MPC MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

INSTAGRAM AND FEMALE CELEBRITY: EXPLORING GENDER
PERFORMANCES THROUGH SOCIAL VISUAL SEMIOTICS, FEMINIST
THEORY, AND FRAMING ANALYSIS

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The Major Research Paper is submitted
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Professional Communication

Ryerson University
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

August 28th 2014

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ABSTRACT

With the advent of social media, and specifically Instagram, individuals now have the ability to instantly communicate their moods, thoughts, and ideas through personally created visual messages. Instagram is designed to communicate ideas through self-generated digital images uploaded to the platform and network in real time from mobile devices, especially smartphones. This has had an impact on what is accepted as important media content, with fans, publics, and popular culture having a seemingly insatiable appetite for the personal details proffered by celebrities' online profiles (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). These images are redefining our understanding of celebrity, reformatting fans' expectations of reality, and helping to define emerging modes of subjectivity in a world dominated and increasingly defined by social media networks.

This Masters of Professional Communication Major Research Project examines how social media networks are changing the way female celebrities portray themselves to the public and how these digital platforms are assisting in the cultivation of celebrity personas. Informed by social visual semiotics, postmodern feminist theory, and framing analysis this research project will analyze: 1) the Instagram accounts of three prominent female celebrities: Ellie Goulding, Kat Dennings, and Beyonce; 2) how these celebrities' self-portrayal assists in their ability to create an accessible persona for their fans; and 3) what these prominent female celebrities' social media performances reveal about female empowerment and self-representation in our social media saturated era.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's always-on digital environment we are in a perpetual state of visual and digital stimulation. Whether checking our email or walking through city streets we are immersed in, and constantly bombarded by, digitally generated media images. Often these digitally generated media images are directed toward the "modern" woman, attempting to offer dynamic representations of women rather than "sexualized" stereotypes. However, these images often fail to convey a relatable or realistic sense of female empowerment, instead depicting women in powerful business roles wearing revealing clothing in sexually suggestive poses (Gill, 2008, p. 36). Motivated by a capitalist agenda to sell products to impressionable consumers, those who author advertisements and media images shape stereotypes of what it means to be a woman (Ashikali & Ditmar, 2012).

With the advent of social media, and specifically Instagram, advertising firms are no longer the sole creators and distributors of media images; individuals now have the autonomy and ability to communicate ideas instantly and globally through personally created and curated visual messages. Those who have access to the appropriate technology are able to communicate mediated personas across social media networks. This has had an impact on what passes for important or attention-grabbing media content, with fans, publics, and popular culture having a seemingly insatiable appetite for the personal details proffered by celebrities' online profiles (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). These images are redefining our understanding of celebrity, reformatting fans' anticipations of reality, establishing an expectation that everyone develop a social mediated persona, and

helping to define emerging modes of subjectivity in a world dominated and increasingly defined by social media networks.

Instagram is designed to communicate ideas and messages through self-generated images uploaded to the platform and network in real time. How celebrities use this channel and what messages they convey through media images can reinforce or challenge social, gender, or sexual stereotypes. Specifically, social media allows female celebrities to communicate their daily activities, which, in turn, has the potential to express the everyday complexity of female experience. Rather than focusing on stereotypical media images created by a team of communicators depicting women in sexualized dress, or as silent and submissive objects within a frame, Instagram allows users -- females and female celebrities in particular -- to consciously or unconsciously challenge these stereotypes.

As powerful agents within western society, today's female celebrities have untold social and cultural influence. With the proliferation of social media, this influence becomes further embedded into the psyche and everyday lives of followers and fans. Aguayo and Calvet argue that "ordinary or vernacular images are a pervasive and under studied category of photography" (2013, p. 181). Instagram has spawned a rise in ordinary photography, and by sharing ordinary or private images we gain insight into the more nuanced aspects and complexities of female celebrities' lives (2013, p. 183). Indeed, through the creation and uploading of images to social media celebrities are able to engage in self-promotion and persona development, thus creating more personalized connections between users and celebrities (2013). Additionally, Humpheres and Verad

state that "new media practices offer different affordances for the performance of gender, rather than, or as well as, the representation of gender by someone else" (2014, p. 5). Ultimately, new media leads to greater diversity in gender performance and its representation (2014, p. 5).

