Beyoncé's style in *Lemonade*: a *corpus*-based analysis

O estilo de Beyoncé em Lemonade: uma análise com base em corpus

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Abstract

This study investigates the lexical style in Beyoncé's album *Lemonade* (2016) by comparing its lyrics to those belonging to other artists' works released simultaneously and to Beyoncé's previous albums, in order to identify its distinctive semantic fields. *AntConc* is used to retrieve keywords from the lyrics. Recurring keywords are then analyzed in their contexts and eleven semantic fields are identified and discussed. The findings are compared to *Lemonade*'s critics' reviews to reveal similarities and differences between their comments and this analysis, which takes quantitative data into consideration. The analysis confirms some of the features identified by the critics and provides a deeper insight into topics unnoticed by them.

Keywords

Corpus Linguistics. Corpus Stylistics. Beyoncé. *Lemonade*. Music review.

Resumo

Este estudo investiga o estilo lexical do álbum *Lemonade* (2016), de Beyoncé, comparando suas letras àquelas dos trabalhos de outros artistas lançados simultaneamente e de álbuns anteriores de Beyoncé, visando identificar seus campos semânticos característicos. *AntConc* é usado para determinar as palavras-chave das letras. As palavras-chave recorrentes são analisadas em seus contextos e onze campos semânticos são identificados e discutidos. Os resultados são comparados às críticas de *Lemonade* para identificar semelhanças e diferenças entre os comentários e esta análise, que parte de dados quantitativos. A análise confirma algumas das características identificadas pelos críticos e oferece um entendimento mais aprofundado sobre tópicos não percebidos por eles.

Palavras-chave

Linguística de corpus. Estilística de corpus. Beyoncé. *Lemonade*. Crítica musical.

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Introduction

Born on September 4, 1981, Beyoncé Giselle Knowles is a black singer from Houston, Texas, USA. According to Li (2017, p. 106), she is "one of the most significant cultural and media icons of our time". Her career began in the late 1990s in the group Destiny's Child, which split in 2005. Her first solo studio album, *Dangerously in Love*, was released in 2003, and, since then, her style has changed considerably:

> [S]ince her solo career began in 2003, Beyoncé has moved far beyond the familiar boundaries of Destiny's Child to reinvent herself again and again through record setting albums, transformative songs and videos, and visionary marketing strategies. Her songs are not just global hits. They are rife with slogans that simultaneously direct and reflect contemporary culture […]. (LI, 2017, p. 107)

Therefore, Beyoncé is recognized by her ability to identify and adhere to trends as well as to set them herself. She became such a pop culture icon due to marketing strategies that encompass her songs, albums and music videos. But despite influencing behaviors and attitudes, Beyoncé's artistry has not received significant attention from academic researchers (LI, 2017). In order to help fill in this gap, we propose a corpus-based investigation of her solo studio albums, with a special emphasis on her sixth – and so far last – release.

Lemonade (2016) is Beyoncé's latest solo studio album and second visual album, which is "a hybrid medium between film and music video" (HARRISON, 2014, p. 1). When "Formation", its first single and music video, was released, critics pointed out its political engagement and support to the Black Lives Matter movement, which fights against violence towards Black communities by the state and vigilantes. After the whole album was dropped, Beyoncé's marriage to Jay-Z – a famous rapper and producer with whom she has been collaborating since 2002 and to whom she has been married since 2008 - was subject to speculation, as betrayal is heavily addressed in it. According to music critics, political engagement and unfaithfulness are not typical topics in Beyoncé's work, so it was a consensus among them that *Lemonade* represented a shift in her discography (BALE, 2016; PETRIDIS, 2016; SHEFFIELD, 2016).

As Beyoncé has always been considerably involved in the creative and executive aspects of her album production, it seems interesting to analyze her discography to verify how *Lemonade* represents a change in the themes developed by the artist. After all, song lyrics are key components of an album, for they express the

topics addressed in it. As such, determining the dominant aspects of the lyrics leads to discovering an album's main themes.

In order to identify the lexical characteristics of Beyoncé's *Lemonade*, we used a methodology underlying Corpus Linguistics (CL), a suitable approach to empirically identify patterns in language (MCCARTHY; O'KEEFE, 2010). We believe that a quantitative analysis can serve as starting point to identify semantic fields that recur in some song lyrics when compared to others. Therefore, this analysis aims at answering two questions:

i. Are the differences between *Lemonade* and Beyoncé's previous albums perceived by critics statistically reflected in the song lyrics?

ii. What semantic fields are characteristic of *Lemonade* when compared to Beyoncé's previous albums and to its contemporaries?

Nineteen sections comprise this study: (i) Song lyrics as a genre, (ii) Beyoncé and *Lemonade*, (iii) *Lemonade*'s reviews, (iv) Corpus Linguistics in the identification of style, (v) Methodology, (vi) Qualitative analysis, (vii) Brand names, (viii) Alcohol consumption, (ix) Success, (x) Lifestyle, (xi) Effort, (xii) Crime and violence, (xiii) Injury, (xiv) Racial identity, (xv) Boundaries, (xvi) Ways of speaking, (xvii) Relationship, (xviii) Discussion, and (xix) Conclusion.

Song lyrics as a genre

Caretta (2011) defines songs as a multimodal secondary speech genre - multimodal because they are composed of lyrics and melody, and secondary because they are not everyday communication, but complex artistic expression. The association between verbal and musical language is fundamental to songs, which can be accompanied by music videos, adding yet another dimension to its multimodality. This corpus-based analysis focuses exclusively on lyrics, i.e., the musical dimension of the genre is not in the scope, nor are music videos.

