

CANADIAN JOURNAL OF

Disability Studies

Published by the Canadian Disability Studies Association · Association Canadienne des Études sur l'Incapacité

Canadian Journal of Disability Studies

**Published by the Canadian Disability Studies Association
Association canadienne d'études sur le handicap**

Hosted by The University of Waterloo

www.cjds.uwaterloo.ca

**They See Me Rollin’, They Hatin’: Discourses on Disability, Race and Masculinity
in the Wheelchair Drake Meme**

**They See Me Rollin’, They Hatin’ (Ils me voient rouler, ils détestent)
Discours sur le handicap, la race et la masculinité dans le mème de Drake en
fauteuil roulant**

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Abstract

Aubrey Graham, more commonly known as hip-hop performer Drake, presents himself as a man of contradiction—a lover and a fighter, sensitive but hard, successful but humble. Despite this subjective work, designed to present a complex embodiment of an artistic and financial success, the discourse of Graham online is often underpinned by suspicion and derision that seeks to redefine him as a pretender who is unworthy of the status he claims. Nowhere is this more evident than in the “Wheelchair Drake” memetic cluster, which uses an old *Degrassi: The Next Generation* promotional image of Graham sitting on a wheelchair, combined with humorous juxtaposition of rap lyrics, to critique Graham’s status as both a performer and a Black man. In various Wheelchair Drake memes, physical impairment becomes a living metaphor for a spoiled identity; the memes argue that, just like ableist imaginations of physically disabled people, Graham is doomed to a life of impotence and dependency. Built upon a sample of 583 user-generated images, coded into 9 thematic groups, this article excavates the latticed discourses of masculinity, disability and race that animate the Wheelchair Drake meme and consider the ways that this memetic cluster subjects Aubrey Graham to the strictures of ableist hegemonic masculinity.

Aubrey Graham, plus connu sous son nom d’artiste hip-hop Drake, se présente comme un homme de contradiction, amoureux mais combattant, sensible mais dur, accompli mais humble. Malgré ce travail subjectif, conçu pour présenter une incarnation complexe de la réussite artistique et financière, le discours en ligne sur Aubrey Graham sous-tend souvent la méfiance et la dérision qui cherchent à le redéfinir comme un prétendant indigne du statut qu’il revendique. Cela ne pourrait pas être plus évident qu’avec la série de mèmes « Drake en fauteuil roulant », qui utilise une vieille image promotionnelle de *Degrassi : La nouvelle Génération* dans laquelle Graham est assis sur un fauteuil roulant, combinée à une juxtaposition humoristique de paroles de rap, pour critiquer le statut de Graham en tant qu’interprète et homme noir. Dans divers mèmes de Drake en fauteuil roulant, la déficience physique devient une métaphore vivante d’une identité gâtée. Les mèmes soutiennent que, tout comme les représentations mentales capacitistes des personnes ayant un handicap physique, Graham est voué à une vie d’impuissance et de dépendance. Grâce à un échantillon de 583 images générées par les utilisateurs, codées en 9 groupes thématiques, cet article explore les discours entrecroisés de la masculinité, du

handicap et de la race qui animent le mème de Drake en fauteuil roulant et examine les manières dont cette série de mèmes soumet Aubrey Graham aux restrictions de la masculinité capacitiste et hégémonique.

Keywords

Disability Studies; Digital Memes; Discourse Analysis; Masculinity

Introduction

At age 14, Aubrey Graham began his career on the popular Canadian teen drama *Degrassi: The Next Generation*, where he performed the wheelchair-user character Jimmy Brooks. During his time on *Degrassi*, Graham explored anxieties around masculinity and corporeal capability through the Jimmy Brooks character, who starts the series as a popular, confident and athletic teenager, only to be metamorphosed by a gunshot-induced spinal cord injury into a sullen artist who struggles to maintain romantic relationships¹. For most though, Graham is better known as hip hop recording artist Drake, an artist whose oeuvre stands in direct opposition of the Brooks character—whereas Jimmy Brooks is vulnerable, dependent and impotent, Graham’s lyrics present Drake as virile, strong and (sexually) accomplished—a Certified Lover Boy. Despite Graham’s concerted efforts to validate his proximity to hegemonic masculinity through feats of strength, threats of violence and assurances of prolific sexual conquest, online discourses rarely accept this interpellation and surface an antagonistic version of Drake’s reality and express this most commonly through satirical user-generated viral digital content known commonly as “Internet memes”. One such memetic cluster, the Wheelchair Drake meme, reveals clear patterns in which proximity to physical disability and femininity are used to highlight Graham’s inadequate masculinity. Graham seemingly cannot escape the confines of the wheelchair and is perpetually imagined as infantile, feminine and lacking in masculine and physical strength. These emotional and critical impressions of Drake are made manifest in the ways we talk about and represent

¹ As previously explored in *The Fantasy of Disability* (Preston, 2017)

Graham online, dismantling and satirizing his constructed self-image through memetic clusters like the Wheelchair Drake meme.

The objective of this article is two-fold. First, the article tracks the dominant themes of gender and disability found within user generated Wheelchair Drake memes and how these understandings assert hegemonic white able-bodied masculine supremacy. Second, the article considers how despite Graham spending a career complicating racist understandings of Black masculinity, the Wheelchair Drake memetic cluster often seeks to identify rapper Drake as an insufficient exemplar of masculinity because of his proximity to femininity and disability. These memes are employed to publicly shame him for operating outside these dominant boundaries. Graham's musical identity, and subsequent parody thereof, reveal deeply engrained societal imaginations of race and the disabled subject, how physical disability and race interface with oppressive forms of masculinity, and the desire to delegitimize those who dare live outside these oppressive subjective categories.

A Brief Aside on Discourse Analysis and Methodology

“Pullin' back the curtain by myself, take a look, ayy” – from “Nonstop” (2018)

Despite the popularizing of the term “meme” over the past decade, there is still debate over what digital content constitutes a “meme”. For the purposes of this article, we will be using Limor Shifman's definition of Internet memes: “Instead of depicting the meme as a single cultural unit that has propagated successfully, I suggest defining an Internet meme as (a) a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance; (b) that were created with awareness of each other; and (c) were circulated,

imitated, and/or transformed via the Internet by many users” (Shifman, 2013). Using this definition, a meme is then constituted of two parts: the memetic vehicle, which is the form or structure of the meme, and the memetic content, which are the user-generated variant ideas that animate the vehicle. Similar to Roland Barthes’ description of mythology as a parasitic concept that cannibalizes the host form for political or ideological ends (Barthes, 1972, p. 132), so too do memetic vehicles play host to the ideological and creative content of meme creators who share personal views, opinions and jokes through the memetic vehicle. As Shifman explains, “While memes are seemingly trivial and mundane artifacts, they actually reflect deep social and cultural structures. In many senses, Internet memes can be treated as (post)modern folklore, in which shared norms and values are constructed through cultural artifacts such as Photoshopped images or urban legends” (Shifman, 2013).