Drawing on social visual semiotics, postmodern feminist theory, and framing analysis this research project will analyze: 1) the Instagram accounts of three prominent female celebrities: Ellie Goulding, Kat Dennings, and Beyonce; 2) how these celebrities' self-portrayal assists in their ability to create an accessible persona for their fans; and 3) what these prominent female celebrities' social media performances can tell us about female empowerment and self-representation, and if these messages offer an appropriately complex representation of females in media images in our social media defined era.

From a socio-cultural and professional communication perspective it is important to examine powerful images created by individuals who have amassed "celebrity" status. Analyzing such media images is important because it allows for a window into how these individuals view themselves, or their professionalized personas, while assessing the potential influence celebrity generated media images have on networks and larger society as a whole.

Through social media's channels a new generation of fans and a plethora of online communities are being exposed to media images that convey visual messages with powerful implicit and explicit meaning. Given our ongoing interest in (female) celebrities (Furedi, 2010; Harper & Tiggemann, 2007; Ruane & Wallace, 2013; and Simon & Holt,

2012) it is crucial to understand the ways media images can influence media users and viewers and the ways these images can reinforce and reinscribe cultural, sexual, and gender stereotypes. By better understanding the messaging of media images uploaded to Instagram we can begin to examine and understand the benefits and limitations of the Instagram social media channel.

Research Questions

1) How are female celebrities portraying themselves using media images on Instagram?

2) What messages do these media images convey?

To pursue this analysis and engage with these questions this project will be divided into the following seven sections: 1) Introduction, 2) Review of Theoretical Literature, 3) Data Collection Methodology, 4) Analysis, 5) Findings: Quantitative and Interpretive Results, 6) Discussion: Implications and Social Influence, and 7) Conclusion.

Definition of Terms

In order to address and analyze images created and uploaded by female celebrities to Instagram, it is important to define what general terms mean in the context of this research project. The three primary terms that will be discussed in association with this project are: media images, publicity, and Instagram.

Media Image

  The term "media image" is often left undefined in the literature due to its self-explanatory meaning. However, it is important to differentiate and define this term and its relevance to social media. I define this term by bridging the independent definitions of the words "media" – meaning "multiple forms or systems of communication" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) and "image" – meaning "a picture that is produced by a camera, artist or mirror" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). The term "media image" will refer to pictures captured on camera and shared across different systems or channels of social media communication (i.e. Instagram).

  With the rise in popularity of visually driven social media channels, images become prominent and key cultural communicative artifacts. As a result media images take on an entirely new level of significance. They become units of expression sometimes accompanied by text, but often expressing meaning beyond semantics. Media images and social media channels influence and are reliant on one another to express meaning. Thus, the importance of media images in relation to social media (i.e. Instagram) cannot be overstated. For my purposes, the term "media images" also embodies and emphasizes the importance of this new connection and reliance.

Publicity

  Crucial to the discussion of media images is how they are used to attract attention. Though the focus of my research will not address publicity specifically, attention will be given to image representation and how this representation could attract attention to a

celebrity. As defined by Merriam-Webster's dictionary publicity is "something that attracts the attention of the public" or "attention that is given to someone or something by the media" or "the activity or business of getting people to give attention to someone or something" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). With entertainment organizations placing greater importance on publicity for promotional purposes, access to free social media networks proves invaluable to celebrities (Eisend & Kuster, 2011, p. 906). Since I will be focusing on Instagram, which is a free service, I will acknowledge the possible benefits garnered from using such a service. A discussion of advertising will not be a focus of my study because advertising is based on a pay-for endorsement model (Richards & Curran, 2002, p. 74).

Overall, the term publicity will refer to something that attracts the attention of publics and fans. Interestingly, this notion of publicity is applicable to all social media and interactive web-based channels. Since social media platforms allow users to generate profiles that are created and built upon by users, publicity is built into the structure of social media channels and arguably is for users one of its main draws.

Instagram

Created and launched in 2010, Instagram is a social media channel that shares images and videos with other users and the public. As defined by its website, Instagram is "a 'fun and quirky' way to share your life with friends through a series of pictures and videos" (About Us, Instagram, 2014). Instagram is a photo and short video database open to the public where users can go to view images other users have posted under

personalized public profiles connected through the Internet. The goal of the channel is to create a "world more connected through photos" (2014, About Us, Instagram).