Another characteristic common to any piece of music, according to Margulis (2014), is repetition. It is not particular to an artist or a genre, but rather a fundamental feature of music. In songs, repetition is in both melody and lyrics. An example of repetition in the structure of song lyrics, the object of this study, is the chorus, or "a set of lines that are sung at least twice in the course of a song, usually being repeated after each verse" (ANDERSON et al., 2006, p. 39). An album, in its turn, is "a set of

songs that work together to make a united whole" (SUMMERS, 2004, p. 8). There is, therefore, a sense of unity that characterizes an album.

Caretta (2011) states that historical elements are indispensable to understanding a song, since they determine the style of a period. Summers (2004) argues that an album defines an artist's musical sensibilities at a particular moment in history, also asserting the importance of its release date and how it must be synchronized with marketing and television appearances. Therefore, information about Beyoncé's career, discography, and awards, as well as about *Lemonade*'s release dates and reviews, is key to this analysis.

Beyoncé and *Lemonade*

This section expands on Beyoncé's involvement in her discography and the recognition she has received for it. Then, *Lemonade*'s release context and reception is discussed. We start with Table 1 below, which shows Beyoncé's six solo studio albums, their release years, the artist's involvement in them as producer, and the amount of tracks in which she was cited as composer:

Table 1 - Beyoncé's solo studio albums

Album	Year	Executive Production	Song Composition
Dangerously in Love	2003	Beyoncé and Mathew Knowles	13 out of 15
B'Day	2006	Beyoncé and Mathew Knowles	10 out of 10
I am… Sasha Fierce	2008	Beyoncé and Mathew Knowles	15 out of 16
4	2011	Beyoncé	11 out of 12
BEYONCÉ	2013	Beyoncé	14 out of 14
Lemonade	2016	Beyoncé	12 out of 12

As we can observe, the album in which Beyoncé participated less in the composition was *Dangerously in Love*, her first one, in which she was still credited as composer in 13 out of 15 tracks. In *I am… Sasha Fierce* and *4* she is credited in over 90% of the songs, and in *B'Day*, *BEYONCÉ* and *Lemonade* she is listed as composer in the entirety of the tracks. These numbers reveal the level of her creative involvement in her work. Besides composing most of the songs, Beyoncé also acts as the albums' executive producer, i.e., she manages the production of the songs and albums, including organization and schedule (GALLAGHER, 2008). For Summers (2004), the

producer "guides the creative direction of a project" (p. 101). Therefore, we can claim that Beyoncé's role as executive producer adds a management trait to her artistic input in the albums.

All of Beyoncé's solo studio albums have reached the top position in *Billboard 200*[1], a chart that ranks the most popular albums weekly, considering album sales and streaming as factors to calculate their popularity. *Billboard* is a publication specialized in entertainment, closely connected to the recording industry (HOFFMAN, 2005). The fact that these six albums have peaked at number one proves her popularity among the general public.

Beyoncé has received not only popular appreciation but also peer recognition: she is the most-nominated female artist in *Grammy* history with 70 nominations, of which she has won 24 (RECORDING ACADEMY, 2020). It seems important to emphasize that the *Grammy* Awards, presented annually to celebrate artistic excellence, are the only peer-recognized award for achievements in the music industry, and (RECORDING ACADEMY, 2019). Beyoncé has been receiving such recognition since *Dangerously In Love*, her 2003 debut solo studio album, which won the *Grammy* for Best Contemporary R&B Album in 2004, a feat she repeated with *B'Day* and *I am… Sasha Fierce* in 2006 and 2010, respectively.

As for *Lemonade*, it was launched on April 23, 2016, and is composed of 12 songs. Its first single, "Formation", was released on February 6 of the same year - one day before Beyoncé's presentation on the 50th *Super Bowl* halftime show, when she performed said song for the first time. *Super Bowl* is the most watched television broadcast in the United States, according to Nielsen ratings[2] (2016). Another key factor in *Lemonade*'s release is that February is Black History Month in the USA, and during the *Super Bowl* performance, Beyoncé, a black woman, wore an outfit that resembled the uniform worn by the Black Panthers, an anti-imperialist political organization founded in 1966 – and dissolved in 1982 – to fight police abuse against black people in the US (BLOOM; MARTIN, 2013). Hence, *Lemonade*'s release date was not random, but meaningful.

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[1] Beyoncé's *Billboard* chart history is available at <https://www.billboard.com/music/beyonce/chart-history/billboard-200>. Accessed on 26 feb. 2020.
[2] Nielsen ratings are audience measurements carried out by A.C. Nielsen, an US company, which are considered the "best-known and most influential ratings information business" (HILL; WATSON, 2012, p. 207).

Concerning awards, in 2017 *Lemonade* was nominated for the 59th *Grammys* in two categories: Album of the Year and Best Urban Contemporary Album. It won the latter. Urban Contemporary, the latest development of R&B, is a very commercial music genre linked to the urban lifestyle of nightclubbing (MUSICMAP, 2016). The other four albums nominated for this award in 2017 were (i) *We Are KING*, by We Are KING; (ii) *Malibu*, by Anderson .Paak; (iii) *Ology*, by Gallant; and (iv) *ANTI*, by Rihanna. They comprise one of our reference corpora, as we will detail in the Methodology section.

Lemonade was well received by the critics. Three of the album's reviews are commented in the next section.