In order to grapple with the discourses surrounding and subjecting Aubrey Graham, we turn to the amorphous tradition of critical discourse analysis, rooted in the writings of Michel Foucault. Foucault was critical of rigid structuralist analysis, imploring critical thinkers to imagine discourse as more than just texts and meaning, but to consider the complex power relations binding and constructing subjects through language, with special attention paid to “the power inherent in language [that] seeks to understand how historically and socially instituted sources of power construct the wider social world through language” (Given, 2008). While many have written candidly about the ways critical discourse analysis is often resistant to formalization or structure (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdin 2017), the analysis presented here is, in part, guided by James Paul Gee’s understanding of discourse analysis. To Gee, discourse analysis is

about looking beyond word usage and exploring the ways we say (inform), do (act), and be (identify) through language (Gee, 2011, p. 2). While Foucault was concerned with the dense genealogies of knowledge and power structures, this article focuses in on the Wheelchair Drake memetic cluster's co-relational grammar (Gee, 2011, p. 50) and intertextual utterances (Gee, 2011, p. 58) to understand how these memes use disability in an attempt to materialize Graham's deficient masculinity while simultaneously naturalizing binary imaginations that "real (Black) men"² are physically strong (not weak), perpetrators of violence (not victims), and financially and sexually successful (not poor or impotent).

To conduct this study, Wheelchair Drake memes were gathered through a convenience sampling methodology targeting popular English-language meme generator and meme archive websites³. Images were gathered from archives dedicated to the specific meme or, where possible, sites were searched using the phrase "Wheelchair Drake" and "Wheelchair Jimmy" to account for subtle variation in naming and tagging. After eliminating images and memes that did not conform to the meme format, a total of 4788 images were identified and sorted by their popularity on the website repositories. To maintain a high degree of confidence with a margin of error of approximately 5%, a sample of 583 images were selected, first from smaller archives to increase diversity of submissions. The remaining sample was gathered from the largest archive of Wheelchair

² As expanded upon later, this article is informed by Tommy Curry's *The Man-Not* (2017a) and the contention that popular and academic work has long misdiagnosed Black masculinity as a subordinate white (supremacist) masculinity or essentialized archetypes of brutes or savages, none of which fully capture actual or desired experiences of masculinity for Black men and boys. This article does not attempt to track or define "real" Black masculinity but, instead, investigates how the racist assumptions of Black masculinity that Curry identifies in fact materialize and are subsequently reinforced through the creation, liking and sharing of memetic clusters like the Wheelchair Drake meme.

³ Sample was generated from memegenerator.net, knowyourmeme.com, quickmeme.com, ifunny.co and funnycaptions.com

Drake memes at memegenerator.net. Compiling duplicates or slight variations in text, namely difference in spelling or phrasing, the sample was left with 295 distinct variations with 2 memes included that retain the original *Degrassi* promotional image but do not strictly conform to the top text / bottom text format most commonly attributed to the memetic vehicle.

After coding, 9 distinct thematic codes emerged, informally clustered under four categories: disability memes, Graham memes, both disability/Graham and nonsensical/random memes (Table 1). The first cluster is comprised of memes that refer

to physical impairment and disability specifically, with memes that make definitional or functional claims about experiences of disability or impairment, memes focused on walking and/or the use (or dysfunction) of legs, memes making overt reference to wheelchairs

Thematic cluster	#	%
Wheelchair/Disability memes	219	38%
Graham/Drake memes	83	14%
Both Disability & Drake memes	252	43%
Outlier memes	29	5%
Total	583	100%
Table 1		

or wheels in general and memes that satirize Graham appearing in a wheelchair despite not being a person with physical limitation. The second cluster is comprised of memes that focus on Graham himself, with memes that question his financial or career success, memes that question Graham’s sexual ability, memes about Graham’s apparent femininity and sexual orientation, and memes that question his authenticity in relation to other Black rappers. A third cluster was formed of memes that fell into both categories, combining discourses of disability in direct relation to Graham himself. The final cluster,

dubbed “outliers”, are memes that either did not fit within the two primary thematic groups or whose meaning was hyper specific⁴ or otherwise incomprehensible⁵.

Given the prominence of the wheelchair in the stock image, it should be no surprise that a majority of the memes engage with disability directly, but nearly half of the memes sampled were coded as falling into both categories, indicating an important intersection between disability and Graham’s identity. Memes coded as exclusively about disability were far more common than memes exclusively about Graham/Drake, indicating the foundational status of disability within the cluster. Outlier memes represent a small percentage of the sample and indicates a reasonable capturing of the discursive intention of the cluster. The gathered sample is by no means exhaustive, but provides compelling insight into the ways the meme was typically used from a content and stance perspective (see Chapter 4 Shifman, 2013), as well as several clearly emerging themes that reveal specific foci on disability and race that resonate with creators and sharers of the meme.

Memetic and Viral Discourses on Drake

“Jealousy is just love and hate at the same time” – from “Over My Dead Body” (2011)
Fittingly, the first popular Internet meme to interrogate the Drake persona is rooted in Graham’s early days on *Degrassi*. Beginning in 2009, a viral image in the form of a “demotivational poster,” a memetic subgenre intended to parody or ridicule motivational posters like the “Hang in there, baby” cat poster popularized in the 1970s (Adam (pseudo), 2016), started spreading on social media using a promotional image of Graham

⁴ For example: “But then again / maybe Vartan will” (*Vartan Will*, 2011)

⁵ For example: “HAMFFFF” (*HAMFFFF*, 2011)

as Jimmy Brooks from *Degrassi: The Next Generation*, sitting happily in a wheelchair on what appears to be an outdoor parking lot or basketball court, with the text “They see me rollin’. They hatin’” (Trash Boat (pseud), 2012a). This meme is in fact a mash-up of a previously popular 2006 meme rooted in the lyrics of Chamillionaire’s song “Ridin’ Dirty,” sometimes superimposed upon images of people in wheelchairs (Trundle (pseud), 2009). Whereas the “Foundation for a Better Life” motivational billboards analyzed by Alison Kafer sought to individualize and erase lived experiences of disability (Kafer, 2013, p. 87), the “Ridin’ Dirty” demotivational memes appear to center disability explicitly. They indicate a sense of celebration of the notion that a wheelchair user, despite what jealous or judgemental onlookers think, may be riding with the same bravado as Chamillionaire. The *Degrassi* promotional image was then pulled out of the demotivational poster format and translated into a typical stock image text-overlay meme in 2010, often humorously juxtaposing modified Drake lyrics in relation to rolling or sitting in a wheelchair (Trash Boat (pseud), 2012a).

