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Why All the Limp Wrists? Black Gay Masculinity in Film

Presenter: Jared Hudson

Faculty Mentor: Christine Talbot

Abstract: Building on scholarship about black masculinity and white gay men in films, my research explores the representation of black gay males and their masculinity in film. Too often these men and their identities are presented in one-dimensional ways on screen, which can negatively narrow an audience's view of real life black gay men. Scholars have looked at black masculinity and white gay men in film but few have looked at black gay men in film. This research fills that gap by opening up new avenues in which this topic can be discussed. The purpose of this research is not to present a correct representation of black gay men but to instead analyze these representations and give audiences a different angle through which to view these characters and the men they represent. Fourteen films made between 1980 and 2014 will be viewed and analyzed according to how gay black male characters are stereotypically represented, as will the tone of each film relating to its characters. Using the theory of intersectionality I will develop my own theory of the black gay male gaze to analyze these films. Intersectionality is the study of oppression through the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality. I use this as a lens through which to analyze the intersecting identities present in the films. My theory of the black gay male gaze will be used in conjunction with intersectionality to show how black gay men may view stereotypical representations of their identities. I hope to challenge the ways film represents the identities of black gay men and ultimately open readers' minds to a new way of thinking about these men and their masculinity.