In order to facilitate this "photo connected world," Instagram has been developed as a cellphone-app-based platform. Users may only create an account via their smartphones, mobile phones that can go online and that function similarly to computers with advanced mobile operating systems (Oxford Dictionaries). Thus, only those with access to smartphones and who have data plans or wireless access are able to create an account and upload media images to the social media application. User accounts are automatically set up as public, and the user must change their profile to private in order to become "unsearchable" or nonpublic. For the purposes of my research, I am focusing on Instagram specifically because of its popularity and its emphasis on sharing images through integrated media channels with the goals of creating a connected image-based global community.

REVIEW OF THEORETICAL LITERATURE

Social media has revolutionized how humans interact. Gone are the days of waiting months, weeks, days, hours or even seconds for a reply from contacts near and far. With the speed at which information now travels, change, both on- and off-line, is occurring at a faster rate. And while text-based social media is still a relatively new phenomenon, communicating via text using language is increasingly being challenged by image-based and video-sharing social media channels (Social Media Today, 2014;

Forbes, 2013). Unlike text, media images allow users to promote their lives in more graphically dynamic and intimate ways (Forbes, 2013), connecting and communicating with online social circles, communities, organizations, the general public, and other media platforms through images.

One cultural figure taking full advantage of these channels is the celebrity. At no other time in western culture have celebrities ascended to such an influential status (Furedi, 2010, p. 493). We seek out celebrity guidance in matters of consumer purchases, we look to them for political advice, and we give them authority as role models (2010). In particular, visual representations of celebrities are idealized (2010; Ogden et. al, 2010; Simon & Hoyt, 2012; and Ruane & Wallace, 2013). We want to view and interact with celebrities to gain further access into their lives.

While both celebrity and social media have received attention from scholars (Furedi, 2010; Marwick & boyd, 2011), there has yet to be a study done that discusses the possible cultural implications and connections of these two phenomena through image-based social media. This research project will reveal how female celebrities portray themselves on Instagram, and what messages these images convey.

To pursue my research on female celebrities on Instagram I will combine social visual semiotic methods, theories developed and explored by feminist theorists, and Erving Goffman's framing analysis to analyze selected images on Instagram. Combined, these theories and methodological approaches are crucial to my project because they enable a greater understanding of the Instagram network and will help reveal what representative meanings celebrity self-generated images convey.

It is important to examine powerful images created by individuals anointed with "celebrity" status. Through social media's channels a new generation of fans and a plethora of online communities are being exposed to media images that convey visual messages with powerful implicit and explicit meaning. Given our ongoing interest in (female) celebrities (Furedi, 2010; Harper & Tiggemann, 2007; Ruane & Wallace, 2013; and Simon & Holt, 2012) it is important to understand the ways media images can influence media users and viewers and the ways these images can reinforce and reinscribe cultural, sexual, and gender stereotypes.

From Performative Acts and Feminist Theory to the Female Celebrity

With the proliferation of social media vast networks of people are going online and using virtual social channels to access and share information. It has become commonplace to see and hear celebrities on these channels. Online celebrity performances are embraced by networks of fans and publics interested in learning about the daily habits of their favourite celebrities. In particular, female celebrities are using social media channels as outlets of expression, as a way to generate publicity and as a tool for shaping their personas. Instagram allows celebrities to publish images of themselves that give networks of fans perceived access to their private lives. Instagram provides celebrities with the ability to create private/public personas with images uploaded depicting their private moments to millions of people. This private/public persona cultivation can be examined using Judith Butler's performativity theory which analyzes individual behaviour by suggesting that individual actions are powerful and

"performed" personal expressions capable of reproducing gendered behavior. Performativity theory will allow for the objectification of the flexibility of gender and self-presentation (Dobson, 2012, 2013). After all, images hold multiple meanings and allow for the reinvention of self based on the content and the sociocultural context.