Delving into the discourses informing the Wheelchair Drake cluster, we start by examining the most common thematic category: physical impairment and loss. Central to the memetic discourse of this cluster are playful inversions of Drake lyrics to transform them to be about physical impairment or the use of the wheelchair. Some memes are rooted in lyrics, Drake or otherwise, that include words like “wheel” or “roll” to humorously reconfigure the lyric to be about using wheelchair, such as “rolling in the deep” (Rolling in the Deep, 2012a), “rollin on dubs” (Rollin on Dubs, 2011), or “rollin on the river” (Rolling on a River, 2012). A fair number of the memes within the sample rely on homophonic lyrical alterations using the word “wheel”, such as the “wheels are on the

rise” (Wheels Are on the Rise, 2012) which substitutes the word “real” or “maybe she wheel” (Maybe She Wheel, n.d.) which substitutes the word “will” from the lyrics. Other memes simply replace words within Drake lyrics to connect with the wheelchair image, such as the over 20 variants of Drake’s viral phrase “YOLO”, you only live once, being converted into phrases like “you only walk once” (Trash Boat (pseud), 2012m) or “you only roll once” (Trash Boat (pseud), 2012l). The wheelchair, the symbol *par excellence* of disability in North America, appears to hold a deep gravitational pull that draws all other themes to encircle it. We also see a conflation of wheelchair use and the complete inability to walk, a discourse found in other viral images (shotty1058 (pseud), 2011).

More interesting are the discursive claims made about physical impairment specifically and disability more generally, mirroring common ableist tropes of inability and loss found in other forms of mass media (Cumberbatch, 1992; Ellcessor & Kirkpatrick, 2017; Ellis et al., 2019; Ellis & Goggin, 2015; Gartner & Joe, 1987; Mogk, 2013; Norden, 1994; *Framed: Interrogating Disability in the Media*, 1997; Preston, 2017; Riley, 2012). Throughout the memetic cluster, disability is presented as a clear binary opposition to able-bodiedness (Goodley, 2018). To encounter disability is to fundamentally shift one’s subjective definition—Graham can no longer just be “Drake” while sitting in a wheelchair, he must be seen now as “Drizzabled” (Brad (pseud), 2012). Disability is positioned throughout the cluster as not just a moment of bodily change but of discursive change, when the old “normal” self is shattered by the new, lesser, disabled self. The moment of this rupture is casually or overtly indicated as being caused by bodily injury. Graham finds himself in a wheelchair because of accident or misfortune: because of a sprained ankle (Trash Boat (pseud), 2012f) or athlete’s foot (Athlete’s Foot,

2011), an accident with fireworks (Fireworks, 2012) or because of a failed attempt at deadlifting (Deadlifted, 2014), referencing a social media post Drake made (That Guy at the Gym (pseud), 2015). Perhaps physical impairment is rooted in drugs, like having your life ruined by trying acid (Try 'Cid, 2011) or excessive partying causing someone to stunt too hard (Stunt Hard, 2011). Conversely, physical impairment is thought to be the result of violence, either being caused by gun violence (Take a Shot for Me, 2011; Shots for Me, 2011), being beaten up for talking “stupid” (Off with Your Legs, 2012) or because of an arrow to the knee (Arrow to the Knee, 2011), an explicit reference to a popular Skyrim meme (mattmanj (pseud), 2011). While it could be argued the focus on violence is tied to the disabling moment in *Degrassi*, in which Jimmy Brooks is paralyzed after being shot at school, the discourse of disability as bodily loss seems to transcend the Jimmy Brooks origin story. There are also a handful of memes that tether debility to the effects of aging, referring to use of the wheelchair as “stuntin like my grandma” (Trash Boat (pseud), 2012h) or deploying the Drake lyric “I’m way too young to be feeling this old” (Trash Boat (pseud), 2012e). Either way, the memes assure us that for people with physical impairments, “Walking? Its over” (Walking?, n.d.).

Disability is routinely presented as not a temporary or episodic state, but a subjective change that is permanent. Adapting the Drake lyric “Last name ever, first name greatest”, these memes claim that this individual will never walk again (DailyDoseOfDrake, 2015) or rather than having no need for “new friends”, this individual will never get new, presumably functional, legs (No New Legs No New Legs No No New, n.d.). We are told that because his “legs gave out” he will now be “in a chair forever” (In the Chair Forever, 2012). This is a tragic loss, with the yearning for

functional legs being cast as a higher priority than finding the girl who will be his everything—legs are “all [he] ever wanted” (All I Ever Wanted, 2012) and he still “think[s] about the legs he had” (Legs He Had, 2011). And, worse still, not even time will heal this wound (Time Heals, 2012). Contrary to popular discourses of disability and the importance of finding a cure (Longmore, 2016), the Wheelchair Drake meme frames disability as an inescapable or permanent condition with serious consequences for an individual—a profound, and permanent, loss of ability.

The lack of ability animates much of the discourse of disability and physical impairment throughout the cluster. The loss or lack of ability becomes the focus of much of the word play, seeing no world outside the dis/ability binary opposition for those with physical impairment (Goodley, 2016, p. 127). Contrary to the saying “what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger,” disability is thought to reveal the “lie” (Trash Boat (pseud), 2012i)—disability is of course a sign of weakness. After all, people with physical impairments have “leg issues” (Leg Issues, 2011) and, as a result, cannot “wheely” play (Don’t Wheely Play, 2012). Along with numerous examples fixated on the inability to walk, the memetic cluster also implies that physical impairment is a totalizing experience, resulting in slobber or drool (Tuck My Napkin in My Shirt / ’cuz Im Just Slobberin like That, 2012). Disabled people are also thought to need help with intimate tasks, such as needing help to put pants on (Put My Pants On, 2012) or depend on others to help getting them back into the wheelchair (Help Me Up, 2011). While the field of disability studies has long engaged with the positive experiences of inter- or codependent relations (see Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018), these memes rely on hegemonic individualist notions that to be dependent on others for basic tasks is cause for both anxiety and shame.