Lemonade's reviews

A review is a public mechanism that summarizes and evaluates a product or performance (BLANK, 2007). It assists readers in making informed choices or appreciating a piece of art more fully. According to Blank (2007), there are two questions that a review answers: "what is it?" and "is it any good?" (p. 7). Reviews must be credible, and credibility is usually constructed on the basis of expertise (connoisseurial reviews) or tests (procedural reviews). The three reviews examined next are mostly connoisseurial, as they are written by specialists and/or issued in music-centered publications. Examining *Lemonade*'s reviews more closely is relevant for this study because they bring information that helps understanding the social and cultural context of the album. The three reviews commented next were chosen because they were issued in music-centered publications of renown and/or written by specialists whose credibility could be verified, i.e., whose work was periodically published in the same newspaper.

Bale (2016), in her review of *Lemonade* published on *Billboard*, stated that Beyoncé redefines authorship in the album. She argues that *Lemonade* is "made by a black woman, starring black women, and for black women", i.e., a work of Black Feminism that emphasizes union among women. Bale also claims that *Lemonade* is more political than Beyoncé's previous albums, as it engages in racial issues that had not been previously addressed by the artist in her opus.

Sheffield's (2016) review of *Lemonade* for *Rolling Stone* – a periodical that has been published since 1967 and specializes in influential record reviews (HOFFMAN, 2005) – praises Beyoncé, calling her the most creative and respected pop artist

currently. It describes the album's main theme as "emotional discord and marital meltdown", emphasizing a shift in Beyoncé's discography as the artist had never addressed heartbreak and infidelity in the harsh way she does in *Lemonade*. Like Bale, Sheffield also mentions blackness as a topic in the album, specifically in the tracks "Freedom" and "Formation".

For Petridis (2016), *The Guardian*'s lead rock and pop critic with a fixed column called 'Album of the week' in said newspaper, *Lemonade* makes a statement, differing from contemporary pop albums, which tend to be inane. He also points marital crisis as the most prominent topic in the album, like Sheffield. The critic adds that the political dimension that criticizes police brutality is secondary.

The three reviews seem to recognize that *Lemonade* is different from Beyoncé's previous albums. Additionally, marriage issues and racial matters are seen as *Lemonade*'s general features.

Corpus Linguistics in the identification of style

According to Biber and Reppen (2015), CL "is a research approach that facilitates empirical investigations of language variation and use, resulting in research findings that have much greater generalizability and validity than would otherwise be feasible" (p. 1). CL has a variety of applications, such as in language teaching and learning, discourse analysis, literary studies, translation studies, forensics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and political discourse (MCCARTHY; O'KEEFFE, 2010). Although CL has diverse uses, Biber and Reppen (2015) establish features that are common to all of them: (i) being empirical, (ii) being based on analysis of representative corpora, (iii) using computer tools for analysis, and (iv) using quantitative and qualitative techniques for analysis.

Corpus Stylistics is another application of CL. Mahlberg (2007) claims that Corpus Stylistics is a branch of CL that narrows the gap between the study of language and literature by combining corpus methodology with more intuitive approaches. It aims at describing and analyzing style, i.e., what is distinctive in the way language is used by a specific author, or in a specific work, or in a specific period. Because Corpus Stylistics allows for the identification of tendencies, intertextual relationships, and reflections of social and cultural contexts, it is an appropriate approach to the analysis of Beyoncé's style in *Lemonade*.

Methodology

The corpus design and analysis were based on Fischer-Starcke's (2009) study on Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice.* The author used two reference corpora to create two different keyword lists: one of them contained five of Austen's six books – *Pride and Prejudice* was not included so that features that are specific to it could be identified; the other contained works by various authors that were contemporary to Austen, in order to identify differences between *Pride and Prejudice* and its contemporaries. Using more than one reference corpora is useful because words or topics identified as dominant on more than one keyword list are doubly legitimized as relevant for analysis (FISCHER-STARCKE, 2009).

Here, this methodology is replicated. The corpus *Lmnd* contains *Lemonade*'s song lyrics and was compared to two reference corpora. The first one – named *Beyoncé5Lemonade* – contains the song lyrics in Beyoncé's five preceding albums, which allows for the identification of what is characteristic of *Lemonade* inside her opus. We used only the original versions of Beyoncé's six solo studio albums – live albums, soundtrack albums and bonus tracks were not considered because they would (i) fail to meet the criteria of being a solo studio album or (ii) make some song lyrics repeated in the corpus.

The second reference corpus – named *contempAlbums* – is comprised of the song lyrics in the other four albums nominated for Best Urban Contemporary Album in the 59th *Grammy* Awards. This allows for the identification of what is particular to *Lemonade* and not to the albums of the same genre that were produced in the same period and received a similar degree of peer recognition. This double comparison adds to the reliability of the results, giving the analysis a sounder basis on which to determine what keywords should be studied in depth.

The song lyrics were retrieved from *Genius*, a website focused on music knowledge. Among other song lyrics websites, it was chosen because it is used by the streaming service *Spotify* as the lyrics provider for the platform. Some of the content on *Genius* is verified by artists themselves, which adds to its reliability. Table 2 summarizes the three corpora used in this study:

Table 2 - The corpora in this study

Corpus	Content	Size
Lmnd	Beyoncé's sixth studio album	4,145 tokens
Beyoncé5Lemonade	Five of Beyoncé's six studio albums; *Lemonade* is excluded	28,768 tokens
contempAlbums	59th *Grammy* nominees for Best Urban Contemporary Album; *Lemonade* is excluded	15,928 tokens

Due to the number of tokens, the three corpora compiled for this study could be classified as small (see Berber-Sardinha (2004) for more details on corpus size). According to Koester (2010), "what is more important than the actual size of the corpus is how well it is designed and that it is 'representative'" (p. 66). The author states that there is not an ideal size a corpus should have. Rather, its purpose should drive the compilation, and hence, its size. As our corpora aim at representing song lyrics belonging to the aforementioned albums and are centered on specific artists and music genre, they showed appropriate.