In her article *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory* (1988), Judith Butler develops a theory wherein she argues that gender gets defined, manufactured, and perpetuated through performative acts (1988, p. 520). It is through repetitious behavior that we define and reinforce normalized acts of sex and gender. As Butler explains:

> Significantly, if gender is instituted through acts that are internally discontinuous, then the *appearance of substance* is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief. (Butler, 1988, p. 520)

Here Butler argues that we are affected by the actions of others and that our own actions contribute to the perpetuation of gendered behavior. We are part of this mundane social audience. Not allowing for the existence of "natural" gendered behavior, the performer and audience come to expect and believe traditional and socially-constructed gender roles. It is through this reciprocal "performativity" between performer and audience that we relate to and through which we perpetuate the gender roles with which we identify. However, based on the diversity of gender performances we have the ability to influence behavior by altering the performance associated with a particular gender (Butler, 1988, p. 521).

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Using Butler's theory to assess photographs created, uploaded and shown on three female celebrity Instagram profiles, this project reveals the gendered complexity of on- and off-line self-presentation. Of course, the complexity of performed identities also contributes to structures of power and hierarchy in societies – representations and performances, in other words, are never neutral. Tonya Hammer affirms this reality when she observes that controlling images and images based on stereotypes are used throughout western society in order to subjugate women (2009, p. 203). Thus, a further motivation of this project is to examine and reveal what stereotypes, if any, still exist and are being reinforced, in these three celebrities' Instagram accounts; or whether new sexualized, objectifying or empowering trends are occurring through images uploaded to social media.

Sandra Lee Bartkly extends the observation that images, gender performance, and power go hand in hand when she argues that one of the three tools of oppression is stereotyping, along with cultural domination, and sexual objectification (1990, p. 23). For Bartkly oppression can take the form of many different kinds of social pressures, from social norms – influenced hegemonic structures – to cultural artifacts, such as media, advertisements, entertainment, and so on (1990, p. 24). She observes that gendered oppression is built into everyday life through language, popular culture, institutions and capitalist enterprise (Bartkly, 1990, p. 25). For Bartkly, media images (as popular culture) can be understood as a possible tool of oppression and stereotyping.

The oppressive power of stereotyping women through media images is well documented (Ogden et al, 2011; Ruane & Wallace, 2013; Myers & Crowther, 2007;

Simon & Hoyt, 2012; Harper & Tiggmann, 2007; Lamb, Graling & Wheeler, 2013; and

Tyler & Bennett, 2010). Images are found to have a profound and lasting effect on body

dissatisfaction, thin-ideal internalization and self-objectification with "even short-term

exposure to thin women in media images leading to increased body dissatisfaction"

(Myers & Crowther, 2007, p. 297). As social media becomes increasingly image-based

there is potential for media images to have even greater – not to mention, more

immediate – impact.

As Western society's obsession with body image increases so does our obsession

with the visible self. Baroncelli and Freitas discuss how social recognition is now largely

performed through visibility and self-spectacularization (2011, p. 1). Celebrity culture

has become something to be ingested and created, obtainable to all who can portray

themselves as "famous" (i.e. not only Kim Kardashian, but everyday individuals as well).

No longer are celebrities – or individuals – admired for their talents alone.

But whoever they are, the public wants to be able to identify personally with

celebrities (Baroncelli & Freitas, 2011, p. 1). Thus, social media and visual promotion of

the self has altered the strategies we use to pursue social recognition and create identity.

Increasingly we must be made visible to others to become real to ourselves (Baroncelli &

Freitas, 2011, p. 1; Furedi, 2010). As Western celebrity culture continues to promote

mediated forms of visibility and self-spectacularization, female celebrities seem

pressured to become increasingly narcissistic in their behaviour and the promotion of

their self-image (Young & Pinsky, 2006).

As my research demonstrates, gender and feminist theory have been applied extensively to studies of new media. At the same time, given the emerging popularity of social media little existing authorship specifically discusses Instagram and celebrity culture. Undeniably, social media is performative in nature – we craft messages and capture images to influence, shape and inform our social networks. By analyzing female celebrities' images on Instagram my objective is to uncover what, if any, gendered stereotypes exist and are being reinforced. Drawing on Butler's performative feminist theory and Bartkly's feminist theory provides an excellent theoretical lens through which to deconstruct gendered visual expressions on social media.

Goffman's Framing Analysis

The presentation of the self through images is not a new concept. What has changed is the way we access and share that information. It is through an analysis of images created and uploaded to Instagram that we can begin to reveal how the content and presentation of self may influence our perception. Using Erving Goffman's framing analysis I will analyze three female celebrities' media images uploaded to Instagram. When combined with postfeminist theory, Goffman's framing analysis will help establish an interpretive framework to better understand messages expressed through the uploaded media images.

