

The Dual Tool: AAVE and Masculine Language used by Alpha Male Podcasters

Introduction

Alpha males are men that use an aggressive form of masculinity to define themselves as specifically opposite and dominant to women. With that understanding, it would be expected that their language would differ drastically from Women's language, however, I have found that not to be the case. I argue that alpha males do not exclusively use masculine coded language but instead use Women's Language and AAVE as well. Moreso, Alpha males can specifically combine their usage of masculine language and AAVE in three ways. It can grant the speaker a hypermasculine persona, negate femininity, and create a hierarchy that places the most masculine man at the top and forces less masculine alpha males to the bottom and to use feminine speaking patterns. In order to prove this I am investigating the conversational habits of Alpha Male podcasters. I will specifically be investigating the usage of AAVE that is used near masculine language as well as aspects of women's language such as hedges and minimal vocal responses. The next few pages will include a deep dive into the Fresh&Fit podcast through analyzing their speech patterns in relation to AAVE and gendered language, all to demonstrate the multiplicity of ways AAVE and masculine language are used together.

Data and Methodology

The data gathered to build and support my argument is from the Fresh&Fit podcast. The Fresh&Fit podcast surrounds Fresh and Fit who are the hosts. I chose them because they are a well known alpha male podcast with a large following, meaning they have the potential to be representative for a lot of the alpha males that watch their content. They often invite other alpha males as guests onto their podcast with the episode I chose having them inviting 6ix9ine. 6ix9ine

is a famous rapper who similarly follows their alpha male ideology. For ease, I will be referring to 6ix9ine as simply 69. The title of the episode I studied is “Full Interview - 6ix9ine vs Fresh and Fit”. It is available on Youtube and falls under public availability. I combed the podcast for moments of significance, looking for specifically hyper masculine or feminine instances. Whilst looking, I noted the way in which blackness was often utilized as a tool alongside masculinity and started writing down those instances as well. The podcast itself was an hour long and I combed for about five minutes worth of transcription for further analysis. I am specifically studying the speaking habits of Fresh, Fit and 69. Their demographic information is as follows: Fresh is black and 33, Fit is black and 35, and 69 is latino and 29. One reason that I'm observing Fresh&Fit is due to the conversational structure of their interactions, whilst this is still an interview, the conversation is kept casual and friendly which resulted in more organic conversation. Another reason that I'm observing Fresh&Fit is that they are all near the millennial age range, representing a mid range between Gen Z and older adults. However, there are limitations to my data. The sample size is only three, and I'd only be covering one podcast out of the several on their channel.

Data Analysis

Following the collection of data, I noticed that there were instances of masculinized language in association with AAVE, as well as instances of women's language used by all members but predominately the dominant male. I will first be going over the usage of masculine language alongside AAVE, then the usage of stereotypical 'women's language' and then finally how the two intersect inside a racialized hierarchy of masculinity.

Hypermasculine language and AAVE

Over the span of the hour-long podcast, 6ix9ine is seen to unite AAVE forms and masculine language. The following two excerpts demonstrate the way these forms are united.

The first excerpt is at 15:11. Fresh and Fit have just toasted to 69's arrival, with 69 specifically toasting to all the black women watching. During this excerpt they are discussing a 'don de marco' sound bite that just played in the podcast. 6ix9ine is mentioning that he didn't know they had that soundbite. As a reminder, 69 is latino while Fresh and Fit are both black.

Excerpt 1

1. Fit: @ Bro this guy's blacker [than ME, man] @
2. 69: [yeah wait] @ you've
3. got the don de marco? [That was don de marco?]
4. Fit: [@ yeah yeah]
5. Fresh: [@ we've got that]
6. 69: Play that shit one more time
7. 69: [Y:ES BRO] what the fuck i didnt even know that
8. Fit: @
9. 69: SAY WORD TOO i dont be sayin that
10. I be in the car just like <singing> {don de marco}

Excerpt 1 demonstrates several markers of masculine language combined with AAVE. Fit

comments on 69's being 'blacker than him' in the first line immediately after 69 mentioned black women in a romantic connotation. Moving on to more linguistic forms, The usage of 'bro' in line one and six is an instantly recognizable masculine marker. In line eight and line three 69 states 'i dont be' and 'i be.. like' which are both examples of the habitual be which is an indicator of AAVE. In line eight, 6ix9ine utilizes AAVE, once again, through the phrase 'say word' which is a common phrase used in AAVE. Masculinity is often associated with AAVE, due to preconceptions about blackness often aligning with toughness and stereotypically masculine qualities. Due to those assumptions about AAVE, 69's use of masculine and AAVE terms grant

alpha males can utilize masculinized or black associated word forms to make their words appear less femininely coded.

Usage of Women's Language

All members of the podcast used hedges and minimal vocal responses throughout the hour of observation. Below is an excerpt that takes place at 17:08 which generally demonstrates their usage.