The keyword lists were retrieved with *AntConc* version 3.5.8 (ANTHONY, 2019). Traditionally, keyness has been calculated with statistical significance measures. Simply, they show whether an observed difference between two corpora is dependable or not, but they do not show the size of that difference. Recently, however, effect size measures have become more common for corroborating keyness in corpus studies, as they are able to determine how big the observed difference is. Statistical significance and effect size metrics measure different aspects of a frequency, and Gabrielatos (2018) recommends combining both of them (p. 16):

> [T]he level of keyness of an item needs to be established via the combination of two metrics, which complement each other. The effect size score will enable the ranking of the items returned from the automated frequency comparison according to the size of the frequency difference. The statistical significance score will provide information regarding the level of confidence we can have that the observed frequency difference is dependable

For both keyword lists, the keyword statistics used was log likelihood and the threshold was set to $p < 0.05$. Log likelihood is a statistical significance test that verifies the dependability of an observed frequency difference, i.e., how likely it is that a frequency difference is not random. It uses word frequency and corpus size values in its calculations. By setting $p < 0.05$, *AntConc* returns only words that have a log

likelihood score higher than 3.84, which means that there is a 95% chance that the difference is significant. The effect size measure used was Hardie's Log Ratio, and the threshold was set to all values. According to this measure, if the effect is 0, it means the relative frequency of a word is the same between the corpora being compared. If the value is 1, it means the word at hand is two times more common in the corpus under study than in the reference corpus. As our study corpus is small, we considered all the words whose effect is above zero in such corpus when compared to the reference corpora.

In this setting, the comparison of *Lmnd* to *Beyoncé5Lemonade* returned a total of 385 keywords, and the comparison of *Lmnd* to *contempAlbums* returned a total of 180 keywords. The first twenty keywords sorted in decreasing order of effect size are shown, respectively, in Tables 3 and 4:

Table 3 - *Lmnd* x *Beyonce5Lemonade*					Table 4 - *Lmnd* x *contempAlbums*				
Rank	Freq	Keyness	Effect	Keyword	Rank	Freq	Keyness	Effect	Keyword
1	32	132.82	8.795	slay	1	21	66.34	73.344	freedom
2	24	99.58	8.38	sorry	2	32	92.65	69.421	slay
3	21	87.12	81.873	freedom	3	12	37.89	65.271	rub
4	8	33.16	6.795	friday	4	12	37.89	65.271	shoot
5	8	33.16	6.795	wassup	5	8	25.25	59.421	wassup
6	6	24.87	6.38	bye	6	7	22.09	57.495	sweet
7	6	24.87	6.38	dollar	7	6	18.94	55.271	dollar
8	6	24.87	6.38	formation	8	6	18.94	55.271	formation
9	12	42.98	6.38	rub	9	6	18.94	55.271	he's
10	5	20.72	61.169	grinds	10	6	18.94	55.271	ok
11	5	20.72	61.169	held	11	5	15.78	5.264	club
12	5	20.72	61.169	loves	12	5	15.78	5.264	grinds
13	5	20.72	61.169	nah	13	5	15.78	5.264	loves
14	5	20.72	61.169	prove	14	5	15.78	5.264	nah
15	10	35.03	61.169	walked	15	5	15.78	5.264	wicked
16	5	20.72	61.169	whispering	16	18	44.77	5.112	his
17	4	16.58	5.795	above	17	4	12.62	49.421	business
18	4	16.58	5.795	inch	18	4	12.62	49.421	heels
19	4	16.58	5.795	monday	19	4	12.62	49.421	inch
20	4	16.58	5.795	murdered	20	4	12.62	49.421	jealous

It is important to emphasize that we set the tool to treat all data as lowercase, otherwise the words in the beginning of the verses would be distinguished from the same words in other positions only because of the initial capital letter. Hence, distinguishing between proper or common nouns, for example, considered the contexts in which they were used. Next, these two keyword lists were sorted in alphabetical order and compared to reveal key keywords, i.e., keywords that recur in both lists (PRINSLOO, 2011). As the keyword lists generated when comparing *Lmnd* to *Beyoncé5Lemonade* and to *contempAlbums* were small, this comparison was done manually in a Microsoft Excel (MICROSOFT, 2013) file. A VLOOKUP function was used to display information common between the two columns. The key keyword list totalizes 140 words that were divided into eleven semantic fields, plus a 'zero' field with words which were excluded from the analysis.

Qualitative analysis

Corpus Stylistics combines corpus methodologies with intuitive approaches. Identifying semantic fields in the key keyword list accounts for the intuitive aspect of this study. This process demanded that concordance lines – which display in lines all occurrences of a word or group of words preceded and followed by their context in the text (RAYSON, 2015) – were considered from the start, since some key keywords would be misleading if considered in isolation. For example, the word 'business' could be wrongly interpreted as being related to a professional activity, but the four concordance lines reveal that it is only used in the expression "nobody's business", meaning absence of involvement Table 5.

Table 5 - concordance lines for 'business'

1	She walked in the club Like nobody's business God damn She murdered everybody and I
2	She walked in the club Like nobody's business Goddamn She murdered everybody and I
3	She walked in the club Like nobody's business Goddamn She murdered everybody and I
4	She walked in the club Like nobody's business Goddamn She murdered everybody and I

Additionally, some keywords were actually parts of compounds but were separated in the keyword lists as *AntConc* retrieves single keywords. An example is the car model 'El Camino': 'El' and 'Camino' were separated items in the keyword lists, but are together in all their instances, so they were manually joined. It is also worth

mentioning that both 'business' and 'El Camino' occur more than once in the same context, i.e., in verses that appear more than once in the song lyrics. Most key keywords reveal this same pattern of having all their occurrences in a same verse that is repeated in a song. This was expected due to the ubiquitous repetitive quality of music, discussed above in Song lyrics as a genre.