Erving Goffman introduced framing analysis in his seminal work, *Framing Analysis: an Essay on the Organization of Experience*. He argues that there are two broad classifications of what he calls "occurrences," the natural and the social (1986, p. 22).

The so-called "natural" occurrences are unguided, unoriented, purely physical events or instances. These occurrences have no apparent willful agency behind them, they are not positive or negative, they simply are "natural." An example of natural framing is the weather or a natural disaster (1986, p. 22). Social framing, on the other hand, describes occurrences with intelligent effort and intention behind them; there is a will, aim or controlling effort – they are, in other words, expressions of agency.

Routinely we find both natural and social framing being connected throughout peoples' lives and individual experiences. For example, natural occurrences may interrupt a social activity, like rain stopping a baseball game. Regardless of the ratio of natural versus social framing employed, the important point is that Goffman's framing analysis provides an analytical lens to assess the world around us. He states, "we can hardly glance at anything without applying a primary framework, thereby forming conjectures as to what occurred before and expectations of what is likely to happen now" (1986, p. 38). Thus, the social frames we use to extract knowledge about our social and cultural experiences enable us to interpret our world:

> the primary frameworks of a particular social group constitute a central element of its culture, especially insofar as understandings emerge concerning principle classes of schemata. … [Through frameworks we can] try to form an image of a group's framework of frameworks – its belief system. (1986, p.27)

For Goffman, every image allows for a further understanding of group or network culture. It is through framing analysis that we come to know how groups view experience and how these experiences are important to that group. Once frames are identified, belief systems can be better understood.

This theoretical perspective is crucial to the analysis of media images insofar as it provides an interpretative framework that allows for a more nuanced understanding of image content and associated meaning. Goffman's theory is often employed when analyzing media images (Gamson, Croteau & Sasson, 1992; Featherstone, 2010; Gill, 2008; Gamson, Croteau & Sasson, 1992), but has yet to be applied to social media or Instagram.

Goffman's framing analysis is relevant to my study because it provides an excellent tool for analyzing media images uploaded to Instagram by female celebrities. By employing Goffman's analysis, I will determine different frames or classifications of frames to help derive meaning from the images selected. Together with theories of feminist performativity, Goffman's framing analysis will allow me to develop a comprehensive system of classifications with which to derive meaning from online Instagram images. Drawing on social framing, I will be able to develop a sense of the "framework of frameworks" employed by a cross-section of female celebrities on Instagram.

DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

In order to ascertain meaning and to analyze media images of female celebrities uploaded to Instagram, data collection methods and methods of analysis are crucial. This section details the data collection methods and analysis techniques used for this project.

Additionally, with the popularity of Instagram being a recent phenomenon and given the narrow scope of this project limitations are discussed.

Data Collection Methods

The objective of my project is to analyze media images uploaded by female celebrities to Instagram using the following theoretical and methodological approaches: feminist theory, Erving Goffman's framing analysis, and Claire Harrison's visual social semiotics analysis structure. Analysis will begin with a detailed discussion of Harrison's structure and application of visual social semiotics. Following from this, findings from Harrison's framework will be combined with the analysis of images through interpretive feminist theory and framing analysis. Combining findings from Harrison's framework and the qualitative analysis will allow for a more comprehensive or holistic interpretation of the media images uploaded to Instagram. My primary source of data will be the media images from the public Instagram profiles of three female celebrities.

With the rise of social media, the definition of celebrity has changed. Nowadays anyone can become recognized through a prolific social media presence (Baroncelli & Freitas, 2011). Because of this, as a researcher the breadth of choice seems limitless when selecting viable celebrities-on-Instagram to analyze. As a result, core criteria were established to select well-known celebrities for analysis. First, the scope of the project was limited to recognizable celebrities working in the entertainment industry (i.e. music, film, television etc.). This was done to ensure that each celebrity had a following beyond

the confines of social media. Female celebrities who are famous for other reasons were not considered (e.g. the Kardashians).