Disability is also thought to result in romantic or sexual loss, with one jokingly being unable to fall in love because they cannot stand (PeopleBeLike2 (pseud), 2015). This sample posits that romantic partners must help disabled people before sexual intercourse (Help Me Out, 2012) or that physical impairment results in a man being unable to feel their penis (Can't Feel My Penis, 2011). This loss or inability is presumed to be met with hostility and hatred (Hate Being Crippled, 2011), sometimes directed at those who still can walk (You're Walking?, 2011) while, at other times, this derision is focused on those who do not take disability as a legitimate or serious loss (You Think It's a Game?, 2011). These discourses align with the treatment of disability in Kafer's study of motivational billboards, which also rely heavily on ways that the 'disability as loss to be overcome' notion is "...natural, accepted, commonsense, and therefore beyond the scope of debate or discussion" (Kafer, 2013, p. 87).

The memetic cluster is not just about physical impairment, but draws on common discourses of disability in general. For instance, the meme is used to insult others' intelligence or physical ability, such as mocking the LA Lakers' as being so unskilled that a wheelchair user could be their starting center (position) (LA Lakers, 2017) or that only someone with a developmental disability - a subject here presented as an uncontested object of irrationality or stupidity - could believe the 2011-2012 Miami Heat are the best team ever (Are You Retarded?, 2011). There is also a sense that disabled people can be inherently tied together, with Wheelchair Drake having "moves like [Stephen] Hawking" (Moves like Hawking, 2011) or swimming like Nemo (Nemo, 2011), the animated clown fish with a deficient flipper (Stanton & Unkrich, 2003). Disability, as a concept, becomes the dominant character trait by which we are to

understand the intellectual pursuits of Hawking, the minimal inability of Nemo and the talents of Graham—disability is universalized and therefore discursively interchangeable.

Although representing a small percentage of the sample, it is important to note the ways the cluster is used to offer counter-hegemonic narratives of disability and physical impairment: for some memes, the problem is not disability itself but the world disabled people find themselves within. While much of the discourse is rooted in a medical model of disability, there are several examples that situated the problem of disability not within the body but within the social environment, specifically the ways wheelchair access could hold one back (Small Ledge, 2012; Step Free Access, 2012). There is also a small cluster of memes that appear to take direct aim at Graham himself and the politics of a nondisabled user using a wheelchair or playing a disabled character (Siebers, 2004). Although not as direct in some of the “started from the bottom” memes (Started from the Bottom?, 2013), which satirize Graham’s claims of humble beginning despite being a teenage television star, the “fuck a fake chair” cluster injects physical impairment into a lyric about questionable friendships. The fake chair here is the one Graham is sitting in—not only is his origin story inaccurate but perhaps his fame is ill-gotten as well; he is an “FDR-ake” (FDR-Ake, 2011).

Taken as a whole, the Wheelchair Drake meme travels many well-worn discursive pathways in defining, explaining and imagining physical impairment. When confronted with a wheelchair, the primary focus becomes the legs and the ways they do (or more likely do not) function. Disability is thought to be the result of a disabling moment or incident, an accident or injury that resulted in the tragic loss of physical ability. The response to this loss is often a hostile one, either directed internally or externally, as

someone with a disability of course wishes they were not. This anger is thought to be justified because, after all, a disabled person is unable to do things both big and small—disability seeps into all aspects of one’s life. Worse still, this profound loss is destined, not temporary or fleeting. While cure may be desired, this bodily carnage is sure to last forever. In summation, the discourse of disability within this cluster continues to be reminiscent of Goffman’s stigmatized subject, “ritualistically polluted” and “spoiled” identities to be pitied, at best, or outright avoided at worst. Liberatory theories of disability may be circulating within the world of disability studies or bubbling under the surface in disability justice movements, but this memetic cluster indicates that these counter-hegemonic ideas have not yet shifted the popular biomedical imagination of disability.

Being the Man

“Bitch I’m the man, don't you forget it” – from “Shot For Me” (2011)

Of interest to this study are the ways that physical impairment (specifically) and disablement (more generally) intersect with discourses of masculinity and race in mutually reinforcing ways. Throughout the Wheelchair Drake cluster, disability appears not just as a symbol of bodily loss but as a metaphorical tool wielded to level harsh critiques against Graham’s lyrical claims toward his embodiment of proper or desired forms of masculinity. To unpack the discourses of patriarchal masculinity and the ways it collides with white supremacist conceptions of Black masculinity, we turn to the field of masculinity studies and race theory. Generally speaking, masculinity studies is “a product of the major reconfiguration of academic disciplines that has taken place since the 1960s”

(Adams & Savran, 2002, p. 1). Borne out of second-wave feminism, masculinity studies seeks to investigate the ways in which “masculinities are historically constructed, mutable, and contingent, and analyzing their many and widespread effects” (Adams & Savran, 2002, p. 3). In this way, masculinity studies uncovers the ways that patriarchal society does not just assign “man” into a dominant role, but also dominates and subjects men to specific roles while limiting opportunities for transgression, especially in terms of sexual and emotional status.

The concept of hegemonic (or dominant) masculinity was first developed to articulate “a related conceptual discussion of the making of masculinities and the experience of men’s bodies” and the ways men are compelled to associate with - and attempt to achieve - a socially acceptable gender performance of strength and dominance (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 830). Firmly rooted in work investigating power, subjectivity and difference, the concept of hegemonic masculinity proposes a hierarchy of masculinities best understood as “...the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 833). The key takeaway to understand is the notion that hegemonic masculine positionality is not a common or “normal” role, but rather “embod[ies] the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). It is a complex ideological cluster that is not exclusively characterized by violence and domination, but allows for challenges, modifications and alterations based on local, regional and national contexts:

Men can dodge among multiple meanings according to their interactional needs. Men can adopt hegemonic masculinity when it is desirable; but the same men can distance themselves strategically from hegemonic masculinity at other moments. Consequently, “masculinity” represents not a certain type of man but, rather, a way that men position themselves through discursive practices. (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 841)

Hegemonic masculinity, then, is not a static concept that may be generally applied to all men, but rather a contested subject position that allows some room for contradiction insofar as it allows for the continuation of male dominance. A prime example of this is Demetriou’s 2001 study that found elements of gay masculine style and culture, which had otherwise been widely rejected as antithetical to hegemonic masculinity, now slowly being accepted by heterosexual men as an appropriate hybrid (cited in Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 845). While elements of gay masculinity may be slowly entering acceptance under the rubric of hegemonic masculinity, male disabled bodies are still largely seen as failing to live up to the requirements of strength, dominance and sexual reproduction seen as central to being a quintessential “man” (see Siebers, 1999).