Extract 3:

1. 69: youknowwhaimean? Like m- m- m- (.)
2. like people- a lot of people think i'm funny
3. So- but i just cant like- if you tell me yo li- tell
4. me a joke on the spot youknowwhaimean?
5. I wouldn't be able to
6. Fresh: yeah
7. Fit: [if they ask you the right questions] (.)
8. 69: [NO but it can]
9. Fit: you can improvise
10. 69: yeah like

Excerpt 3 demonstrates several instances of what Lakoff would define as women's language.

Some forms are outright while some are masculinized. In line one and four, 69, utilizes a masculine form of the hedge ‘you know’, in ‘youknowwhaimean’. He also has a high rising intonation while using it. In line 10, 69 uses two feminine forms. Yeah serves as an add on to contribute to Fit’s sentence, and more directly ‘like’ operates in order to buy 69 more time as he thinks about what to say next. In line 6, Fresh uses ‘yeah’ as a minimal vocal response as 69 is speaking. Fit indirectly uses women's language, while not using any explicit forms, he adds on to 69’s line of reasoning and helps build a collaborative space. Interestingly enough, 69 sandwiches his numerous false starts, as seen in line one, two and three between masculine language. He has the masculinized hedge ‘youknowwhaimean’ in line one and four. He also briefly says ‘yo’,

which has ties in AAVE. The potential feminine impact of all the false starts is negated through the use of masculinized language to surround it. This excerpt demonstrates firstly that alpha males utilize women's language. It secondly demonstrates that the use of Woman's language can be made more masculine in order to disguise it or surrounded by other overtly masculine forms in order to lessen its impact.

Masculinity and Race operating in a Hierarchy

The combined references to masculinity and race within alpha male conversation combine to create a form of hypermasculinity which places the person who uses the most masculine and AAVE word forms into the highest level on the pyramid. The following excerpt at 18:10 demonstrates this hierarchy.

During Excerpt 4, 69 elaborates upon the ostracization that he faced in the rap community. While talking about this 69 (who is latino) asks Fresh and Fit (who are both black) what his skin tone is. For context, 69 has very light brown skin.

Excerpt 4:

1. 69: (2) w-what's the color of my skin.
2. 69: (3.2) [just say it]
3. Fresh: [Brown? White?] [hispanic?]
4. Fit: [hispanic?]
5. 69: hispanic right
6. Fit: right right
7. 69: i'm in a rap game that's dominated by hip hop
8. Fresh: niggas.
9. (2) @
10. 69: so my thing is like (.) youknowwhaimean?

Feminine and masculine coded language is present in this excerpt with an overlying theme of race. In line 10, 69 is seen to use the female coded buffer word in 'like'. Fresh and Fit both have

high rising intonation in lines 3 and 4 when asked a question about race by 69. In line 2, immediately following 69's questioning a 3.2 seconds silence occurs, longer than most other silences on the podcast. In line 2, 69 has to prompt them both to respond resulting in the high rising intonation. While no explicit AAVE is used in this excerpt, and very little explicitly masculine language is used, the undercurrent of 69's past racial comments are seen. 69's uses of hypermasculine and black-coded language put him in a position of the 'most masculine'. Leading the others to adopt more Woman's language and begin to question their ability to answer obvious questions. Even as 69 uses tendencies of Woman's Language in line 10, he still operates as the 'most masculine' due to the amount of masculine and AAVE language indicators he used prior. Those language indicators then cancel out the woman's language he uses.

Discussion

The alpha males used aspects from three different trends of language: Woman's language, Men's Language and even AAVE, which was notably used most prominently by a latino man. 69 used the greatest number of hedges, in the form of 'youknowwhaimean'. He also used 'like' several times. Fresh and Fit used women's language primarily in the form of minimal vocal responses, such as yeah, whilst encouraging 69 to speak more. Masculine language was often used when situated near AAVE. For example, 'bro' was often used nearby AAVE or another indicator of blackness such as the n-word. AAVE appears to be used in tandem with outright masculine language in order to create a form of hypermasculinity. AAVE also appears to operate as a tool used to soften the emotional burden of a speaker's content, to allow the speaker to maintain their image of hypermasculinity. Similarly, use of explicit forms of Woman's Language such as 'like' and continued use of hedges had the potential to strip the man of masculinity, however use of

both masculine language and AAVE counteracted the negative impact of woman's language on an alpha male's masculinity. The usage of AAVE and masculine language also operates to create a hierarchy where the 'most masculine' man pushes less masculine men into using feminine forms.

Conclusion

Alpha Male podcasters use a wide variety of gender-coded language and are not just limited to masculine language. However, despite Woman's Language often being used by Alpha males, that use is often covered up by masculine language and AAVE, which allows the masculine speaker to retain their masculinity in the face of feminine action. Moreso, Alpha males can utilize masculine and AAVE terms in order to create a hyperform of masculinity that allows them to force other masculine men into using feminine forms. The data in this study challenges the common assumption that hypermasculine men only use masculine language. Alpha males do use women's language, however, they are able to cover it up by use of hypermasculine language and AAVE.