend them by drawing upon common knowledge, or the discursive resources which are utilized in constructing the meaning of that display (Goffman, 1979). Displays are essentially used to communicate one's position

in the power matrix in a social situation, and cues on what is to be expected in social interactions from all individuals involved in that social situation. In relation to human behavior and appearances, displays convey social identity, intentions, and their relation to those who witness these displays (Goffman, 1979). However, displays are culturally distinctive and specifically nuanced so as to serve their intended function of communicating effectively. Displays have multiple meanings, are highly contextual, and are omnipresent (Goffman, 1979). For instance, a chef's kiss is used to mean multiple things but the context in which the display is used confirms the displays' meaning. In the context of food, it would denote taste. In the context of art, it could denote satisfaction, and so on. The display is used as a sign of appreciation in a multitude of contexts. Displays also imply a sense of personal interaction with the people that witness these displays. However, this personal interaction is largely absent in displays seen in mass media (Belknap & Leonard, 1991). Therefore, how displays are choreographed to convey a message becomes a vital source of how gender, among other things, is recursively defined by media products. Media play an important role as a socializing agent and an analysis of these displays is essential in understanding gender since they find themselves in language, social interactions, and visual mediums of communication as well (Goffman, 1979; Belknap & Leonard, 1991). Erving Goffman provides us insights into the daily lives, the taken for granted, and the familiar aspects of social life (Jacobsen, 2010). He has explored the fairly obvious in such detail that it seems unfamiliar, thus, providing a meticulous account of the different facets of human psychology and society as a whole (Jacobsen, 2010).

Through Goffman's (1979) work on gender display, we can analyze how non-verbal signs convey ideas about power and authority. Through his observations and analyses on size, posture, touch, in magazine advertisements, he laid bare the micro-politics of everyday life and gender relations in general (Jacobsen, 2010; Kohrs & Gill, 2018). He noticed patterns within these advertisements in their portrayal of gender and gender dynamics. Men were shown as dominant, authoritative and women as subservient, unassertive. He argued that these representations give us context on cultural and societal ideals about gender (Goffman, 1979; Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Kohrs & Gill, 2018). Representations in advertisements are an important bellwether for cultural norms about gender and sexuality in society (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015; Kuipers, Van der Laan & Arfini, 2017). Goffman (1979) argues that in social situations individuals are always performing to

communicate cultural cues to express their gender and position to those around them. These cues are complex and rely on multiple factors such as pre-established knowledge, situational context, etcetera. How then must marketeers convey these detailed and highly contextual behaviors through a static picture someone might see for seconds? Through the hyper-ritualization or exaggerations of these behaviors into stylized and easily readable messages (Goffman, 1979; Kohrs & Gill, 2018). Similarly, other visual media like print advertisements provide a vast inventory of illustrations where gender is performed, since gender is also shaped by advertisements and advertisements are deeply entwined with social existence (Kohrs & Gill, 2018). But in a time of saturated media content, illustrations of gender display become even more aggressive in their stylizations.

Individuals find gender representations in a plethora of media products, however, on television they are ever-present (Allan & Coltrane, 1996). Some argue that one of the purposes of television programming is to gather individuals to view commercials, simply put, television programs provide a backdrop to consumer brands to display their products (Allan & Coltrane, 1996). Furthermore, it is argued that gender depictions in television shows corroborate with the ones in television commercials. Thus, observing shifts on television helps us understand the changing meaning of gender, since television cultivates and propagates common viewpoints (Allan & Coltrane, 1996). However, despite the growing diversity in the characters written for television, there is an unfair representation of gender in media (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015).

Goffman (1979) argues that individuals are agents that perform gender according to social situations (Johnson, 2009). Thus, one's identity and invariably gender are co-constructed through these interactions (Goffman, 1979; Johnson, 2009). These displays are perceived as natural but are actually dictated by the environment (Wallis, 2011). Although these displays are subtle and go unnoticed, they are encoded with power relations (Goffman, 1979; Wallis, 2011; Kuipers, van der Laan & Arfini, 2017). For instance, in media, a prolonged gaze or certain hand gestures are associated with dominance and power and are mostly exhibited by men. Whereas touching oneself is associated with subordination and exhibited by women (Wallis, 2011). In *Gender Advertisements,* Goffman (1979) classified nonverbal displays in six categories: a) Relative size, b) Feminine touch, c) Function ranking, d) The family, e) The ritualization of subordination, and f) Licensed withdrawal.

Firstly, relative size where size is represented as an assertion of authority in height and width. Usually men were displayed as taller than women but if they were not, the men were seen performing a subordinate role or were from a different social class. In other words, women were shown only as dominant as subordinate males. Even in advertisements with only men, the dominant male was shown as taller and usually directed his subordinates who were displayed as shorter, in lower positions such as being seated, from a different social class, or performing passive roles (Goffman, 1979).

Secondly, the category of the feminine touch included instances where there were noticeable differences in the ways men and women were seen using their hands, particularly fingers. Men were shown to have a more purposeful touch while women were seen to be barely touching, caressing an object, or touching themselves. This is further illustrated through the example of shower gel commercials, where men are seen lathering up with random hand movements and women are shown making circular motions on their shoulders (Kohrs & Gill, 2018). Indicating the fragility of women as compared to men and their need for protection (Goffman, 1979).

Thirdly, function ranking where in social situations one is likely seen performing the role of the executor or active roles and the other is seen simply following instructions. Usually men are displayed performing these executive roles and women are not. Furthermore, Goffman (1979) argues this category likens women to children as though they are still learning and need to be taken care of. This display represents women as subordinate individuals who need to be directed since they lack the skills in directing themselves.

Fourthly, the family category shows how women were often represented in a family setting (Kuipers, van der Laan & Arfini, 2017). Women were presented to be similar to their daughters and vice versa but this was not the case with men and their sons (Goffman, 1979). As though a girl just has to grow up to be a woman, but a boy needs to break through his immature mould to become a man. This further likens women to children who need guidance from authority figures.

Fifthly, the ritualization of subordination, Goffman observed that erect postures were a sign of superiority and body canting, or body clowning were signs of submission. Women and children were often shown on floors and beds whereas men were not (Goffman, 1979; Wallis, 2011).

Finally, the sixth category is licensed withdrawal, where one is shown psychologically removed from the imagery, or never directly looking at the camera, or being unable to control emotions. Goffman (1979) observed that women were shown performing these displays showcasing them as fragile and in need of protection (Wallis, 2011). While relative size, functional ranking and family are relational, the other three are individual behaviors (Kuipers, van der Laan & Arfini, 2017). Although these categories are not mutually exhaustive they remain pertinent in gender studies, evident through the multiple studies conducted on representation of gender in media (Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Coltrane & Adams, 1997; Kang, 1997; Rettie, 2009; Wallis, 2011; Baumann & De Laat, 2012; Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015; Kuipers, Van der Laan & Arfini, 2017; Kohrs & Gill, 2018).

Although Goffman's postulations about gender display remain a fundamental basis for studying gender, these gender displays were defined at a time when very limited language existed about this subject. However, society has changed, and numerous academics have invested their time in studying gender in print and video since. There are conceivable differences in the relevance of certain gender displays over others. One such study conducted by Wallis (2011) on gender in music videos finds that stereotypical representations of gender in their displays of feminine touch were similar to those observed by Goffman (1979) but not in their displays of the ritualization of subordination. Furthermore, Allan and Coltrane (1996) claim that television commercials have gradually started including diverse representations of women and leading female characters display non-stereotypical behaviors but there are increasing stereotypical displays of men. However, most research is conducted in an American context, calling into question the cultural differences in gender display. For example, Korean girl's magazines portrayed men in a manner which would be considered feminine according to American conventions (Kuipers, van der Laan & Arfini, 2017). Therefore, gender displays must be understood historically and geographically. Furthermore, an analysis of contemporary forms of masculinity is important in understanding the dynamism of gender identities and facilitates a nuanced perspective on the use of gender display in the creation and representation of gender identity.

Next to the dated-ness of Goffman's study, the focus on Caucasian individuals is another limitation of Goffman's postulations of gender displays. Goffman's (1979) analysis

consisted of adverts which majorly featured Caucasian individuals, which meant that observations were applicable largely to North America's Caucasian population. Merely one percent of the advertisements consisted of people of color (Goffman, 1979). In general, people of color such as African Americans were under-represented and unequally represented in magazine advertisements (McLaughlin & Goulet, 1999). McLaughlin and Goulet (1999) observed that black women were mostly shown from a distance and the women in African American families were shown as more dominant akin to men in Caucasian families, further reinforcing the black matriarchal cultural stereotype. Goffman's (1979) displays take on different meanings when applied through the lens of race, suggesting gender and race are used by marketers as a means to convey messages in media (McLaughlin & Goulet, 1999). Hence, an analysis of the representation of masculinity through Goffman's (1979) gender displays is essential in identifying how power relations play a role in representing race. Furthermore, an analysis of mediated representations of masculinity and black masculinity helps in understanding the intersectionality of masculinity.

2.3. Black masculinity

This section aims to explain the construction of black identity in the media. Particularly, the representation of African Americans in film and television and the stereotypes prevalent in those representations. Consisting of a predominantly black cast, a careful analysis of the representation of masculinity in *The Wire,* requires an exploration and analysis of mediated representations of masculinity in visual media. Specifically, representations of masculinity in its intersection with race, in this case black masculinity.