Following from this, and in consideration of the recent popularity of Instagram, the second data collection criteria addressed the activity and longevity of the female celebrity on Instagram. Instagram was created in October 2010, and has since become extremely popular as an image-sharing social media platform (Forbes, 2013). As a result, most users have only been active on the channel for three or less years. In order to analyze how female celebrities depict themselves on Instagram, possible celebrity candidates for this study had to be prolific Instagram users, as defined by their posting four or more photos per month and having been active for at least a 12-month period prior to my analysis. A 12-month date range was selected to ensure that the female celebrities interact and post to Instagram on a regular basis. Also, with Instagram being a relatively new social media channel, 12 months allows for a wide range of data and allows for the users' expertise and understanding of the channel to develop and evolve.

Narrowing the selection further, only female celebrities with a minimum of 500,000 followers were considered. This number was selected based on preliminary research and my observation that popular users with less than 500,000 followers were generally not recognized celebrities. This criterion relates to the first component, recognizable entertainers, to ensure that the female celebrity is well known and has a strong following and thus a significant fan base and potential influence.

Having created suitable research parameters a number of female celebrity profiles' were accessed to select appropriate candidates. As a result of the selection

process I chose three influential and prolific female celebrity Instagramers: Ellie

Goulding Kat Dennings and Beyonce. Ellie Goulding is a singer-songwriter who gained

celebrity status after her debut and sophomore albums sold over three million copies

world wide. Kat Dennings is a television and film actress, who currently stars in the hit

television show *2 Broke Girls*. Last but not least, Beyonce, who cultivated celebrity status

as a member of the R&B pop girl group Destiny's Child in the early 2000s. Beyonce has

since launched a successful solo music career and married popular rapper/performer Jay-

Z.

Each celebrity has been posting images to Instagram on a regular basis and at

regular intervals throughout a 12-month span. A date range of June 2013 to May 2014

was selected to ensure that the most recent images were selected. Regarding popularity

and followers amongst the female celebrities selected, there is a sliding scale of

popularity, from Beyonce (approx. 13 million followers), to Ellie Goulding (approx. 3

million followers) to Kat Dennings (approx. 1 million followers) (Instagram, User

Profiles, 2014).

Following the celebrity selection process, all images depicting the female

celebrities from June 2013 to May 2014 were analyzed. Images were copied from the

internet and organized based on month. Only images that contained the celebrities'

bodies were considered and analyzed in detail by the referenced methodologies in order

to be able to assess features such as body language, posture, etc. Additionally, the total

images uploaded to the celebrities' profile were compared to the number of images

containing the celebrity. This was done to identify what I'm calling possible narcissistic

tendencies, where by the female celebrity often uploads self captured portraits, or selfies, if any. Upon completion of logging and coding all images depicting the female celebrities, 1,086 media images were coded in total. Specifically, this coding process involved 659 media images depicting Ellie Goulding, 123 depicting Kat Dennings, and 304 depicting Beyonce.

It is important to highlight that how the celebrity was depicted in the images is of importance to this project. How the female celebrities choose to represent themselves, through physical expression and visual social semiotic composition of the photo is my central focus. Of course, the data collection methods are limited by the scope and timeline of this project; nevertheless, even with these restrictions, criteria were selected to mitigate these limitations.

Methods of Analysis

To understand culture requires that we analyze cultural artifacts. Today, like no other time in history, scholars have access to information through the Internet, etc. As a result, there is an unprecedented amount of freedom to analyze current cultural trends. Nevertheless, frameworks and methods of analysis are crucial in order to determine how popular culture icons, those celebrated by society, represent themselves and what messages they are conveying through their public social media profiles.

Having established the parameters and criteria of the data collection methods, images are analyzed using relevant theoretical approaches and through a structured visual social semiotic framework. The intention of combining the two methods is to allow a

more holistic and arguably more detailed analysis of the images selected. It is not my intention to categorize the images within rigid classifications of understanding – or through purely quantitative means, but to allow for a more open interpretative, theoretical, and cultural studies-inspired analysis of the images. I wish to assess the images based on feminist theory, as well as by employing Goffman's framing analysis to uncover the meaning of the images and how might these meanings (latent messages) and detected themes inform the social networks connected to the celebrity or wider society.