It is from this position of contesting hegemonic masculinity that we find the work of Tommy Curry. In articles and *The Man-Not* (2017), Curry explores the ways in which Black masculinity has not been adequately considered as anything other than a subcategory of hegemonic white masculinity, assuming that all men benefit equally or comparably from the subjugation of women. As Curry explains,

Scholars investigating Black manhood are not only denied the ability to assert that Black males do not, in fact, conform to white masculinity but also condemned for suggesting that Black men do not, in fact, aim for this semblance, given their distance from gender/man/human. Under the current paradigm, Black males are theorized as only mimetic entities, incapable of reflectively challenging white patriarchal social roles. (Curry, 2017a, p. 40)

In this way, Curry argues that true attention to lived experiences of Black masculinity reveals “that patriarchy is not an insular and gender-opposing system that protects all men while subjugating all women” (Curry, 2017a, p. 42) and, instead, we see that histories of post-Civil War racist pseudo-science and ethnology have long set the conditions for understanding Black masculinity as inherently threatening, degenerate or otherwise lacking and in need of urgent correction (Curry, 2017a, p. 54). In this way, much of the scholarship Curry critiques fails to articulate a “real” sense of Black masculinity because of the caricatures of Blackness this research is often founded upon. Ironically, the very theories that are proposed as useful analytic interventions for the analysis of Black masculinity presuppose the very stereotypes which Black males are defined by in society. The conceptualization of Black masculinity offered by such theories are so overbearing that even armed political strategies made necessary by the terrorism of the state aimed to protect Black men, Black women, and Black children against the Ku Klux Klan or tyrannical cops are posited as attempts to gain patriarchal power. (Curry, 2017a, p. 223)

This focus on attaining the benefits of white patriarchal power, according to Curry, has resulted in scholars and the public alike to misidentify and misunderstand the realities of life for Black men and boys—not as perpetrators but often the victims of both state and domestic violence. We are not just misunderstanding Black masculinities, though, but also the ways that “...the Black male body generally, and the disabled Black male body more specifically, is engaged as a phobia-inspiring entity” driven by white fear (Curry, 2017b, p. 324) and resulting in horrendous state violence (Curry, 2018).

In this way, the academy must think about race, and Black masculinity specifically, in different or more complex ways. While Curry reveals how conceptions of Black masculinity from the 1980s and 1990s are inaccurate or baseless, the very stereotypes of Black men and boys being (re)formed by sex and violence appear to be the very prism which refracts Graham's masculine identity within the memetic cluster. To Curry's argument, the notions of black masculinity articulated by scholars like Robert Staples (Staples, 1982), bell hooks (hooks, 2004) and Frank Rudy Cooper (Cooper, 2006) align closely with the ways Graham himself talks about his own life lyrically, and how these claims of masculine success are subsequently ridiculed through Graham's proximity to disablement and femininity.

An analysis of this interplay between masculinity and disability in the case of Graham cannot be complete without engaging with the intersection of disability and race. As Anna Hinton argues, "Blackness and disability are so deeply enmeshed that it is difficult to write about one without, in some way, touching upon the other" (Hinton, 2021). Moya Bailey and Izetta Autumn Mobley concur, lamenting that "[r]ace marks Black people as being inherently disabled, fundamentally other. In this way, race and disability are mutually constitutive" (Bailey & Mobley, 2019, p. 24). This is because, of course, "...disability always exists as part of an intersected identity that includes, at minimum, race, gender, sexuality, class, and gender presentation. These categories dynamically inform each other, so analyses of them must attend to how audiences (broadly defined) and the disabled accept, eschew, or manipulate the narratives in flux" (Pickens, 2017, p. 95).

When approaching this very memetic cluster, one could read the memes through the lens of “The Dozens,” an insult contest evolving out of chattel slavery that uses inter-group insults, like modern day “yo momma” jokes, to strengthen the resolve of those subjected to ridicule. For Darryl Anthony Smith, there is perhaps a liberatory or anti-oppressive opportunity to these types of jabs, noting:

The dozens is a comedic practice in dis-/ability that spotlights our precondition as such through the critical refiguring of that precondition in verbal displays of dialectical dismemberment. Such dismemberment is “divine” in the sense that through this critical comedic practice, the whole is retained in every part and, indeed, the whole is positively strengthened through the sparring that ironically attempts to undermine it. In this sense, the dozens is a form of spiritual practice, the play of which is essentially comedy at the level of cosmological preservation. (Smith, 2013, p. 293)

These insults, in a way, both universalize experiences of disability in which we all must acknowledge our subjective and corporeal limits in order to play, while also reducing the potential subjugating effects of racist and ableist insults used by oppressive forces to delegitimize certain subjects. From this perspective, Wheelchair Drake memes are perhaps not about tearing Graham down at all, instead offering up the protective power of the Dozens to fortify Graham to be a different kind of man. While this may be the case for some users, the current anonymous and ephemeral nature of meme creation limits our abilities to explore the intended meaning or cultural intention of the creator. And, perhaps even if we did know, it would not be as relevant as the meanings being generated by the receiver of the message (Hall, 1999). At the same time, the most common “jokes” used to frame Graham through the Wheelchair Drake meme appear not to engage with deeper understandings of corporeal limit or racist expectations of masculinity but, instead, seek to expose the ways that Drake, the artist, is not who he claims to be in his music. The

memes appear to argue that Drake may perform but does not embody a correct form of hegemonic Black masculinity.