Citing the example of a Common song featuring The Last Poets, *The Corner*, Peterson (2009) suggests street corners are one of the places where black masculinity is articulated and performed. The corner refers to the inner-city street corners where boys and men are exposed to the hyper violent underbelly of society (Peterson, 2009). The corner also serves as a metaphor for the complex intersections of diverse male identities that converge at the proverbial "corners" (Peterson, 2009). Masculinity is socially constructed through educational and social practices that regulate and define social norms. These practices also help in reinforcing dominant social expectations in times of uncertainty (Peterson, 2009). *The Wire,* set in Baltimore, gives us a peek into the lives of

adolescents and youth indoctrinated into a life of drug dealing and gun violence, competing for street corners to do their business. This is often referred to in the show as "the game". However, masculinity is not monolithic, and the street corners in *The Wire* symbolize the intersections where black masculinities are deconstructed and reconstructed under the backdrop of urban city life (Peterson, 2009). Inner city youth, while exposed to riches of capitalism through media, find themselves with a dearth of economic opportunities to realize their capitalistic desires (Peterson, 2009). To deprived African American males, masculinity is directly associated with economic prosperity. Unemployment, poverty, etcetera provide ample opportunities for those working in underground economies to seek recruits. Socio-economic factors that construct black masculinity in the form of structural and institutional problems such as poor education facilities, dilapidated neighborhoods, and the resultant violence within the community, make the deconstruction of the notions of monolithic and stereotypical black identity difficult (Peterson, 2009). Similarly, media representations of black masculinity tend to focus on rigid hegemonic constructions of black masculinity as well. However, Peterson (2009) argues that *The Wire* provides a diverse range of African American male existence.

Neal (2005) argues that representation of African American male identity is constantly changing in the media. Black male existence has been labelled discursively as a contaminant, an outlier (Jackson, 2006). Black masculinity represents a mixture of all the insecurities of the American society and is filled with presumptuous stereotypes that barely convey the reality of a black man's life (Neal, 2005; Jackson, 2006). For instance, the blackface employed by white minstrel performers in the beginning of the twentieth century mocked aspirations of African American men and significantly emphasized the absence of authoritative male figures in black families in their performances to present them as inferior (Neal, 2005). Similarly, Hollywood films and television shows regularly employ the use of stereotypes to represent African Americans, which are elaborated upon below. Stereotypes are notions or ideas about attributes and behaviors of a certain group of people (Hilton & Von Hippel, 1996). Stereotypes serve a variety of purposes and are context dependent, one of their purposes is to make the processing of information easier for the reader by relying on pre-existing knowledge (Hilton & Von Hippel, 1996). Stereotypes are created due to factors such as differences in social order among people, as a response to justify existing notions, or to articulate a social identity (Hilton & Von Hippel,

1996). Similar to the process of Othering as mentioned in the earlier section on gender (Said, 1995; Dyer, 1997; Khatib, 2006). Furthermore, in the case of African-American males, stereotypes limit the conceptualization of a range of black masculinities in reality and the media (Peterson, 2009).

With the help of visual agency, media images of rappers as a menacing presence have become an object of admiration. When images of rappers making threatening gestures, shirtless and exposing their muscular bodies appear on screen they evoke associations with the Black Buck stereotype (Li, 2019). Like mediated representations of black athletes add to the notions of social transformation through sports (Ward, 2020), media representations of rappers add to the notions of social transformation through the means of cultural expression (Li, 2019). Rappers such as Snoop Dogg, Tupac, 50 Cent, etcetera have constructed an image of black masculinity akin to that of a criminal, who evokes fear (Li, 2019). Film historian Donald Bogle recognized five prominent stereotypes utilized for the representation of black masculinity in classic Hollywood cinema (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004) that are labelled by using slurs, they are: a) the Coon - the lazy and stupid stereotype, he is often ignorant and a source of entertainment. b) Uncle Tom - the subservient slave, he is submissive and endures being dominated by his master, which makes him well liked. c) Mammy - Tom's obese female counterpart who takes care of children, d) the Tragic Mulatto - a bi-racial women that inevitably meets her demise, as a punishment for being of mixed race, and e) the Black Buck - the sexually prolific hypermasculine male (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004; Bogle, 2015). Obviously, black representation is not limited to these stereotypes alone, there have been an emergence of various other stereotypes as well. Some of the newer stereotypes include: the Law Enforcement Officer(LEO), the quasi-Uncle Tom (QUT), the Gangster, the Brute, the Athlete, etcetera (Reid, 1993; Chan, 1998; O'Brien, 2017; Sexton, 2017; Li, 2019; Ward, 2020).

LEO's are often portrayed as charming, diligent, and well-mannered individuals who are highly regarded individuals in society (Reid, 1993; Sexton, 2017). These officers are presented as leaders of the community and act as father figures for subordinate characters in the film (Reid, 1993). LEO's are authoritative, intelligent, and in a position to command restraint from colleagues regardless of race (O'Brien, 2017). This stereotype articulates a masculinity that is built on nationalism and implies that one can be a respectable member

of society if he stays on the right side of the law. A sanitized version of black masculinity.
Moreover, crime action films often represent black police officers, or government officials
carrying out their duties with unease (Reid, 1993). Signaling a reluctance to enforce the
law, or the difficulty in following due process. For instance, Denzel Washington plays the
role of a corrupt renegade cop, Detective Alonzo in *Training Day,* (Sexton, 2017). Alonzo's
insurgency signifies his reluctance to obey authority and at the same time Alonzo is also an
authority figure showing paternalistic tendencies towards the white protagonist. However,
Alonzo is ultimately defeated by the white protagonist who shoots and injures Alonzo,
indicative of the notion that black militancy must be suppressed through violence (Sexton,
2017). Certain characteristics associated with the Coon, such as his foolish and comical
nature can be seen associated with the black character in black-white buddy action films as
well (Sexton, 2017). Where the black character often finds himself in peril and must be
rescued by the white character (Sexton, 2017). However, the interracial budy theme is not
confined to crime action films alone. It is widely employed in sport films, teen films,
dramas, etcetera (Sexton, 2017).

David Bogle recognized the Uncle Tom stereotype prevalent in classic Hollywood
movies (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004). Uncle Tom is a faithful slave, who is devoted to serving
his master. Uncle Tom's are presented as good black men, accepted in society by their
masters but still reserved a place among the lower social classes albeit with some perks for
their loyalty (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004). Representations of the Uncle Tom stereotype in
films perpetuate an ideology that the subordination of black men to white supremacy,
yields a better life and acceptance from society. The Uncle Tom stereotype is often
portrayed as one who is helpful when their master is in distress (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004).
Uncle Tom is prepared to make sacrifices for others to ensure their wellbeing. However,
this stereotype has evolved over the years and we see varied depictions of the Uncle Tom
stereotype in contemporary Hollywood films (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004), the quasi - Uncle
Tom. QUT's are black characters that play the role of advisors and mentors to white
characters. The QUT is always at the service of white men and their purpose is to help
those white men succeed (O'Brien, 2017). The Uncle Tom stereotype has seemingly
evolved into one where the black male character is an erudite, well-dressed man, whose
duty is to mentor and empower the white protagonist through his wisdom and resources
(O'Brien, 2017). The QUT's appearances and advisory roles go against the inclinations of

class associated with the Uncle Tom stereotype. The mentors command a level of respect, are authoritative in their speech and actions, and are intelligent individuals (O'Brien, 2017). The QUT's are presented as prophetic figures and also showcase paternalistic characteristics (O'Brien, 2017). QUT's offer sage advice to the protagonist and help them fulfil their destiny, which has connotations of mysticism associated with African American identity (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004; O'Brien, 2017).

Stereotypes of black masculinity are structured by discourses of exceptionalism, such as an emphasis on their physical body or athleticism, or criminality, etcetera (O'Brien, 2017). Whereas, white masculinity is invisible and neutral. Black male identity is also often characterized by physical attributes rather than intellectual capabilities (Ward, 2020). This has resulted in portraying the black male body often through the lens of physical appearances, where black masculinity is expressed through endurance or athleticism (Ward, 2020). Diverse representations of black masculinity share the same physical body (Li, 2019). For instance, Morpheus played by Laurence Fishburne in *The Matrix* exhibits characteristics of a QUT where he is a mentor to the white protagonist. However, Morpheus is often seen being beaten by and beating white men. In these moments of physical violence, it becomes apparent that the black male body is capable of enduring extreme pain (Ward, 2020). Furthermore, it is also reminiscent of the brute stereotype that emphasizes the black body as capable of extreme physical violence (O'Brien, 2017).

Crime action films have a tendency to represent simple constructions of African Americans as gangsters, or drug dealers, using the backdrop of crime, drugs, and violence (Reid, 1993; Chan, 1998). The classic gangster narrative requires that the leader or boss possess characteristics which have been validated by previous bosses (Reid, 1993). These crime action films take place in the confines of the ghetto (Reid, 1993; Chan, 1998). Gangsters are presented as individuals who have a real urban experience in a fictional realm (Reid, 1993). The gangster stereotype encompasses various identities associated with criminality, the mob boss, the drug dealer, bounty hunter, the brute etcetera. However, representations of black characters are often simple and focus on the binary good vs evil, without contextualizing the socio-economic, and political conditions that create these binary oppositions (Chan, 1998). Gangsters are portrayed as men who revere honor and loyalty but have no qualms in breaking their code of honor for the consolidation of power (Reid, 1993). Gangsters are presented as taking the "easier" alternative of leading

a life of crime than trying to make it in life through legal professions (Chan, 1998). They are portrayed as self-righteous and unscrupulous males who take advantage of children to profit from the drug trade (Reid, 1993). Gangsters are assertive and passive aggressive, they travel in fancy cars and often wield firearms (O'Brien, 2017). Furthermore, classical gangster film conventions dictate that they are often killed in a police showdown (O'Brien, 2017). These narratives are built on a conservative views of law enforcement and justice (Reid, 1993). Furthermore, the depiction of the gangster stereotype is often characterized though a heteronormative lens.