According to Fischer-Starcke (2009), by identifying semantic fields on a list of keywords, the dominant meanings of the data can be revealed. Eleven semantic fields were identified, comprising 73 of the 140 key keywords. They are listed in table 6. Some key keywords were not placed into any category, while others were put into two or more categories because (i) they fit into more than one (e.g., 'José Cuervo', which is used to express both alcohol consumption and success), or (ii) they were used in different contexts (e.g., 'gates', which is used in the strings 'Bill Gates' and 'correctional gates'). Necessary insertions are between brackets, marking additions that were (i) retrieved from the concordance lines (e.g., 'Red' in 'Red Lobster'), (ii) gathered from context but non-existent in the corpus (e.g., 'José' in 'José Cuervo') or (iii) not present in all the occurrences of the word (e.g., 'trick' as an optional intensifier for 'slay'). They are signaled with brackets because they are not originally in the key keyword list but are necessary for comprehension. 67 key keywords were not sorted into any category because they (i) were grammatical words or (ii) did not constitute a group with any others. They are all shown on table 6 below.

Table 6 - identified semantic fields

Semantic field	Key keywords
brand names	El Camino, [José] Cuervo, [Red] Lobster
alcohol consumption	chaser, [José] Cuervo, sipping, recipe
success	El Camino, commas, crave, decimals, dollar, [José] Cuervo, [Bill] Gates, [Red] Lobster, material, money, paper, reign, slay [trick], stacking, stunt, twirl, winner, worth
lifestyle	El Camino, club, [José] Cuervo, [six] inch heels, [Red] Lobster, seat
effort	fights, finish, Friday, grinds, Monday, professional, Sunday, trying, wade, works
crime and violence	gun, hurt, murdered, rifle, riot, shoot, walked [over], war, witness
injury	albino alligators, diss, middle fingers, haters, playing [you]

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racial identity	Becky, [black Bill] Gates, negro, yellow-bone
boundaries	chains, cut loose, freedom, [correctional] gates
ways of speaking	diss, lying, promise, promised, said, swore, warned, whispering
relationship	love, loves, rub, sweet, treat, wicked
ø	above, ain't, aware, away, bout, business, bye, catch, cause, co-ordination, daddy, don't, eliminated, every, fat, flames, formation, forward, goddamn, he, held, hell, her, herself, he's, hide, his, I'ma, lifeline, listening, made, men, Mexico, move, moving, nah, night, nobody's, oh, ok, okay, other, pray, prove, rain, recreate, rot, running, sake, she, slow, smart, sorry, spend, station, step, Texas, them, themselves, they, thinking, thru, up, wasn't, wassup, worse, yourself

These categories do not intend to be absolute splits, since many of them are related to each other. Rather, they are used to identify dominant semantic fields in the album. Each semantic field is further explained and commented in the sections that follow.

Brand names

Three brand names were identified among the 140 key keywords. They are (i) El Camino, a car model; (ii) José Cuervo, a brand of tequila, and (iii) Red Lobster, a restaurant chain. 'El Camino' has already been commented above. 'José' does not occur in *Lmnd* – i.e., 'Cuervo' is not preceded by it in any of its instances. It was understood by context that it refers to the alcoholic beverage because all occurrences are in the verse "sipping Cuervo with no chaser", always capitalized and preceded and followed by words that are related to consumption of alcoholic beverages. 'Red' is not identified as key keyword, only 'Lobster', but all instances of 'Lobster' are capitalized and preceded by 'Red' in the song lyrics, so it has been considered jointly, with reference to the name of a North-American restaurant chain. 'Red' was probably not retrieved as keyword because it is a common color, occurring six times in *Beyoncé5Lemonade* and nine times in *contempAlbums*. All brand names were put into more categories because they are related to other semantic fields, namely alcohol consumption, success and lifestyle. Their uses are expanded in the following sections.

Alcohol consumption

Four key keywords were sorted into this semantic field: (i) chaser, (ii) José Cuervo, (iii) sipping, and (iv) recipe. The first three always occur together in the verse "sipping Cuervo with no chaser". 'Recipe' could be wrongly interpreted as related to food, but it actually refers to a mixture of two alcoholic beverages, as can be seen in the verses "She mixing up that Ace with the Hennessy/ She love the way it tastes, that's the recipe". The verse reveals two other brand names, 'Ace', the colloquial name for the Armand de Brignac champagne, and 'Hennessy', a brand of cognac. It is worth mentioning that *Genius*' song lyrics annotations, which provide insights into lyrics and explanations about culturally charged words, were a valuable source for learning some of the vocabulary, such as 'chaser', a non-alcoholic beverage consumed with an alcoholic one, and the popular form of referring to the champagne previously mentioned. Although it does not receive academic recognition, *Urban Dictionary* was also essential, as renowned conventional dictionaries cannot keep up with how fast slang changes, informal sources such as these proved to be an asset.

Success

Containing 18 words, this is one of the most expressive semantic fields identified. The category was divided into two sub-categories: financial success and personal success. The 11 key keywords expressing financial success are (i) El Camino, (ii) commas, (iii) crave, (iv) José Cuervo, (v) decimals, (vi) dollar, (vii) Red Lobster, (viii) material, (ix) money, (x) paper, and (xi) stacking. The seven key keywords expressing personal success are (i) Bill Gates, (ii) reign, (iii) slay trick, (iv) stunt, (v) twirl, (vi) winner, and (vii) worth. This is not a clear-cut division, but an attempt to deal with words from different domains used to express success.