A longstanding expectation of hegemonic masculinity is that “real men” are not just physically dominant but also financially successful “breadwinners” able to take care of those around them (Creighton, 1999; Holt & Thompson, 2004; Horrell & Humphries, 1997; Pfau-Effinger, 2004). Men who are not financially independent and rely on the support of others are marked as deficient or less valuable. The Wheelchair Drake memetic vehicle is used in several instances to make racist jokes about poor Black men asking to borrow money until they “get back on their feet” (beautifulashlee357 (pseud) & Daquan (pseud), 2015), the wheelchair serving as the punch line that just as a wheelchair user will never stand again, the loan will never be repaid by these deficient men. Memes such as these appear rooted in the belief that the poverty experienced by Black men is of their own doing, ignoring the clear systemic connections between criminalization and racial fear that disadvantage Black men in securing employment (Curry, 2017a, pp. 107–108). Graham is no stranger to discourses of wealth as symbolic of masculine status, as many of his songs embrace the hip hop braggadocious tenor of “money over everything” (Graham, Samuels, et al., 2011). At the same time, the Wheelchair Drake memetic cluster routinely takes Drake’s claim to financial and artistic success and subverts it with the injection of disability. Graham, who brags in “Headlines” to excessive drinking because he always drinks to his accomplishments, is reimaged as “rolling” instead of floating “in and out of consciousness” (Trash Boat (pseud), 2012b). Similarly, he claims that “fame feels like a drug that I’ve taken too much of” in “I Never Ever Trip”, but subverting the song, the meme claims he cannot “trip” because he is in a wheelchair (I

Never Ever Trip, 2012). A significant substitution, these memes shift from the emancipatory feeling of “floating” or being high to the apparent grounded or “confined” nature of wheelchair use—like a wheelchair user unable to jump, perhaps Graham is not flying quite as high as he claims. Similarly, when bragging about being able to provide a night “bigger than you ever had,” the lyric is remixed to be doing it “wheel big” (Trash Boat (pseud), 2012j) or the reason he is “down to spend whatever” is because lately he has “been on a roll” (Trash Boat (pseud), 2012c). All he does is “wheel” (All I Do Is Wheel, 2012), rather than win (DJ Khaled, 2010). Graham’s throne being lyrically connected to his status as a successful rapper is minimized elsewhere as an invalid or less important one; a mere wheelchair (I Just Feel like the Throne Is for the Taking / and Its a Wheelchair, 2011). Rather than being a young money cash money billionaire, he is only YMCMD, with his billionaire status being replaced by disability itself (YMCMD, 2012).

Graham’s material wealth is not only drawn into question, but so too is his ownership of an important marker of masculine power: an expensive car. Car culture has long been entangled with masculine status (Best, 2005; Duerringer, 2015; Dummitt, 2007; Gross, 2007; Mellström, 2004; Morgan, 2009) and within the Wheelchair Drake meme, lyrics about cars are regularly shifted to be about wheelchairs. Women are not sleeping with Graham because of who he is, but instead, are joked to only want to “f*** my ride” (F*** My Ride, 2011), with the wheelchair implying Graham does not have the woman or the cool car. Rather than driving a nice car with big rims, the “rims on the ride” are satirized as referential of the wheels on his wheelchair (Es Ist Freitag, 2011; Freitag Und Die Felgen, 2011; Sittin on 25’ Wheels, n.d.; I Need Dubs, 2011; I Ride Spinners, 2011; JMac1127 (pseud), 2012; Throw Some D’s, 2011; Tippin’ on 44s, 2011;

Trash Boat (pseud), 2012g; Yea Them 20s, 2011; Rollin on Dubs, 2011). When Graham brags about buying a white Rolls-Royce Ghost, one meme quipped that he has bought a wheelchair instead (Bought a White Ghost, 2011). While hip-hop group Big Tymers may have a quarter tank of gas in their new E-class Mercedes-Benz or cruising with the top down in their 430 Lexus, Graham's new vehicle is a wheelchair (430 Lex, 2011; New E-Class, 2011). And even if Graham does have a nice car, at the end of the day he will be stuck in the handicapped parking spot (Wheelchair Zone, 2011). In all of these examples, the humour is derived from the wheelchair substituting or replacing typical symbols of wealth and status, leveraging the belief that wheelchairs are symbolic of deficiency and loss rather than success and notoriety. Despite lyrical claims, Graham is not as successful as he brags and the discursive weight of the wheelchair is used to embody these perceptions.

When discussing ascribed Black masculinity it is necessary to consider the historical role that white emasculation and castration of the black male plays in defining contemporary racist ideas of the Black male. In *Black Masculinity* Robert Staples writes, "It was during slavery that attempts to emasculate the black male were made, motivated by the fear of his sexual power" (Staples, 1982, p. 76), and going on to quote Calvin Hernton's work he states "There is in the psyche of the racist an inordinate disposition or sexual atrocity. He sees in the Negro the essence of his own sexuality, that is those qualities that he wishes but fears he does not possess. Symbolically, the Negro at once affirms and negates the white man's sense of sexual security [...] it is the black man who is sacred to the racists. And that is why he must castrate him" (c.f. Staples, 1982, p. 77). This castration or emasculation that begun with the enslavement of the black male

continues through history with dominant markers of masculinity being the ability to vote, having property rights, fair access to gainful employment, achieving status as the head of the nuclear family and so on (Bailey & Mobley, 2019, p. 26). Even so, “[t]he image of emasculated and castrated black males is so embedded in the cultural imagination that many black parents feel it is crucial to train boys to be ‘tough’” (hooks, 2004, p. 86). In hip-hop, this toughness would seem to be, at least in part, exhibited through dominance over women (Weitzer & Kubrin, 2009).

Not only do these stereotypes of “toughness” dominate mainstream media but at the same time, “Black males today live in a world that pays them the most attention when they are violently acting out” (hooks, 2004, p. 57) as the “media teaches young black males that the patriarchal man is a predator, that only the strong and the violent survive” (hooks, 2004, p. 27). Subsequently, “[y]oung males embrace a notion of cool that is about getting pussy and getting ready to kill (or at least to make somebody think you can kill) because as an identity this one is easier to come by than the quest to know the self and to create a life of meaning” (hooks, 2004, p. 155). While Curry contests hooks’ claims, arguing instead that these are “stereotypes masquerading as theory” (Curry, 2017a, p. 129), he does agree that “...the language and imagery of the Black super-predator remains imprinted on the nation’s collective psyche, as does the violent mythology of the Black communities from which these Black men and boys come” (Curry, 2017a, p. 114). Anna Hinton also importantly notes that “[r]epresentations of black manhood have been informed by racist, psychiatric discourse. In the mid to late nineteenth century, white, racist depictions of black men characterized them as hyper-sexual and psychotic Bucks

and Brutes” (Hinton, 2017, p. 293). Graham claims to embody these mythologies through his lyrics while the memetic cluster deploys disability to reveal the claims as farce.