A study on gender, particularly for a series like *The Wire,* requires a careful consideration of the range of masculine identities prevalent in visual media. Especially, with a focus on masculinity's intersection with race. Over the years race and gender discourse has created a pastiche of black male identity (Jackson, 2007). In essence, black males are generators of their own descriptive legends (Neal, 2005). Although the post-civil war era has seen a menagerie of black identity develop, black masculinity has failed to break away from its rigid construction (Neal, 2005). Media representations of black masculinity tend to focus on fixed hegemonic constructions of black masculinity. However, Peterson (2009) argues that *The Wire* provides a diverse range of African American male existence. *The Wire* challenges inflexible models of black masculinity and offers numerous representations of the 'New Black Man' (NBM) postulated by Neal (2005). NBM is not simply a positive conception of black masculinity but the acknowledgement of the complex nature of progressive masculinity (Peterson, 2009). NBM is a range of masculinity that are constructed by social, economic, and politics' intersection with everyday life (Neal, 2005; Peterson, 2009).

2.4 The Wire storyline

For some context into the TV series, the storyline of the show is elaborated upon in brief. The third season of *The Wire* ends just the way it begins, it begins with the demolition of the Franklin Terrace Towers, a social housing project, which is a corollary for the drug problem faced by the police and administration in the city of Baltimore, Maryland. It ends with the demolition of Hamsterdam, three partially state sanctioned legal drug trading zones consisting of abandoned and dilapidated houses. The opening and ending scene serve as a metaphor for the influence of institutions on each other such as the police,

government administration, and social welfare and the cyclic nature of the impact of these institutions on society. For instance, Bunny argues that police work consists of soldiering and policing. Bunny claims soldiering is reactive and has certain implications which only address the surface level of the problem and not the root cause. Whereas, policing is preemptive and an attempt to eradicate the problem. Thus, soldiering and policing impose a certain degree of influence on the effectiveness of government administration and social welfare and in turn police work is influenced by them as well. Similarly, the demolished sites could also be interpreted as the avenues of intersectional construction of gender with race and sexuality. The Franklin Towers and Hamsterdam were places where the underground drug economy is seen thriving. These sites are a source of employment and livelihood for many kids, teenagers, and adults in the African American community in Baltimore. However, these sites are mainly male dominated. To conclude, season 3 of *The Wire* is about betrayal. Betrayal which ultimately leads to death, loss of employment, and a prison sentence.

3. Methodology

In this section the steps and decisions taken in order to conduct this research are elaborated upon. Specifically, the choices made in conducting a Goffmanian analysis, a thematic analysis, and the integration of the results of both the analyses in order to answer the research question. First, the research design, sampling and data collection procedures are stated and explained. Next, the operationalization of important concepts required for the Goffmanian and thematic analyses are highlighted along with the steps involved in conducting both the analyses are explained.

The aim of this study was to determine how masculinity is represented on television. Furthermore, its intersectionality with race and how that was represented, called for a qualitative method of analysis. Especially since this thesis is concerned with an in-depth analysis of gender and its social construction and not with the numerical analysis of gender representations. Qualitative research helps gather meaningful information about a phenomenon and provides the context within which these constructed meanings are communicated (Babbie, 2014). It can also be argued that objects by itself do not have any meaning, they are constructed by individuals through the use of language, rhetoric devices and words, and qualitative methods help describe, explain and interpret these meaningful constructions (Boeije, 2010). Furthermore, qualitative research is interested in finding out the latent meanings or connotations of ideas or concepts that are being communicated and helps in understanding the values being conveyed (Brennen, 2017).

The intent of this research was to interpret the contents of the third season of *The Wire*. Specifically, how creators construct and convey ideas of masculinity. Therefore, a two-step approach was used: first the data was analyzed through Goffman's (1979) framework of gender display and next the method of thematic analysis was chosen, to answer the research question. Many scholars have employed the use of Goffman's (1979) framework for studying gender representation in the media, such as Kang (1997), Baumann and De Laat (2012), and Kuipers, Van der Laan and Arfini (2017) to name a few, proving Goffman's (1979) codes on gender display still remain relevant. Therefore, Goffman's conceptualization of gender displays was taken as the starting point of this investigation, as they provide a good foundation for gender analysis (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015).

However, due to the datedness of the framework on gender displays (see section 2.2.1.), the presence of Goffman's codes were looked at along with the presence of new

codes which were previously unrecognized. Thematic analysis helps identify the motifs within the data and interpret them in greater detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Along with repeated patterns thematic analysis also helps in systematically reducing the data while still maintaining a thick description of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, thematic analysis helps maintain flexibility by not being bound by a fixed theoretical framework. This was helpful in conducting the in-depth inductive analysis of the latent themes prevalent in the data. Since, this study took a constructionist perspective on gender, the above mentioned methods of analysis were chosen to answer the question, *"How is masculinity represented in the third season of The Wire?"* with the help of one sub-questions which was *"How is masculinity represented in its intersection with race in season 3 of The Wire?"*

The question and sub question were answered through the Goffmanian and thematic analyses of the primary characters. The representation of primary characters and the different models of masculinity they represent established the relation of masculinities to one another. The main focus of the analysis was to ascertain how race plays a role in the representation of masculinity. The relational nature of Goffman's (1979) gender codes revealed the social hierarchy of masculinities and the thematic analysis revealed the context by which these hierarchies are organized. Thus, providing a comprehensive understanding of masculinity in its intersection with race, which in turn helped answering the overall research question.

3.1. Data Collection

The data for conducting the research was collected by the use of a non-probability sampling method that was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select the dataset most suitable for answering the research question (Flick, 2007; Brennen, 2017).The third season of *The Wire* was chosen, which consisted of a total of 12 episodes of 60 minutes each. *The Wire,* in its entirety, ran for a total of five seasons. The third season, being the halfway point, was considered for analysis as it was assumed that character plots have greater meaning and have evolved compared to earlier seasons. In the midway point of a series, there are a higher number of characters and the storylines are more developed and the narrative is highly contextual, providing a better understanding of the series and the characters. This was essential for the purpose of analysis via Goffman's

framework on gender display as it further contextualized the power dynamics prevalent in the series. The episodes of the third season were obtained through DVD's. Furthermore, a digital file containing the transcription of the subtitles was also acquired to help in the analysis. This helped in making the first step of conducting the thematic analysis, that is, transcribing and familiarizing oneself with the data, easier (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The transcripts provided a good starting point to begin the thematic analysis. For the purpose of answering the research question, only primary male actors were chosen for analysis. It is assumed that the primary characters are the most important for the storylines, who receive further emphasis in their visual representation in terms of screen time and narrative context.

Primary characters were shortlisted using plot summaries available for each episode on IMDb. These summaries offer short descriptions of the overarching storyline indicating some of the characters as principal subjects of that particular episode (see Appendix A). Due to their importance to the plot, the primary characters had a higher chance of having the maximum screen time, numerous interactions with other characters and close associations with the nuances important for the narrative. This made the primary characters interesting to examine. Their actions, behaviors and language were examined for richer description and contextual information. Those characters were looked at independently and in their interactions with others, neither being mutually exclusive observations.

Moreover, selecting characters on criteria such as race was also essential in answering the research question. Therefore, a total of eight characters were selected for analysis, out of which five were African American characters and three were Caucasian characters. The African American characters chosen were Avon Barksdale, Russell Bell (Stringer), Dennis Wise (Cutty), Howard Colvin (Bunny), and Ellis Carver. Avon, Stringer, and Cutty play the roles of gangsters (former gangster in the case of Cutty) and Bunny and Carver play the roles of police officers in Baltimore. The Caucasian characters selected for the research were James McNulty, Thomas Hauk (Herc), and Tommy Carcetti. McNulty and Herc play the roles of police officers and Carcetti plays the role of a politician in Baltimore. These primary characters were then studied for their portrayal of masculinity via the Goffmanian and thematic analyses.

3.2. Data analysis

The analysis took place in three steps. In the first step of analysis the data was analyzed using Goffman's (1979) framework on gender display. The primary characters selected were studied on their display of the six categories (see Appendix A) put forth by Goffman. Goffman's categories were analyzed as follows: (1) Relative Size which deals with the physical size and the power dynamics they create. When a character's size, in terms of height and girth were noticeably bigger in relation to the other characters it was defined as relative size. (2) Feminine Touch which deals with hands and fingers, and how they are used to hold, trace or touch objects. This display of touch does not include hand gestures such clasping, gripping, or clutching. (3) Function Ranking observes who performs the executive role indicating the power structure emphasized by a certain image. When a character plays an active or executive role in the scene it is considered function ranking. Instances such as instructing and ordering people, commanding action from people, taking the initiating action in scenes, etcetera were noted under this category. (4) The Family helps identify the social structure inherent or being emphasized in a visual representation. When characters are pictured with family members such as wives, ex-wives, kids, siblings, grandparents, etcetera it is recorded under this category. (5) The Ritualization of Subordination which deals with the poses, posture, and submissive behaviors, that indicate authority or superiority. When a character emphasizes his authority through the body posture, he or she displays it is considered under this gender code. When body postures represent the superiority or submissiveness of a character such as standing erect over someone or lying on the bed respectively, it is seen as an indication of the level of subordination of that character. And finally, (6) Licensed Withdrawal helps examine the emotions and actions being displayed and by whom. These emotions often indicate mental and physical presence in a visual scene, and how attached or removed a character is to the current situation. Displays such as head and eyes averted from the camera and staring into space, expression of remorse, etcetera all goes to indicate the characters need to be rescued and define this category. Furthermore, the analysis was not limited to these six categories alone. The qualitative nature of this study helped maintain flexibility, thus, leaving room for newer gender displays that were noticed in the series. Ensuring the reliability and validity of the analysis (Brennen, 2017).