The brand names were inserted in this category because they help express ability to afford products – which are not referred to by the hypernym, but by the specific brands, emphasizing the acquisition of goods. 'Commas' and 'decimals' convey capital accumulation, which is further expressed by 'stacking' and its variation 'stackin''[3]. These two also reveal that such capital accumulation is performed by a woman, as they appear in the verses "Stacking her paper" and "Stackin' money everywhere she go". 'Paper', meaning monetary bills, is also in the verse "Best revenge is your paper",

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[3] Only 'stacking' was retrieved as a key keyword. 'Stackin'' was noticed during the qualitative analysis as a variation, and therefore considered for the discussion.

expressing that wealth is a manner of getting revenge. Besides being stacked, 'money' is also what a woman works for ("She work for the money") but, despite accumulating it, she does not leave her roots behind ("I earned all this money but they never take the country out me"). Despite the numerous displays of wealth, both occurrences of 'material' are linked to 'crave' in the phrase "too smart to crave material things". Finally, 'dollar' occurs with 'worth', linking financial success to personal success in the verses "She worth every dollar/ And she worth every minute". These verses equate money and time as valuable elements to qualify a woman.

'Bill Gates' is used as an example of success to be achieved ("might be a black Bill Gates in the making"), and will be further commented in the Racial identity section. 'Reign' is used as a verb, followed by the preposition 'on', meaning control over something ("I'ma reign on this bitter love" and "Trying to reign on the thunder"). 'Slay' means doing something extremely well, and is followed in two instances by 'trick', which works as an intensifier. It is important to highlight that 'slay' ranks highly in the keyword lists whether they are sorted by keyness or effect, which means it is particularly characteristic of *Lemonade*. Table 7 contains the keyword list generated when comparing *Lmnd* to *Beyoncé5Lemonade*, sorted by keyness on the left, and by effect on the right. Table 8 contains the keyword list generated when comparing *Lmnd* to *contempAlbums*. Again, on the left, it is sorted by keyness, and on the right, by effect. 'Slay' is highlighted in all of them.

Table 7 - position of 'slay' in the keyword list *Lmnd - Beyoncé5Lemonade*

Rank	Freq	Keyness	Effect	Keyword	Rank	Freq	Keyness	Effect	Keyword
1	32	+132.82	8.795	slay	1	32	+132.82	8.795	slay
2	48	+103.45	3.4731	she	2	24	+99.58	8.38	sorry
3	24	+99.58	8.38	sorry	3	21	+87.12	8.1873	freedom
4	21	+87.12	8.1873	freedom	4	8	+33.16	6.795	friday
5	17	+51.13	4.8825	yourself	5	8	+33.16	6.795	wassup

Table 8 - position of 'slay' in the keyword list *Lmnd - contempAlbums*

Rank	Freq	Keyness	Effect	Keyword	Rank	Freq	Keyness	Effect	Keyword
1	32	+92.65	6.9421	slay	1	21	+66.34	7.3344	freedom

2	21	+66.34	7.3344	freedom	2	32	+92.65	6.9421	slay
3	48	+56.19	2.4396	she	3	12	+37.89	6.5271	rub
4	81	+53.47	1.6381	love	4	12	+37.89	6.5271	shoot
5	70	+50.25	1.7316	up	5	8	+25.25	5.9421	wassup

'Stunt' is used in the sense of showing off. 'Twirl' was inserted in the success semantic field because it only occurs in the phrase "twirl on haters", as in prevailing upon an enemy. 'Winner' is in the verse "I'ma keep running cause a winner don't quit on themselves", which is related to the effort semantic field.

Lifestyle

There are six words in this semantic field: (i) El Camino, (ii) club, (iii) José Cuervo, (iv) six inch heels, (v) Red Lobster, and (vi) seat. The brands were inserted in this category because what people consume helps understand their style and social class. 'Seat' expresses the use of low suspension in the verse "El Camino with the seat low". 'El Camino' was originally a muscle car, i.e., a car used for drag racing. Low suspension made cars more efficient for it. Once again *Genius* was essential for finding the cultural implications of the expression. 'Six inch heels' expresses clothing choice, linked with 'club' in the verses "6 inch heels/ She walked in the club/ Like nobody's business". 'Club' also occurs in the verse "Headed to the club". Both instances relate to the definition of the Urban Contemporary genre, which targets an urban audience that goes to clubs.

Effort

Another very prominent semantic field in the key keyword list, the effort category contains 10 words: (i) fights, (ii) finish, (iii) Friday, (iv) grinds, (v) Monday, (vi) professional, (vii) Sunday, (viii) trying, (ix) wade, and (x) works. 'Professional' is given as a reason for persistence in the verses "She don't gotta give it up cause she professional". The days of the week are in the verses "She grinds from Monday to Friday/ Work from Friday to Sunday", intensifying the frequency of 'grinds' and 'work'. Although only 'grinds' was identified as a keyword – as the corpus was not morpho-syntactically tagged and the words were not lemmatized –, 'grind' and 'grinding' also occur in *Lmnd*, in the verses "She loves the grind", "Stop interrupting my grinding", and "I dream it, I work hard, I grind till I own it". Besides expressing hard work to reach a

goal, these verses also reveal that such effort is enjoyed and should not be interrupted. 'Works' is in verses modified by 'finish': "She works for the money/ From the start to the finish". 'Finish' is another word that intensifies the effort put towards an end, similarly to the days of the week. Lastly, 'fights' occurs in the verses "She fights and she sweats thru sleepless nights" and "She fights for the power", once again expressing work as a means to reach an end (power) and a demanding task (sleepless nights).