The connection drawn between violence and Black men and boys can also be seen through a disability lens. Hinton argues that,

all too often, vulnerability and disability go undetected in black men and in black people more generally, and racist and ableist stereotypes bolster and reproduce this erasure. When black men reclaim/appropriate/signify on these types through rhetorical performances of violent masculinity, I argue that they reproduce this erasure. (Hinton, 2017, p. 290)

Violence and aggression become not only dominant stereotypical markers of Black masculinity, but perhaps an important tool to fight back against emasculation. Through the performance of violence (or strength more generally), the debilitating label of “disability” is washed away—one cannot be both disabled and violent as disability is bound to imaginations of weakness. Proximity to disability could then be thought of in threatening terms. As Hinton explains,

Qualities typically associated with disability, such as vulnerability, inter/dependence, bodily fragility, and weakness, are antithetical to the “hard nigger,” black masculinity espoused by hip hop culture—a culture criticized, and most often rightfully so, for its materialism, misogyny, and violence. (Hinton, 2017, p. 292)

In this way, performance of violence, literal or figurative, then becomes an important means of distancing oneself from stigmatized subjectivities like disability and poor mental health. Conversely, disability becomes symbolic evidence of the pseudo-scientific claims that mark Black bodies and minds as inherently dysfunctional.

Although Graham openly derides excessive reference to violence in hip hop with lines like “when you hollerin’ at labels and they silencing you back/Cause you fail to

thoroughly discuss some violence in ya track” (Graham, 2007a), he still attempts to infuse aggression and aggressive invulnerability into his lyrics with varying success. He refers to himself as “the young spitter that everybody in rap fear” (Graham et al., 2009) and frequently mentions how his rap is comparable to violent action, including “murdering and avoiding conviction” (Graham, 2007b), “harnessing a weapon” (Drake & Nickelus F, 2006) “killin’ shit” and “going trigga happy” (Graham, Roberts II, et al., 2011). However, the memetic cluster seems focused on how Graham should or would fall victim to the violent prowess of other (more potent) Black men. One meme implies that Graham’s excessive bragging will get him “hit” (Get You Hit, 2011). Another meme, in reference to Chris Brown’s violent attack of then-girlfriend Rihanna (Errico, 2009), implies that the reason he is in a wheelchair in the photo is because Brown gave him a “beatdown” (Drake Wheelchair - Chris Brown?, 2012). Another implies that Graham might be using the wheelchair to avoid a physical confrontation with Brown, presumably because he would lose the fight (Can’t Get Me Now, 2012). One meme also references the rap feud with Pusha T, implying the wheelchair is an outcome of the feud (FUCKED WITH PUSHA T / WELL, YEEEEAAHHH, 2012). Yet another claims that rapper Ludacris is going to disable Graham for stealing his flow (Luda Jocked His Legs, 2011). Woven into all of these examples is the notion that by comparison, Graham is a weak man unable to compete with the violent and aggressive tendencies of “real” rappers, with the wheelchair embodying his emasculated identity. Perhaps in line with Hinton’s observation of disability being erased in discussions of race, the Wheelchair Drake meme elevates physical impairment as a useful tool to make visible Graham’s inadequate claims of physical or violent capacity. In the service of insult, disability is articulated as

oppositional to silence, perhaps aligning with Curry's insight that the concept of Black and disabled bodies collapse under colonial imaginations, with both "...thought to share a phylogenetic distance from European man [and have] been thought to be the embodiment of pathology, degeneracy, and racial inferiority" (Curry, 2017b, p. 322).

In addition to the dominant narratives of the violent or aggressive Black male is the racist stereotype of Black men as innately hypersexual. Since "white fear of black sexuality is a basic ingredient of white racism" (hooks, 2004, p. 79), "racist sexist thinking about the black body [...] has always projected onto the black body a hypersexuality" (hooks, 2004, p. 67). At the same time as these racist assumptions have plagued imaginations of the Black male, hooks writes that

Embedded in much of the literature about black self-determination and black power published in the sixties and seventies was a subtext about black male sexuality [...] The constant graphic representation of black manhood as castrated and emasculated became the victimology script many black males deployed to deflect attention and criticism away from the compulsive-obsessive nature of their sexuality as well as the justification for sexual acting out (hooks, 2004, p. 78).

This concern is visible in Staples' much earlier work, writing that "[f]or some black men, the internalization of racist sexual beliefs has led to [...] preoccupation with their sexual prowess and the neglect of their many other talents" (Staples, 1982, p. 85). He goes on to say that

"[b]lack males [...] have had a strong sexual orientation because the sexual conquest of women was considered a masculine trait. Since other symbols of masculinity have been denied them in the society, sexual prowess became a partial substitute for achievement in other areas [...] Thus, the black male who has a variety of premarital sexual experiences occupies a prestigious position in his peer group" (Staples, 1982, p. 81).

This hyper sexualization of Black men and boys is deeply rooted in antebellum America anxiety toward freed black slaves. Speaking to the rise of the suffragettes, Curry explains that Black men and boys were marked as uncivilized brutes, driven by sensual desire as opposed to reason as a means to justify their oppression: “[i]n other words, the myth of the Black rapist allowed white women to exercise their sexual power over Black men through illicit sexual relations and rape and to further white men’s justification to murder and lynch Black men in an attempt to garner political power and deny political rights to Blacks in the United States” (Curry, 2017a, p. 59).

Generally speaking, Graham’s lyrics frequently work as attempts to prove Graham’s sexual prowess. He brags about his sexual conquests with already-committed women with lines like “Your girl know how I beat it like a flat drum” (Graham, 2007c) and “aside from the D I’m throwin’ in ya wife” (Drake, 2007). Graham also refers to himself as a “big dick bandit” (Drake, 2007) whose penis is so large that sex workers feel like “virgins to me” (Kienzi et al., 2015). With women, Graham assures, he has “plenty of luck” (Graham, 2006). More recently, the cover of his 2021 album *Certified Lover Boy* verifies Drake’s sexual potency with a series of female emojis modified to appear pregnant (Breihan, 2021)—real men do not just have sex, but procreate prolifically. In this way Graham indicates quite clearly with his music that the notion of sexual proficiency is important to him. Despite these assurances, the Wheelchair Drake cluster contains a high volume of memes that call into question Graham’s success with women. While Jay-Z may have 99 problems but a “bitch ain’t one”, Graham has two problems—his dysfunctional legs (Trash Boat (pseud), 2012d). This is perhaps because women will not stay with him because he cannot “stand up” for them (PeopleBeLike2 (pseud), 2015)

or because, unlike The Proclaimers song, he is unable to walk one thousand miles (I Walk a Thousand Miles / O Never Mind I Cant, 2011). Or it may be because he can only protect a woman if they open the door for him first, “for wheel though” (For Wheel Though, 2012). Leaning on the belief that physical impairment results in sexual impotence, one meme scoffs that it does not matter if women find Drake attractive, he “cant [sic] have none” (Can’t Have None, 2011). Two memes do seem to acknowledge Graham’s sexual attractiveness though, with one meme critiquing his appearance by stating that even though he may look as good as Denzel Washington it does not matter because he cannot walk (Denzel, 2012). Another meme asks in exacerbation why women “fall” for Graham’s songs about love and romance (Woman Fell for That, 2012). After all, another meme points out, women “could do better” (You Can Do Better, n.d.). And when Graham does have sexual success, for instance receiving a lap dance from Nicki Minaj in the “Hold On, We’re Going Home” music video, it is assumed he will end up in a wheelchair (Minaj Lap Dance, 2012), perhaps in reference to Nicki Minaj’s posterior or maybe because Graham is not man enough to handle a woman like Minaj. This reading of the meme is supported by another meme, indicating that Graham’s problem, to the point of needing a wheelchair, is because he “loves bad bitches” (Bad Bitches, n.d.).