These displays were recorded per character for each of the 12 episodes. If a character displayed any of the displays which were relative size, feminine touch, function ranking, the family, the ritualization of subordination, and licensed withdrawal, it was recorded in an excel sheet (see Appendix A) with brief notes providing further context about the character and their gender display. Although the displays were recorded even if they were observed a single time, every other instance of the display was noted with a short description for greater context of the social situation the characters found themselves in. Since, the frequency of display was not the aim of the analysis but the context in which the displays takes place was. Furthermore, these notes also provided information on the racial differences in the representation of men in the third season of *The Wire,* which was essential in answering the research question*.*

Next results from all the 12 episodes were combined in order to interpret the bigger picture. Each gender display recorded per character in each episode was collated to generalize the meaning of that display in terms of the representation of masculinity and to better understand the organization of social power. Observations of all the six displays were gathered one by one to formulate a nuanced idea of the gender display and its implication on social context. Combining the results helped in contextualizing the characters and the authority they possess in the realm of *The Wire.* The social dynamics and how gender displays were utilized in conveying these dynamics become apparent in this stage of analysis. This stage also helped in making generalization of the results and what they convey in terms of representation of gender, race, and sexuality.

In the second step of analysis, thematic analysis of the data was carried out. It is argued that thematic analysis is not only reflective of reality but also of the underpinnings of that reality (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis of the data took place in six phases: (1) getting familiarized with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming, and (6) producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).The analysis was done with sensitizing concepts from previous research: the stereotypes discussed in section 2.3. Hence, the sensitizing concepts were; the Coon, the Uncle Tom, the Black Buck, the Law Enforcement Officer (LEO), the quasi-Uncle Tom (QUT), the Gangster, the Brute, and the Athlete (Reid, 1993; Chan, 1998; Benshoff & Griffin, 2004; Bogle, 2015; O'Brien, 2017; Sexton, 2017; Li, 2019; Ward, 2020). The analysis was conducted keeping these stereotypes in mind. They were a) the Coon - the lazy and stupid

stereotype, he is often ignorant and a source of entertainment. b) Uncle Tom - the subservient slave, he is submissive and endures being dominated by his master, which makes him well liked, c) the Black Buck - the sexually prolific hypermasculine male, d) a LEO was typically presented as an authoritative, charming, and diligent individual respected by society, e) the QUT was represented as an erudite, faithful, and wise ally whose duty was to facilitate the well-being and success of the white protagonist, f) the Gangster stereotypes were represented as unscrupulous and aggressive individuals who expect loyalty from friends and colleagues but do not necessarily extend their loyalty to them

In the first phase, familiarizing oneself with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the subtitle files acquired were kept at hand while watching the episodes. They were read through repeatedly in order to get acquainted with the data and to check its accuracy. This helped establish a few initial ideas about the coding process. In the second phase, initial codes were produced (Braun & Clarke, 2006)), the available data was reduced in manner which helped in grouping them for the next phase of analysis. Interesting aspects about the data were retained in this phase to ensure contextuality. The initial codes such as Obeying orders, Following instructions, Homoeroticism, Homophobia. Heteronormative, Smartness, Strategize, Anger, etcetera were used to code the data. Once, all the data had been coded the data was further reduced by identifying commonly occurring themes or if multiple codes could be grouped together to form an overarching theme. This is the third phase of the method discussed by Braun and Clarke (2006). In this phase the relevant data were segregated to form themes and sub themes in accordance with the codes and their relationship with the themes. For instance, codes such as Smartness and Strategize were grouped together to form a new code of Intelligence. Anger was further divided into Aggression and Revenge. In the fourth phase of analysis, the themes established previously were reviewed and further refined (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Some themes were further broken down and some were grouped together depending on their relevance in answering the research question. For example, Intelligence was broken down into Language, and Intelligence. Homoeroticism and Homophobia were grouped together. This phase required some reflection on the data collected and if it corresponded to the themes produced during the process of analysis. Furthermore, whether these themes corresponded meaningfully with the theoretical approach taken for this research was considered. In the next phase of analysis, the fifth phase, (Braun & CLarke, 2006) the themes were refined and

defined according to their underlying meanings. The themes were organized in a concise and definite manner, to ensure there is no overlap between them and that they were structured coherently. These final themes were then examined to check whether they answer the research question consistently without losing any context. In this phase, themes which were not relevant to the research were eliminated. After these phases were over, the next phase involving the reporting of the results of the thematic analysis began. In this phase, arguments were put forth and illustrated with examples that capture the themes wholly and accurately. Each theme was elaborated upon and interpreted in detail. Furthermore, the write up of the analysis was clearly and logically reported, linking the findings and the research question sufficiently.

The third, and last, step in the analysis entailed a synthesis of Goffman's displays and the results from the thematic analysis. While Goffman's displays gave us insight in the power structures between different men and their masculinities, the thematic analysis' results gave insight into how these power structures are shaped. Upon the integration of the results of both the analyses, differences in the representation of race and sexuality became clearer. The combined results gave a better understanding of the male power relation in social situations and how race and sexuality define social status and the representation of masculinity.

3.3 Validity & Reliability

Qualitative research allows multiple interpretations of a phenomenon with no single correct way of interpreting the data (Brennen, 2017). Furthermore, since the analysis is dependent on the researchers' interpretation, the objectivity of the interpretation comes into question (Silverman, 2011). To tackle the problem of subjectivity, the researcher must be critical of the data and its interpretation. The researcher must abstain from making easy and convenient interpretations that suit the researcher's subjectivity. The iterative and flexible nature of qualitative analysis allows a researcher to critically reflect on the data to ensure credibility of the research (Silverman, 2011; Brennen, 2017). Credibility of research entails the reliability and validity of the data (Silverman, 2011). Reliability of the data implies the consistency with which an interpretation applies to the different data regarding a specific phenomenon (Silverman, 2011). Furthermore, similar research should be able to replicate the same results and interpretations. This is achieved by maintaining transparency

of the research process and providing a systematic and detailed reporting procedure (Silverman, 2011). Additionally, explicitly providing context on the theoretical approach undertaken for the study helps contextualizing the interpretations and ensures transparency. Validity of the data is concerned with the accuracy with which it can describe the social phenomenon being studied (Silverman, 2011). Silverman (2011) argues that validity of the data can be achieved through triangulation. The triangulation of data means that comparisons must be made with data obtained from either different research or obtained from different methods of analyses (Silverman, 2011). In the case of this study, triangulation of data is achieved by comparing data from the two methods of analyses that are the Goffmanian and thematic analyses. Triangulation ensures an "accurate, comprehensive, and objective" representation of the subject of analysis (Silverman, 2011). Furthermore, the non-obtrusive nature of the analyses undertaken for this study minimizes the influence a researcher can have in the process of data collection, like in the case of focus groups and interviews. Finally, the method of sampling in the case of qualitative research also determines the extent to which the researcher can accurately answer the research question (Flick, 2007; Silverman, 2011; Brennen, 2017). Silverman (2011) argues that purposive sampling with a well-defined theoretical approach increases the generalizability of the qualitative research. Thus, the credibility of the research is increased as well.

4. Results

In this section of this study the results of the Goffmanian and thematic analyses are elaborated upon. Furthermore, how these analyses contextualize the power dynamics in social settings is also discussed. First, the results of the Goffmanian analysis are discussed. Second, the results of the thematic analysis are explained. Finally, the synthesis of both these analyses and their implications on the representation of gender and the power structures that define them are argued.

In the representation of masculinity in *The Wire,* there are noticeable racial differences displayed through the series' representation of primary characters. The relational nature of the gender displays proposed by Goffman (1979) helped ascertain the position of men in comparison to other men and their social standing in the power matrix within *The Wire.* The Goffmanian analysis reveals that race is sometimes important in the representation of masculinity in context to social ranking and authority while sometimes it is irrelevant. For instance, relative size is important in the representation of black male characters in *The Wire* but not for the white characters. Similarly, with displays such as the family there were differences in the representation of masculinity in its intersection with race. However, gender displays such as function ranking, ritualization of subordination, and licensed withdrawal were used uniformly for the representation of masculinity in *The Wire*. There were no differences in *The Wire'*s use of the above-mentioned displays to present differences amongst black and white characters. Furthermore, two new gender displays were observed in the series. The new displays were muscularity and manly grip. These new displays were used exclusively in portraying the black characters through their physicality.

The thematic analysis helped give insights into how the power matrix is shaped in *The Wire* in context to the hierarchy of masculinities represented in the series. The analysis resulted in the formulation of five themes. They were obedience, aggression, intelligence, homoerotic banter and sexuality, and vengeance. These themes were analyzed in contention with the stereotypes discussed in section 2.3 of the theoretical framework. The stereotypes functioned as the sensitizing concepts for this analysis. The themes in contention with the stereotypes reveal how *The Wire* holds no fixed positions in the identity creation of its characters. For instance, subservience associated with the Uncle Tom and QUT stereotype is observed being displayed by black characters in the series. But they are being obedient to other black characters which is significantly unlike the Uncle

Tom and QUT stereotype, since these stereotypes are defined by their obedience to white characters (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004; Bogle, 2015; O'Brien, 2017). Furthermore, the themes formulated for this analysis represent masculinity through characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity (Banjoko, 2011; Moss, 2011).