Crime and violence

Nine words were identified in this semantic field: (i) gun, (ii) hurt, (iii) murdered, (iv) rifle, (v) riot, (vi) shoot, (vii) walked over, (viii) war, and (ix) witness. 'Gun', 'rifle' and 'shoot' all refer to gun possession and use. 'Hurt' has most of its occurrences in the sequence "When you hurt me/ You hurt yourself/ Don't hurt yourself", which leaves margin for interpreting it as physical violence or not. The only other occurrence of 'hurt' is in the sequence "Nothing else ever seems to hurt like the smile on your face/ When it's only in my memory", in which it is clearly not physical violence. 'Murdered' and 'witness' occur together in all their instances, in the verse "She murdered everybody and I was her witness". 'Riot' occurs in the verse "I'm a riot, I'm a riot through your borders" – and even though 'borders' was not identified as a key keyword, it is related to the semantic field of boundaries, further commented in a subsequent section. The phrases "being walked all over lately" and "war caused by pain", containing 'walked over' and 'war', respectively, both use figurative meaning. 'War' is also used in the verse "you and me could calm a war down", acquiring a more positive connotation.

Injury

Related to the violence category, the words placed here have a less physical/ destructive characteristic to them. They are five items: (i) albino alligators, (ii) diss, (iii) middle fingers, (iv) haters, and (v) playing you. The expression 'albino alligators' was inserted in this category because both its occurrences are in the sequence "I twirl on them haters/ Albino alligators", in which they are equated to 'haters'. Besides the aforementioned verse, 'haters' also occurs in "Ya'll haters corny with that illuminati mess", and its singular variation in the verse "Fuck you hater", both criticizing or confronting the 'haters'. 'Diss' occurs in a construction similar to 'hurt', explained in detail in the previous section: "When you diss me/ You diss yourself". 'Middle fingers'

are shown four times in the verse "Middle fingers up". Finally, 'playing you' is something that a girl is warned about ("He said baby girl he's playing you").

Racial identity

This category contains four items: (i) Becky, (ii) black Bill Gates, (iii) negro, and (iv) yellow-bone. 'Becky' is used to refer to a white woman in the verse "He better call Becky with the good hair". Besides 'Bill Gates' being a model of success to be achieved, as discussed previously, the phrase "black Bill Gates in the making" establishes this model specifically for black people. 'Negro' occurs in the sequence "My daddy Alabama/ My mama Louisiana/ You mix that negro with that Creole make a Texas-bama", expressing the artist's origins, and also in "I like my negro nose with Jackson 5 nostrils", in which appreciation towards this racial identity is evident. "Yellow-bone" is used as a verb close to a series of verbs that express desire, showing off and effort: "I see it, I want it/ I stunt, yellow-bone it/ I dream it, I work hard, I grind till I own it".

Boundaries

The four words in this category express boundaries and their rupture: (i) chains, (ii) cut loose, (iii) freedom, and (iv) correctional gates. Verses such as "Open correctional gates in high deserts", "I break chains all by myself", and "Freedom, cut me loose" express breaking free from boundaries. The word 'freedom' composes verses by itself most times, but it is also in "Won't let my freedom rot in hell" as something that is to be fought for.

Ways of speaking

Eight words expressing speech or qualifying it in a particular way were identified: (i) diss, (ii) lying, (iii) promise, (iv) promised, (v) said, (vi) swore, (vii) warned, and (viii) whispering. 'Diss', 'lying' and 'whispering' all have negative connotations. 'Diss' has already been mentioned in the injury semantic field. 'Lying' occurs in "Now I'm the one that's lying", "I know you're lying" and "You only lying to yourself". 'Whispering' occurs only in "catch you whispering", as in an activity that should not be done so it is done in secret. 'Promise', 'promised' and 'swore' all express some kind of vow. 'Promise' and 'promised' express a vow made but not gone as expected ("I promised/ That I couldn't stay/ Every promise don't work out that way"), and 'swore' has a religious connotation

("He swore it on the bible"). Finally, 'said' and 'warned' express instruction given by a father in "He said baby girl he's playing you", "he said girl it's your second amendment", "before he died he said remember", "my daddy said shoot", "He said take care of your mother", and "My daddy warned me about men like you".

Relationship

The six words in this category – (i) love, (ii) loves, (iii) rub, (iv) sweet, (v) treat, and (vi) wicked – vary considerably in expressing positive and negative connotations to a relationship. 'Love' occurs 81 times in *Lmnd*, both as a verb and as a noun. It is the first lexical word in the word list. Twenty-four of the occurrences of 'love' are in the verse "they don't love you like I love you", expressing a comparison that puts the singer in a superior position to other people in terms of loving a significant other. The verses "When you love me/ You love yourself/ Love God herself" are also repeated in *Lmnd*. 'Love' is preceded by 'true' is three instances: "True love breathes salvation back into me", "true love never has to hide", and "They say true love's the greatest weapon/ To win the war caused by pain". 'Love' characterizes 'drought' in the verse "you and me could stop this love drought", repeated twice in the corpus. 'Love' is also preceded by the adjectives 'sweet' (a key keyword) and 'good', which give it a positive connotation, in the verses "Sweet love/ All night long/ Good love/ All night long", repeated in the chorus of one of the songs. 'Good', however, is also in a verse that negatively portrays a relationship: "it's such a shame/ You let this good love go to waste". Other adjectives preceding 'love' are 'bitter' and 'shallow' ("I'ma reign on this bitter love" and "I'ma wave through your shallow love"), once again bringing a negative connotation to the word, which happens in "Blindly in love/ I fucks with you, till I realize / I'm just too much for you", "All the love I'm giving is unnoticed", and "You don't love me deep enough" too. 'Love' is a vocative in the verses "What are you doing, my love?" and "How I missed you, my love". In one verse, 'love' expresses an idea dissonant to the centrality that financial and professional success occupied in previous examples. In "I love you more than this job", financial and professional success are secondary to the singer's love for a significant other. Overall, the relationship in question seems to be portrayed in a negative light more than in a positive one. 'Loves', 'treat' and 'wicked' occur together in the verse "What a wicked way to treat the girl that loves you" four times, another example of negative portrayal of relationships. Finally, 'rub' brings a physical