Vulnerability and repression are again tied to sexuality and castration, with these questions animating the final thematic cluster of the Wheelchair Drake meme—that Graham is not a real man because he is effeminate, homosexual or possibly transgender. While lyrics from other artists that include words like rolling or wheel are not uncommon in the cluster, there are six specific examples in the cluster that come from female musicians, none of which are typically defined as rappers (Blame It on the Alcohol, 2011;

Come Alive on an Incline, 2012; Call Me Maybe, 2012; Rolling on a River, 2012; Say My Name, 2012; Rolling in the Deep, 2012b). Discourses of Graham's inability to stand up for himself, or deadlift weights, or choosing to drink rosé (Cups of the Rosé, 2011), all mark him as an effeminate man who falls outside dominant discourses of masculinity. Graham is also said to be fellating L'il Wayne (Wayne's Dick, 2012), having sex with J Cole (J Cole, 2011) and, perhaps finding himself in a wheelchair because of anal sex (Bad for Your Health, 2015) or spending one romantic night with Richard Bibbs (RICHARD BIBBS, 2011). Ultimately, as one meme claims, someone should have told us Graham is a homosexual (I'm Homo, 2011). There does appear to be a blurring of the line between being effeminate and being a woman, trans or otherwise. Riffing on a lyric from a diss track Graham released about Meek Mill, one meme asks if he is using a girl's wheelchair in the accompanying photo (hex96 (pseud), 2016). Another, referring to the song "Fancy", replaces hair and nail care with "Wheels done chair done, everything big" (Oh You Fancy, 2012). A more direct meme outright states Graham has a "mangina" (Mangina, 2012), a portmanteau of man and vagina, while yet another still subverts wordplay Graham uses to express his "honest" desire for an orgy, claiming if Graham does love women it is only because he is the "lesbianest" (Lesbianest, 2011)⁶. All of these memes leverage femininity and homosexuality to articulate the ways Graham has failed the test of hegemonic (black) masculinity—while he may claim he is a "real" Black man, the Wheelchair Drake memes impart that in the end, he is merely a "wheel" Black man (Trash Boat (pseud), 2012k).

⁶ Drake later leans in to this meme in the song "Girls Want Girls", in which he quips "say that you a lesbian, girl, me too" (Drake, 2021).

Throughout the memetic cluster, Graham is satirized as not being quite the man he claims to be as rapper Drake. Despite claims of wealth and grandeur, a number of memes seek to undermine these claims, subverting them through the injection of disability into his lyrics. At times, disability is used to show the ways Graham himself is not quite as “able” as he implies, with bodily deficiency functioning as metaphor for lacking in talent or success. At other times, there appears to be a more insidious implication that while money and cars are status symbols of accomplishment, proximity to disability ephemera - like a wheelchair - is evidence of exaggerated or fabricated claims: a disabled person could not succeed in these status-derived ways and, therefore, his claims of success are not to be taken seriously either. Graham is also routinely positioned as feminine or homosexual, the language of disability already held at arm’s length from the status of “real man” and used to articulate the ways he has failed to achieve hegemonic masculine standards. In this case, both discourses strengthen one another, relying on the presumed truth of disabled bodies as castrated to stand as evidence of Graham’s proximity to femininity and, therefore, his distance from manhood. These discourses of masculinity are then further complicated by the intersection of race, with Graham failing not just to be a man but crumbling when faced with comparatively “real” Black men who are more talented, more sexual and more violent than Graham.

Concluding Thoughts

“The real is on the rise” – from “Headlines” (2011)

Studying the discourse present within this memetic cluster it becomes clear that rather than breaking free of stereotypes and pejorative discourses, the online community using

the Wheelchair Drake meme format both validate, naturalize and extend intertwined discourses of masculinity and physical impairment. Throughout the Wheelchair Drake cluster, disability becomes a useful metaphor for dependency and weakness. More, the memetic cluster reveals widespread beliefs that disability is wholly incongruent with masculinity in general, framing men with physical disabilities as impotent symbols of failed masculinities. Wheelchair-users are described as fundamentally unable subjects who have suffered a tragic loss, doomed to be confined to a wheelchair and dependent on those around them for the rest of their lives. These states of inability and loss are affixed to parallel narratives of men who fail to perform white supremacist hegemonic masculinity correctly or sufficiently. Manhood, like someone's legs, can be tragically lost and leave the victim to embody the castrated subject—not quite man, not properly human. Worse still, those who attempt to propose alternate or resistant masculinity are valid targets for ridicule and derision, their physical bodies presented as just as deficient as their masculine function.

Aubrey Graham has been a divisive artist throughout his career, attracting fans and critics of his acting and music. In his music, Graham bristles with bravado, assuring his listeners of his bona-fide manhood while at the same time revealing and, at times, even reveling in anxieties around strength, autonomy, and sexual prowess. Part of what makes this meme funny, and therefore worthy of creation and sharing, is how these cultural constructions of disability are in direct opposition to the masculinity espoused by the Drake persona. Ultimately, it is this very conflict that this meme relies upon, drawing humour from juxtaposing Drake's hypermasculine rap identity with the presumed 'spoiled' masculinity of a physically disabled man. In this way, the meme is drawn into

question Graham's ability to live up to the identity he has constructed while simultaneously leveraging discourses of disablement to reframe his music (and career) as functionally impaired and lacking in 'proper' masculinity. Here, the meme is deployed as a corrective lens, framing Drake's bravado as not just fictional but laughable. Graham, then, becomes a warning to other men considering a challenge to hegemonic masculinity—if you do not behave correctly, you too will be stigmatized as weak, effeminate, and open to ridicule.

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