4.1. Goffmanian analysis

In the Goffmanian analysis the following observations were made. Differences in the representation of masculinity in its intersection with race reveals that certain gender displays were used to differentiate between race, but certain displays were not. For example, relative size, and the family were utilized differently in the representation of race whereas displays such as feminine touch, function ranking, licensed withdrawal, and ritualization of subordination did not indicate any differences in the representation of masculinity. In *The Wire*, relative size was employed as a display to signify authority and social ranking similar to observations made by Goffman (1979). Relative size was important for African American characters' assertion of authority, but it was not important for Caucasian characters. Unlike Goffman's (1979) observation of women pictured in family settings more often than men, the gender display of the family was utilized differently in *The Wire.* Black male characters were often seen in dysfunctional family settings and white male characters in functional family settings. Furthermore, two new displays were observed in the series' representation of masculinity, manly grip and muscularity. They were associated with the physicality of men. These displays represented the authority and power of the characters exhibiting these displays, who were mainly black characters.

4.1.1. Relative size

While size does play a role in signifying authority and power for the African American characters that is not the case with Caucasian characters. If black characters have authority, they are shown as taller and bigger. Size was used as an indication of power or authority in *The Wire*. All the characters appeared taller than or as tall as the women they were pictured alongside. Furthermore, the African American characters were always pictured taller than most of the characters as an indication of their authority. This gender display is used to signify the characters dominance in a social situation (Goffman, 1979). In this gender display, physical size is used to emphasize strength and power in relation to the

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others pictured in the scene (Goffman, 1979). Hence, relating physical size to social dominance. For instance, Stringer (one of the gangsters), who is acting leader of the Barksdale organization while Avon is in jail appears taller than most of the characters he is pictured alongside with the exception of his business partner Avon (leader of the Barksdale gang). Signifying that Avon and Stringer have the same level of authority not only within their crime organization but outside of it as well. The association of size and social dominance in *The Wire* is further emphasized by the representation of Cutty (a former criminal just out of prison). Cutty's stature starts increasing as he grows in authority through the season. Cutty is often pictured shorter than the other characters, from the time he is released from prison to the time he goes back to his old ways of crime. Once Cutty gives up a life of crime to train young kids in the sport of boxing, he starts appearing taller in his scenes. As an indication of him reclaiming his authority and shedding his gangster identity which was weighing him down. However, the series does provide a representation of masculinity that opposes the norm of size and dominance as well. For example, Carver (one of the police officers) is shorter than the other male characters but still has authority as seen through his actions when around colleagues from his police department or when around kids in Hamsterdam. Furthermore, Carver who is often pictured alongside his work partner Herc (one of the police officers), is shorter than Herc but outranks Herc in the police force.

4.1.2. Feminine Touch

The least observed gender display exhibited by the characters was feminine touch. Goffman (1979) observed that the display of touch was used to signify the delicateness of women. Where women are pictured holding objects as though they were electrically charged or fatal (Goffman, 1979; Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). Signifying their need to be protected by someone else or the eroticism of objects. But this was not the case for the male characters in *The Wire*. Characters were rarely seen using their fingers to hold objects. However, delicate items such as a pair of glasses, hand grenades, sim cards, and tiny chits of paper were usually held by the character using their fingers. When characters were seen handling these objects it did not indicate or reinforce any form of authority or social status. However, there were subtle connotations about intelligence associated with this gender display. The characters seen exhibiting this display most often also had their intelligence

explicitly referenced visually or orally in the series. For instance, Carcetti (a politician serving as a councilman in Baltimore) whose formal education is orally referenced in the series, is seen answering phone calls on his flip phone using his fingers. He holds the cell phone differently than the other characters. He is even seen touching his face, when resting his head on the back of his palm and fingers, while watching pre-recorded footage of himself speaking. Even Stringer whose educational pursuits are acknowledged in the series is seen using his fingers to hold objects such as his pair of glasses. Stringer is seen touching his face as well. Interestingly, the only observation in line with the feminine touch observed by Goffman (1979), is seen when two male characters are literally holding a fatal explosive device. Justifying their handling of the object in such a manner.

4.1.3. Manly grip

While feminine touch was the least observed gender display, the characters were often seen tightly gripping onto things, having things held in their hands using closed fists, and even clutching objects. Thus, a new display of manly grip was formulated. The display of manly grip was a way of expressing aggression for the male characters in *The Wire.* It was also used to signify one's strength which was further exaggerated by the display of relative size and muscularity for African American characters. This grip was used as a way of asserting one's authority in a social situation. African American characters were more often seen employing this gender display compared to the Caucasian characters. It seemed important for black characters to express their masculinity through this display, almost pertinent to their gender identity but it was not the case with the white characters. For instance, Avon is pictured clutching his pants near the crotch or belt region to signify his authority and composure. Furthermore, there was a noticeable difference in the portrayal of white-collar jobs and blue-collar jobs. For instance, Carcetti, is the character that least exhibits this gender display. In the instances that he is seen firmly gripping an object it is most often his briefcase that he carries to work. Whereas, all the blue-collar workers who were the policemen and boxing coach were all seen exhibiting this display to variable effect. Perhaps the association of power and manly grip becomes clearer when characters are seen wielding a gun which is clasped tight in their fists. The handling of guns is in a manner which suggests that the men are in complete control of the weapon and not the

other way around. Asserting the notion that men can take care of themselves and are always in complete control.

4.1.4. Muscularity

Along with manly grip another display previously unrecognized by Goffman (1979) was observed in the representation of masculinity in *The Wire.* There was a difference in the way African American and Caucasian bodies were represented in *The Wire.* Stereotypes representing African Americans through their physical attributes were often utilized (O'Brien, 2017; Ward, 2020). When characters such as Avon, Stringer, and Cutty were seen without a top or in sleeveless tops, they appeared more muscular compared to the Caucasian characters. Black characters had their muscles emphasized as a show of strength and if their physical body was not emphasized their strength was emphasized indirectly. For instance, when McNulty (one of the police officers) and Bunny (a superior police officer) are drinking beer from a can in the parking lot of Bunny's police department, upon finishing McNulty requires his legs to crush the can but Bunny crushes the can using his hands. The storyline concerning Cutty's path towards sports coaching further emphasizes the stereotype that sports and athleticism can lead to social transformation in the black community (Ward, 2020). Furthermore, through the representation of black characters through discourses on exceptionalism that is muscularity, *The Wire* re-emphasizes the notion that black bodies feel pain differently and are capable of enduring huge amounts of physical violence, emphasizing their brute strength. For instance, when Stringer is shown shot to death by two characters with multiple gunshots to his chest coming from a shotgun and a revolver. Stringer must be killed not only by one man and his gun but two men and their guns firing multiple shots.

4.1.5. Function Ranking

Regardless of race, all the characters were seen playing the executive role in certain situations throughout the season. The men were active players in scenes who were the ones orchestrating the events that follow. However, the African American characters always exercised their executive power under the backdrop of pre-established hierarchical authority which was a precursor for the black characters' executive role. Furthermore, the white characters especially were seen most often being subordinated by women in

comparison to the black characters. Formal authority was not a precursor for the Caucasian characters to play active roles in the series. Goffman (1979) suggests that function ranking depicts the amount of control a person has in a social situation. Thus, establishing social hierarchy. From the representation of characters in *The Wire,* it becomes clear that the same holds true for the series as well. All the characters were mostly always seen as subordinating women. Often characters exercised their active roles though formal hierarchies such as police ranks, political portfolio's, or informal hierarchies such as gang leadership. However, there were multiple instances when the men were seen subordinated by women, but it was due to the formal hierarchies in place conferring the same level of authority to the police officers belonging in the same rank. For instance, McNulty is seen playing both active and passive roles when it came to colleagues but always played the active role when dealing with gangsters and civilians. McNulty is often subordinated by his work partner Kima (one of the police officers) but is also seen playing the executive role in multiple situations. Furthermore, the social hierarchy achieved by staying on the right side of the law is further emphasized through the representation of Cutty. Cutty finds himself in the lowest social ranking because of his jail time and past actions. However, after establishing his authority as a sports coach and a mentor, he is seen playing the executive role in interactions with other characters. Implying that a life of crime does not bring social acceptance, but gainful employment and social service does.

4.1.6. The Family

There were racial differences observed in the portrayal of the primary characters in family settings. The series portrays Caucasians characters having stable or relatively stable family lives with wives and kids, and African American characters as being a part of dysfunctional families. Black characters were often seen with other members of the family such as sisters and grandmothers. However, *The Wire* also provides a representation of white characters opposing the association of race and functional families. For instance, McNulty is pictured with his ex-wife whom he shares custody of their children with. Subtly insinuating the dysfunctional nature of his family life. However, the African American characters are always pictured without their wives and kids. Goffman (1979) observed that women were more often pictured in family settings as compared to men. Evoking the notions of family oriented and domesticated lifestyles for women. The display of the family

was utilized differently in the series. The display was not used to convey associations of masculinity and domestication but was used to emphasize the stereotypes associated with African Americans and dysfunctional families. Moreover, Goffman's (1979) observations of men often pictured with their sons can be observed in *The Wire* as well. Through the representation of McNulty and his family life. Interestingly, black characters in series are often seen exhibiting paternalistic characteristics towards those younger than them, mostly children. This observation elucidates O'Brien's (2017) observation of black characters acting as paternal figures in Hollywood movies.