dimension to relationships in "Kiss up and rub up and feel up on ya", repeated five times.

Discussion

Considering the eleven identified semantic fields, some are exclusive to one song while others are more widely spread among the tracks that compose *Lemonade*. Some key keywords occur only in one song, but because they are repeated many times in it, their frequency is enough for them to be identified as key, despite an uneven distribution. This was expected due to the genre's intrinsic repetitive characteristic. For instance, all of the key keywords in the 'brand names' semantic field occur in the song "Formation", and all of the key keywords in the semantic field of boundaries occur in the song "Freedom". These semantic fields are not evenly spread throughout the corpus, but rather concentrated in one song.

On the other hand, other semantic fields were more evenly distributed. Key keywords belonging to the semantic field of relationships are present in seven of the songs ("Pray You Catch Me", "Hold Up", "Don't Hurt Yourself", "Love Drought", "Forward", "Freedom", and "All Night"). As discussed previously, negative depictions of love are more common than positive ones, and "All Night" concentrates all of the latter. Considering the distribution of the semantic field of relationships (key keywords distributed in seven out of the 12 tracks), and the fact that it mostly portrays love in a negative way, it seems that the critics' assertions that crisis in marriage is the album's main theme is corroborated by the findings. The violence and injury key keywords might also help express relationship issues, considering verses such as "When you hurt me/ You hurt yourself/ Don't hurt yourself", "Nothing else ever seems to hurt like the smile on your face/ When it's only in my memory", "Middle fingers up/ Put them hands high/ Wave it in his face/ Tell him 'boy, bye' [...] I ain't thinking 'bout you". Crime and violence was the most balanced semantic field, present in eight of the twelve songs, while injury was present in four of them.

Furthermore, Petridis' (2016) remarks about racial discussion being present but not central to the album seem to be corroborated as well, since the racial identity semantic field does not contain many key keywords and it is present only in two of the songs. However, bearing in mind that black people were enslaved for years in the US, the semantic field of boundaries – therefore, the song "Freedom" – seems to be related to racial issues due to historical reasons.

The semantic fields of success and effort were surprising findings, since they were not extensively brought up by any of the critics. Although both occur in three songs only – success-related words in "Six Inch Heels", "Freedom" and "Formation", and effort-related words in "Sorry", "Six Inch Heels" and "Formation" – the amount of words belonging to those categories was expressive, and thus deserves to be mentioned.

It is important to concede that, although corpus approaches lessen human bias, they do not completely erase it (BAKER, 2012). Those same key keywords could have been sorted into different semantic fields, or the focus could have been on grammatical words – for instance, there are three reflexive pronouns among they key keywords ('herself', 'themselves', 'yourself'), three pronouns referring to women ('her', 'herself', 'she'), and three referring to men ('he', 'he's', 'his'). The selection of reference corpora itself is biased, as different reference corpora would generate different keyword lists.

Conclusion

This study aimed at identifying and describing the main themes in *Lemonade*'s song lyrics and comparing them to their contemporaries and to Beyoncé's previous solo studio albums. In order to do so, two research questions guided the analysis: (i) Are the differences between *Lemonade* and Beyoncé's previous albums perceived by reviewers statistically reflected in the song lyrics?, and (ii) What semantic fields are characteristic of *Lemonade* when compared to Beyoncé's previous albums and to its contemporaries?

The findings demonstrate that the song lyrics reflect the changes identified by reviewers, such as an expressive focus on relationship issues, addressing the first research question. Regarding the second question, a total of eleven semantic fields were identified: (i) brand names, (ii) alcohol consumption, (iii) success, (iv) lifestyle, (v) effort, (vi) crime and violence, (vii) injury, (viii) racial identity, (ix) boundaries, (x) ways of speaking and (xi) relationship. Some of them were not identified by reviewers as dominant themes in the album. The categories 'success' and 'effort', which contained a substantial amount of key keywords, were not discussed in any of the reviews, unnoticed by the critics. Therefore, this analysis provides a deeper insight into *Lemonade*'s song lyrics.

CL proved to be an adequate and useful approach to conduct the analysis and identify *Lemonade*'s style. The use of two reference corpora made it possible to affirm with more certainty that the identified key keywords are characteristic of *Lemonade*.

Further expansions of this study could focus on the grammatical words mentioned above, or could examine the reference corpora more deeply, checking for words that are exclusive to *Lemonade*, i.e., that do not occur at all in the other corpora, or investigating how words that occur in all three corpora are used differently or similarly. Additionally, a joint study with Music and Cinema researchers could prove fruitful to analyze the instrumental and visual aspects of the album, linking them to the linguistic features observed, producing a more thorough and complete analysis of the album. In a future research, we intend to focus on how such findings could be used to inform materials for teaching English as a second language, by, for example, linking the song lyrics to the teaching of cultural differences, language variation, slangs, etc.

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