4.1.7. Ritualization of Subordination

Displays of ritualization of subordination observed by Goffman (1979) were often exhibited by the characters in *The Wire* but these displays did not have any implications on their own authority. Unlike Goffman's (1979) observations, individuals pictured in lower positions did not always indicate submission to those in higher positions. Sometimes it was quite the opposite as well. Signifying the notion that formal or pre-established hierarchy did not have to be symbolized through the display of ritualization of subordination in *The Wire* but this display was essential is ascertaining social position outside of these hierarchies. Characters were seen both standing erect and subordinating people and being in lower positions commanding authority and submission from those standing tall as well. However, in specific circumstances, erect positions did indicate authority but was not a fixed indicator of authority. For instance, Stringer's authority and social position within the gang leader's consortium is always emphasized by his position in the scene. He is often conducting the meeting and is seen standing by the podium as the meeting takes place, signifying his importance amongst the leaders. But Stringer is also pictured in lower positions such as being seated and exhibiting other displays such as head cants while subordinating his own gang members. Avon is pictured in lower positions than Stringer and vice versa often but both exercise similar levels of authority. Similarly, other male characters in the series exhibited the above-mentioned displays as well.

4.1.8. Licensed Withdrawal

All the characters exhibited characteristics associated with Licensed withdrawal. Characters had their eyes averted from the camera, they looked as though they were not

present in scenes, they were seen answering calls. They were portrayed as though they were psychologically absent from the present social situation. Although Goffman (1979) implied that licensed withdrawal was often a sign of a lack of agency, this was not the case in *The Wire.* Goffman (1979) argues that licensed withdrawal was employed as a gender display to suggest the vulnerability of women along with their disability to focus and the men had to rescue the women from the respective situation. Unlike Goffman's (1979) observations, the men from *The Wire* are often seen exhibiting this gender display of licensed withdrawal. However, there were no differences observed in race. As the name of the series suggests, tapping phones of suspected criminals is a part of the storyline. Characters are often seen receiving or making calls. Goffman (1979) argues that answering phone calls suggests a degree of withdrawal from the current scene. Characters in *The Wire* are often seen answering calls in social situations which requires them to withdraw themselves from the current scene. Even though the phone calls are brief, the characters are still pictured in conversation. Characters were also seen withdrawn from the scene by a way of staring into space much like having their heads or eyes averted away from the camera as though they were in deep thought. Characters were often seen in such fashion when they were feeling worried, sad, happy, angry, annoyed or remorseful. For instance, McNulty is often seen as though he is in his own world and deep in thought. He is seen at a baseball game with his kids and is annoyed by his ex-wife's current boyfriend. As a result, McNulty is staring all around while his friend and colleague Bunk is trying to speak to him, but it falls on deaf ears. McNulty is also seen staring into space while his head is averted away from the camera when he is looking at Stringer's dead body. In this situation the display of licensed withdrawal signifies his unhappiness at McNulty's inability to bring Stringer to justice through incarceration. Furthermore, McNulty is also often pictured looking at something from behind objects or people. Additionally, all characters are seen smiling as well, unlike Goffman's (1979) observations of advertisements men were often pictured smiling in *The Wire*.

4.2. Thematic analysis

The stereotypes discussed in section 2.3 of the theoretical framework functioned as sensitizing concepts for this analysis. *The Wire* utilizes stereotypes in the construction of masculinity, often using multiple stereotypes in the representation of each character.

Although these stereotypes appear from time to time none of the primary characters were defined by them. *The Wire* deconstructs these stereotypes and rearticulates fluid identities (Dhaenens & Van Bauwel, 2012). Thus, offering no fixed positions on the identities created (Fuggle, 2009). *The Wire* often utilizes stereotypes for the representation of masculinity and offers context about how the stereotypes have come into being. Furthermore, multiple stereotypes are used in the construction of identity and characters are seen exhibiting characteristics indicating an overlap in different models of masculinity. For instance, Bunny (a major in the police force) is seen as an intelligent law enforcement officer who has paternalistic qualities and is seen mentoring his subordinate officer Carver along with the other police officers under his command. He is well spoken, respected by the community, and is ready to take the fall for his police department and the officers therein. These characteristics bear semblance to the LEO which depicts LEO's as intelligent, charming, and well-respected individuals (Reid, 1993; O'Brien, 2017; Sexton, 2017). Furthermore, Bunny even displays characteristics of a QUT, where he is seen as a mentor cum commanding officer to his subordinates and even takes the fall for them for the Hamsterdam debacle. Although he displays characteristics of the above-mentioned stereotypes, he is not entirely defined by them. For instance, the QUT stereotype represents black men as facilitators for white protagonists but this was not the case with Bunny. He is a facilitator for his colleagues and officers regardless of race. The black white buddy movie stereotype is reversed as well, where the black character is seen as the comical one whereas the white character always means business (Sexton, 2017). In the partnership of Carver and Herc we see the black white buddy stereotype but Herc is the comical character in this case.

The thematic analysis resulted in the formulation of five themes: a) Obedience, b) Aggression, c) Intelligence, d) Homoerotic banter and heterosexuality, and e) Vengeance. These themes signify the notion that characters are often trying to establish their superiority or dominance in social contexts. Overall, men were represented as heteronormative, competitive, aggressive, and vengeful individuals. These observations were in line with the characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity (Banjoko, 2011; Moss, 2011). Intelligence was a common characteristic amongst the men as well. However, the intelligence of African American characters was implicitly represented, while the intelligence of Caucasian characters was explicitly referenced. Similarly, authority of black characters was explicitly mentioned whereas the authority of white characters is implied.

Furthermore, African American characters displayed characteristics associated with white hegemonic masculinity which were physical dominance, aggression, and violence (Banjoko, 2011). The above-mentioned themes and their implications on the power dynamics in conjunction with the stereotypes used to represent masculinity are further elaborated upon below.

4.2.1. Obedience

Obedience in the context of *The Wire* meant the ability of the character to follow instructions from colleagues and superiors. Obedience was characterized as following orders despite differences in opinions. Under this theme the subservient nature of African American characters was emphasized. Black characters were always pictured in hierarchical situations to emphasize their obedience and social position. At the same time, black characters' authority was also emphasized through these situations. The Uncle Tom stereotype is characterized by his obedience (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004; Bogle, 2015). Uncle Tom is a slave who is unquestionably loyal to his white master and wants to ensure his masters' wellbeing (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004; Bogle, 2015). Uncle Tom is represented as a content slave who lives a relatively better life as compared to other slaves due to his submissiveness to his owner (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004; Bogle, 2015). However, the African American characters in *The Wire* were neither slaves nor were their masters - in this case superior officers or mob leaders - white. Black characters were displayed being obedient despite the possible negative consequences of their actions. Furthermore, black characters suffered consequences to their insubordination, but white characters always went scot-free

This theme deals with the characteristics associated with obedience which includes obeying orders, and respecting the chain of command and hierarchy, to ultimately benefit their superiors. Generally, the African American characters were represented as obedient and followed orders, sometimes reluctantly. The white characters defy authority and show no respect to the chain of command. For instance, Carver (a sergeant in the police force) is often seen obeying orders. Mostly, orders from his superior officer, Bunny. Carver is seen obeying Bunny's orders even though the orders could result in legal repercussions for Carver. This is evident from the police work done by Carver in Hamsterdam or from the intentional tampering of a crime scene in Hamsterdam so that Bunny does not get into

trouble. Although Carver is not a slave, he shows a degree of unquestioning loyalty for his superior officers much like the Uncle Tom stereotype (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004; Bogle, 2015). On the other hand, the Caucasian characters such as McNulty and Carcetti, are seen disobeying their superiors or not following the chain of command. For instance, McNulty goes behind his superior officers back and approaches another senior officer to reopen an ongoing investigation which was stopped abruptly.

4.2.2. Aggression

In *The Wire*, all men were represented as aggressive and competitive as though it was a central characteristic for masculinity. To reinforce and further emphasize their aggressiveness, the characters often find themselves in confrontational situations. Moreover, aggression expressed through violence was seen as an assertion of one's authority. Banjoko (2011) argues that expressing aggression by the way of physical violence is one of the characteristics that defines and maintains the dominance of white hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, it is argued that black men must confront hegemonic ideals such as aggression, and violent behavior to construct progressive black masculinities (Banjoko, 2011). In the series, African American characters are displayed expressing their masculinity through models of hegemonic masculinity associated with white masculinity. The characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity are physical dominance, aggression, and violence (Banjoko, 2011). The black characters are often seen displaying these characteristics in the series. However, there are some black characters who go against the notion of hegemonic masculinity as well. Since, not all African Americans are physically violent in *The Wire*. For instance, Cutty often refrains from indulging in violence and causing physical harm. Except in the case of a woman who he has to coerce into divulging information on a rival gang member. However, all of the black characters are seen visibly enraged. The same characterization applies for the Caucasian characters as well, not all of them indulge in violent behavior, but all express their anger explicitly.

Aggression was characterized by anger, and violent behaviors. Under this theme all violent behavior is categorized as aggression. When a character was seen causing physical harm to another individual, banging their fists into things, throwing objects were all included in this category. While all the characters visibly showed their frustration and physically expressed their anger, they were reserved in their expression of other emotions

such as fear, guilt, remorse, sadness, etcetera. For instance, Stringer is seen fighting Avon, banging on tables, flicking objects, and slapping his girlfriend's arm. Furthermore, when Poot (a mid-level gang member of the Barksdale organization) asks Stringer a sarcastic and rhetorical question in a gang meeting, Stringer immediately knocks the microphone off the podium and walks up to him as though he is about to hit Poot. However, when characters were seen expressing emotions other than anger such as fear or sadness, they showed restraint. For instance, Stringer is seen running from the men who want to kill him but once confronted is not seen begging or pleading for his life in an exaggerated manner. Stringer is calm and trying to diffuse the situation but to no luck.

4.2.3. Intelligence

Intelligence was a central theme observed in the thematic analysis along with aggression. All the characters in the series are represented as intelligent and thoughtful individuals. Due to the competitive nature of men in *The Wire*, some of the characters are presented as intelligent men not only through the references to formal education but also through the strategizing and scheming to outwit political opponents, rival gangs, and criminals. However, the intelligence of the black characters is implicitly implied, and the intelligence of white characters is explicitly stated. For example, Carcetti is seen reading a newspaper and his formal college education is referenced and is also portrayed as an ambitious politician who wants to serve the community. Whereas, Bunny is presented as a man who has thought hard to come up with the idea of Hamsterdam and successfully manages it for a brief amount of time. The idea of Hamsterdam implicitly references Bunny's intellectual capabilities.

Additionally, the intelligence of black characters is often contrasted with the intellectual capacities of kids, and criminals, particularly in the case of police officers. For instance, Carver's intelligence only comes to the foreground when he is around kids and teens who sell drugs in Hamsterdam. Carver is seen implementing a tax system in Hamsterdam to make sure kids who are out of work still get paid by their former employees. Furthermore, in the case of black characters, they are respected for their opinions and their advice is taken seriously. Their advice is also often beneficial to the person being advised. The quasi - Uncle Tom stereotype identified by O'Brien (2017) as someone who is a facilitator for the white protagonist is seen through these characters. But

the white protagonist in the context of *The Wire,* is often an African American male. As seen through the relationship shared by Bunny and Carver. Where Bunny acts as a mentor towards Carver, and advises Carver on becoming better at his job. However, Bunny acts as a mentor towards all his subordinate officers regardless of race as well.

4.2.4. Homoerotic banter and heterosexuality

All the characters selected for analysis were shown as heterosexual males, explicitly or implicitly. Additionally, characters indulged in homoerotic banter as well. Homoerotic banter was seen as a means to establishing social dominance and hierarchy. Sometimes this banter was also utilized to insult people. Through the homoerotic banter it becomes evident that the men see non-heteronormativity as abnormal and abhorrent. Heterosexuality of the characters becomes evident through their pursuit of women, their sexual encounters, and verbal references to women, wives, or girlfriends. Some of the African American characters were sexually explicit and detailed in their homoerotic banter whereas the Caucasian characters were not so explicit. For instance, when Bunny tells the other officers present about how he initiated McNulty into the police force or when Stringer is referencing Omar (one of the gangsters), who happens to be an African American male and gay. However, a representation that opposes this notion of Caucasian characters is presented through the character of Herc. Herc often uses homophobic slurs to address people and is also indulging in explicit banter with his partner Carver.

Out of all the characters only one of the Caucasian characters, Tommy Carcetti is seen engaging in sex on screen, where both Carcetti and the woman are seen naked. Whereas, other characters are either pictured before or after sex. Furthermore, the Balck Buck stereotype is utilized in the representation of Avon's sexual desires. On Avon's return from jail, Stringer sends two women to Avon's room, one of them is an African American and the other is Caucasian. As though one woman cannot pacify his sexual needs. This is largely reminiscent of the Black Buck stereotype, a sexually prolific male (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004; Bogle, 2015). However, *The Wire* also provides representations of sexually prolific and adulterous Caucasian characters, Carcetti and McNulty. Black characters are portrayed as faithful partners whereas white characters are not.

4.2.5. Vengeance

Revenge was another central theme for all the male characters. Vengeance implicitly implied their competitive nature. All men wanted to outwit their opponents in some cases for the consolidation of power and in all cases for an exertion of their power as well. This endeavor of exercising their power was a way of establishing their authority in society. Vengeance was a common characteristic especially for Caucasian characters and less so for the African American characters. Black characters exact revenge through physically violent means whereas Caucasian characters seek vengeance through their intellectual capabilities. By Avon and Stringers association with vengeance, this trait had a criminal connotation. Characters seeking revenge were doing so without considering the negative implications of their actions and their actions were always self-serving. For instance, when Carver and Herc are chasing a kid who is a suspect carrying drugs, they get angry when the kid disappears in the dilapidated neighborhood. Once they catch hold of the kid, it comes to light that he was not carrying any drugs, he was in fact a decoy. Enraged they beat the kid up for making them chase him and ruin the drug bust. Although illegal Carver and Herc suffer no consequences for beating a kid. The characterization of vengeance with masculinity and its use in the consolidation of power is in line with the ideals associated with white hegemonic masculinity (Banjoko, 2011). While we see African American characters expressing their masculinity in similar fashion, we see representations of their resistance to the hegemony as well. As seen from the refusal of Cutty to exact revenge on the criminal that stole his money. All acts of revenge were considered under this theme. Acts of revenge were not limited to violence and physical harm but also included scheming and strategizing to out-maneuver opponents by ways of on non-violence. For instance, Carcetti is always trying to have the upper hand with his non-compliant superior, who is the mayor of Baltimore, by ways of bureaucracy and smear tactics.

4.3. Synthesis of the results

In *The Wire*, Men are represented as heterosexual individuals through multiple models of hegemonic masculinity. They were represented as authoritative, obedient, and intelligent individuals albeit with a penchant for aggression, and revenge. Each character is trying to outsmart or outmuscle their opponents, colleagues, and other members of society

as a means of asserting their authority. Thus, establishing their social hierarchy. This social hierarchy is reiterated through the use of Goffman's (1979) gender display in the representation of the male characters in the series. The series represents the justice system of Baltimore, through individual departments such as the police department (homicide and narcotics), the government administrative department, and the members of society that influence and are influenced by these departments. Through the representations of members of the various departments in the justice system, *The Wire* juxtaposes the conflicting ideals and discord among these departments to different models of masculinity depicted by the characters. Through *The Wire*'s representation of African American characters playing roles of gangsters and former criminals, the series tries to contribute to a nuanced and intersectional construction of black identity with the various political, social, and economic forces that impact them. Furthermore, with help of Goffman's (1979) framework on gender display in congruence with the utilization of the common stereotypes and tropes to represent African Americans, it becomes evident that differences in the representation of race persist in defining the narrative of *The Wire*.

The African American characters are represented as powerful individuals not just in the physical sense but also in their social influence and weight. Albeit with the use of their physical presence on screen to assert their authority. The Caucasian characters are represented as men with no respect for institutional authority. However, regardless of race, all the characters are represented as heterosexual males who frequently indulge in homoerotic banter and use homophobic rhetoric to express their masculinity. Goffman's (1979) framework along with the themes of Obedience, Aggression, Intelligence, Homoerotic banter, and Vengeance prevalent in the third season, provides insights into the power relations, social dynamics, and racial differences in the representation of men in *The Wire.* For instance, black characters are often seen in hierarchical situations and their obedience is emphasized but their function ranking signifies their agency and authority. While obedience has certain connotations of subordination the function ranking of black characters signifies their authority to subordinate individuals as well. Furthermore, two new gender displays were observed which are Muscularity and Manly grip. These new displays emphasize the racial differences in the representation of masculinity. Mainly, these displays reinforce the association of African Americans through their physicality

(Ward, 2020). As these new displays indicate or reemphasize the dominance and authority,

further contextualizing their social position in the power matrix.

5. Conclusion and limitations

In this section of the study the research question is answered in context to the results of the analyses conducted. Furthermore, the results' relation to the theoretical approach taken are discussed in contention with the scientific and societal relevance of the research topic. Lastly, limitations of this study are discussed and the implications they could have on future research.

5.1. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to analyze the TV series, *The Wire*, to ascertain how gender is represented in the series, particularly masculinity. Therefore, the findings of this study contribute to answering the research question, "*How is masculinity represented in season 3 of The Wire?".* Dhaenens and Van Bauwel (2015) argue that in the context of gender in its intersection with sexuality, *The Wire* relies on the representation of its characters by constructing them through hegemonic discourses on gender which are binary and rigid (Dhaenens & Van Bauwel, 2012). But *The Wire* takes these representations further by deconstructing the fixed identity positions that define these representations and rearticulates fluid and nuanced identities (Dhaenens & Van Bauwel, 2012). A similar argument can be made for the representation of masculinity in its intersection with race as well. *The Wire* utilizes stereotypes as the starting point to construct male identity and renegotiates and contextualizes these stereotypes. The reconstructed identities are often represented in opposition to the stereotypes around which male identities are created. Furthermore, male identities are reconstructed in a manner that refuses to be rigidly defined by stereotypes. Resulting in the representation of nuanced gender identities in context to race.

In *The Wire,* black masculinity is represented through discourse of exceptionalism, that is through an emphasis on their physicality and criminality as observed by O'Brien (2017) in contemporary cinema. However, the series also presents alternate representations of black masculinity that oppose the association of crime and physical size. While there are big African American males that are seen involved in a life of crime, there are also big African American males that are involved in a life on the right side of the law. Furthermore, not every big African American was a gangster or police officer. African American male identity is also constructed around sports, further emphasizing the

stereotype that athleticism or sports can lead to social transformation (Ward, 2020). Contrarily, Li's (2019) assertion that diverse representations of black masculinity are represented with the same physicality does not hold true for *The Wire.* Certain characters' size is never emphasized but their identity is constructed in the same vein as that of authoritative characters in the series. Representation through exceptionalism is further contextualized through gender codes such as relative size, manly grip, and muscularity. However, associations of size and race do not directly correspond to an association with aggression. *The Wire,* represents aggressive behavior as a masculine trait rather than a racial one. Moreover, unlike contemporary representations of Black masculinity through physical attributes (O'Brien, 2017; Ward 2020), African Americans are represented through their intellectual capacities as well. All characters analyzed are portrayed as intelligent and intelligence was not reserved to any specific racial category. There were no inferences of associations of intelligence and social class either.

One theme prevalent in the representation of African American characters was obedience. Black characters are often seen in hierarchical situations to reinforce that notion. Whereas the Caucasian characters were seen having a disdain for authority and reluctantly complying to orders and directives. Often even disobeying orders and institutional hierarchy. The Uncle Tom stereotype regularly employed in the representation of black characters, is built on ideas of subservience and a lack of agency (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004; Bogle, 2015). Importantly, Uncle Tom is present to service and benefit only his white master. However, in *The Wire,* African American characters are seen obeying orders and serving other black characters but reluctant in following directives from Caucasian characters. The agency of African American characters is further emphasized through gender codes such as function ranking and ritualization of subordination. Therefore, opposing not just the Uncle Tom stereotype but the quasi - Uncle Tom stereotype as well (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004; Bogle, 2015; O'Brien, 2017). The black characters in *The Wire,* are seen facilitating other African American characters rather than Caucasian characters. Furthermore, *The Wire* also utilizes stereotypes such as the LEO and Gangster stereotype to represent African American characters (Reid, 1993; Chan, 1998; O'Brien, 2017; Sexton, 2017). Similar to the QUT stereotype, *The Wire* provides us with a complete opposite representation of the LEO stereotype. However, Reid's (1993)

observations about representations of gangsters in Action films still holds true for *The Wire.* Although, there are certain differences observed as well.

Vengeance was central to the representation of masculinity in *The Wire.* Regardless of race, men are represented as competitive individuals who are often seeking some form of retribution or submission from opponents be it politicians, criminals, suspects, or kids on the street. Revenge was often sought through violent means. These observations were in line with the characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity (Banjoko, 2011; Moss, 2011). The characters expressed their need for retribution in a child-like manner as though vengeful actions will redeem their honor. However, certain African American characters resisting their characterization by vengeful acts are seen acting in such a manner, retrospectively because of their past experiences. Vengeful behavior was seen as a differentiating factor bearing some semblance to morality and nobility.

All male characters are represented through the heteronormative lens and their heterosexuality is regularly emphasized. Be it through portrayals of characters in family settings and through verbal references to family in the series or in their pursuit of women. However, there are racial differences in the way families are portrayed in *The Wire.* Where Caucasian characters are seen in stereotypical heteronormative nuclear family settings and African American characters are seen as a part of dysfunctional families. Yet, *The Wire* reverses the functional family stereotype as well, through its representation of an absent father but in this case a Caucasian male. Moreover, African American characters are represented as paternalistic figures guiding and helping kids in multiple ways but that was not the case with Caucasian characters similar to O'Brien's (2017) observation about black masculinity in Hollywood. Despite the differences in the representation of race, indulging in homoerotic banter and homophobic rhetoric is a uniform characteristic for all males. This banter and rhetoric are seen as an assertion of dominance over another male, to establish one's hierarchy in social situations. Arguably, it can also be interpreted as their bigoted perceptions on homosexuality. Moreover, masculinity in *The Wire* is also represented through gender displays associated with touch and femininity observed by Goffman (1979). Furthermore, there were racial differences in the assertion of authority through displays of touch. It was necessary for black male characters to assert their authority through masculine displays of touch but the same did not hold true for *The Wire*'s Caucasian characters. Albeit the displays concerning touch are not entirely limited to race and are

observable to varying degrees amongst all the characters in the series. However, displays of touch associated with masculinity, that is manly grip, provide greater context about power dynamics as compared to displays associated with femininity, that is feminine touch.

As Peterson (2009) suggests *The Wire* provides diverse representations of African American male existence but it also provides a diverse range of Caucasian male existence as well. Despite overlaps in characteristics exhibited by the characters, there is no singular or monolithic model of masculinity that dictates gender discourse in the series. *The Wire* also represents masculinity as flexible and subject to change due to environmental factors that influence one's life. Masculinity in *The Wire* is permeable and syncretic.

5.2. Limitations and future research

Although this study examines the representation of masculinity in its intersectionality with race, there are certain limitations to this study on gender. This study does not look into masculinity's intersection with class and sexuality explicitly. Gender identity is shaped by many factors involving the human experience (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Since, gender cannot be defined by any one factor but multiple factors that mutually influence each other (Collins & Bilge, 2016). An analysis of these multiple factors enhances the understanding of how factors of social division such as gender, race, class, and sexuality help in the organization of power and influence in society.

Additionally, *The Wire* presents multiple secondary and side characters through a non-heteronormative lens (Dhaenens & Van Bauwel, 2012). For example, Kima, Omar, and Snoop. Furthermore, the representation of masculinity in its intersection with class was beyond the scope of this study as well. Notions of sexuality and class further enable a better understanding of the complexity of gender because of their socio-economic implications on gender and everyday life (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Therefore, future research could focus on the representation of masculinity in its intersection with sexuality, and class. Moreover, the scope of this study does not allow a comparison of the representation of masculinity and femininity in relation to each other. Which could be a direction to take when undertaking future research on the representation of gender in *The Wire.*

The Wire resists the representation of complex gender identities through simple and binary representations, it signifies the ability of quality TV to depart from the praxis of representation of rigid identity positions employed in popular TV (Dhaenens & Van Bauwel,

2012). Bringing us to the next limitation of the study, quality TV. Quality TV is known to be progressive and deals with complex issues unlike regular TV (DeClue, 2011; Dhoest, 2014). Therefore, a quality TV series like *The Wire* inherently offers more nuanced perspectives on issues of race, gender, and sexuality as compared to popular TV programming. Investigating another genre of TV series such as soaps, comedies, etcetera could possibly reveal different results. Additionally, not all quality TV is perceived in similar fashion as *The Wire* (Kuipers, 2010)*.* For instance, quality TV has distinctive gender categories as well such as *Sex and the City.* Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalized as the representation of masculinity for all TV programming. Furthermore, quality TV has subtle and implicit connotations of education level and class (Kuipers, 2010). It is catered to specific audiences, leaving out the people situated in the disadvantaged intersections of society (Kuipers, 2010). A study approaching audience perceptions on the representation of gender in quality TV or regular TV could be an interesting direction for future research as well.

Notions of gender are influenced by culture, geography, and history (Goffman, 1979; Beasley, 2008; Moss, 2011; Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). For an American TV show like *The Wire,* which is based in America as well, discourse on gender is very geographically and culturally specific. Although there may be similarities in context to a global perspective on gender these findings cannot be generalized globally. Diverse local TV productions dealing with issues specifically local to them could be studied to form a general idea about how gender is globally understood. Furthermore, gender is a fluid concept and gender identities are dynamic but specific to a certain time in history (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). Therefore, any study concerning gender would have to conceptualize gender in context to the specific time period among other things.

To conclude, future research on gender could either focus on masculinity, femininity, or both. But gender must be analyzed in its intersection with other social factors. Much like this study and its focus on masculinity and race. Future research could study gender in its intersection with either class, or sexuality, or both these factors together. Moreover, future research could further contribute to gender studies in its intersection with race, class, and sexuality together as well. Future research could also analyze the representation of gender in a different genre of regular TV shows such as soaps and sitcoms. Since, they have a greater audience reach as compared to quality TV shows. Hence, the implications of the representation of gender in these genres is greater than that

of quality TV shows. Furthermore, studies concerning audience perceptions of gender in quality TV or regular TV shows could also help provide varied insights and perspectives on gender. Moreover, gender perceptions are geographically specific. Hence, analyzing TV shows originating from countries other than America could also provide insights into the influence of geography and culture on gender. Finally, gender is a fluid concept that is reconceptualized regularly. Therefore, future research on gender comparing past studies on the same could help understand the changing attitudes towards gender in our society, with context to time.

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7. Appendix A – Goffman's display excel sheet

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1				Goffmanian Analysis				
2	**Episode 1**	Relative Size(S)	Feminine Touch (FT)	Function Ranking (FR)	The Family (F)	The Ritualization of Subordination (RS)	Licensed Withdrawal (LW)
3	Bunny						
4	McNulty						
5	Stringer						
6	Carcetti						
7	Cutty						
8	Herc						
9	Carver						
10	Avon						
11							
12	**Episode 2**	Relative Size(S)	Feminine Touch (FT)	Function Ranking (FR)	The Family (F)	The Ritualization of Subordination (RS)	Licensed Withdrawal (LW)
13	Bunny						
14	McNulty						
15	Stringer						
16	Carcetti						
17	Cutty						
18	Herc						
19	Carver						
20	Avon						
21							
22	Episode 3	Relative Size(S)	Feminine Touch (FT)	Function Ranking (FR)	The Family (F)	The Ritualization of Subordination (RS)	Licensed Withdrawal (LW)
23	Bunny						
24	McNulty						
25	Stringer						
26	Carcetti						
27	Cutty						
28	Herc						
29	Carver						
30	Avon						
31							