Furthermore, by combining Claire Harrison's visual social semiotics framework, as described below, the viewers' perspective and interpretation of the media images will be explored. Harrison's framework is more structured in form than other more speculative theoretical perspectives. Combining both will allow for a quantitative and qualitative understanding and interpretation of the images.

With the goal of assessing the social visual semiotics of the images to reveal their meaning, I will first provide context for my analysis by discussing Harrison's framework in detail and offer a description of my theoretical analysis. Following from this, I will first analyze the images based on Harrison's method, before assessing them using the more theoretical perspectives outlined above. After this I will discuss the findings combining both methodological approaches. Last, I will discuss how my findings relate to one another and the larger social implications of my analysis.

Claire Harrison: Metafunction Analysis

When investigating the meaning of media images uploaded to Instagram by female celebrities, it is crucial to use a framework that helps to explain social meaning as well as visual semiotics. Clair Harrison combines Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's visual semiotic analysis with her practical expertise, creating an applicable framework to derive meaning from images within a social context called "visual social semiotics" (Harrison, 2003). Jewitt and Oyama define visual social semiotics as involving "the description of semiotic resources, what can be said and done with images (and other visual means of communication) and how the things people say and do with images can be interpreted" (2001, p. 136). Thus, social visual semiotics looks at how people use visual sign systems and images to construct meaning and how these signs can be interpreted (Harrison, 2003, p. 48).

Harrison describes three different analytic frameworks for analyzing iconic images. She defines iconic images as images that "bear similarity or resemblance to what we already know or conceive about an object or person" (2003, p. 50). Iconic images include photographs, paintings, or visual representations that capture the likeness of an object or person. Thus, for the purpose of this project, what Harrison refers to as iconic images can be understood as media images or photographic representations in general. The three analytic frameworks she lists to interpret icon images are: 1) the representational metafunction, 2) the interpersonal metafunction, and 3) the compositional metafunction.

Representational metafunction (RM) pertains to the people, places and objects within the image (represented participants) and relates to the content of the image. Foremost, RM is concerned with the narrative and conceptual structure of the image (Harrison, 2003, p. 51). Narrative structure refers to whether those individuals being represented are active or doing something, whereas conceptual structure assesses what idea or concept is being put forward in an image (see below).

Structure	Processes
Narrative: Narrative images allow viewers to create a story about the represented participants (RP) because the images include vector of motion.	**Action**: The narrative is created by vectors that can be bodies, limbs, tools, weapons, roads, and so forth.
	Reactional: The narrative is created by eyelines (acting as vectors) between RPs.
Conceptual: Conceptual images do not include vectors. Rather, RPs tend to be grouped together to present viewers with the "concept" of who or what they represent.	**Classificatory**: RPs as "kind of" something or some group (that is, they are members of the same class). Advertisements for beauty products often have classificatory images such as a group of models (for instance, Revlon models).
	Analytical: RPs are displayed in terms of a "part-whole" structure. The "whole" is a Carrier who possesses "parts" called Attributes. A pie chart is an analytical image in which the chart is the Carrier and its segments are Attributes. Diagrams are also analytical processes.
	Symbolic: RPs are important for what they "mean." A motorbike in an advertisement can, for example, be analytical (that is, asking the viewer to check out its attributes), but it is also symbolic of virility. Abstract shapes such as triangles, squares, and circles also fall in this category.

(Harrison, 2003, p. 51)

Interpersonal metafunction (IM) is "about the actions among all the participants involved in the production and viewing of an image" (Harrison, 2003, p. 53). IM addresses how the picture engages the viewer. This analytical framework deconstructs images based on their features: image act and gaze, social distance and intimacy, perspective – the horizontal angle and involvement, the perspective – the vertical angle and power. Each feature correlates to the eyeline or position of the represented participants in relation to the viewer. IM allows for an analysis of the subject in connection with the viewer reaction (see below).

Features	Feature Processes
Image Act and Gaze: The image act involves the eyeline of the represented participants (RP) in relation to the viewer.	**Demand:** The RP is looking directly at the viewer. A demand generally causes the viewer to feel a strong engagement with the RP.
	Offer: The RP is looking outside the picture or at someone or something within the image. In this case, the RP becomes an object of contemplation for the viewer, creating less engagement than that of the *demand*.
Social Distance and Intimacy: Social distance is determined by how close RPs in an image appear to the viewer, thereby resulting in feelings of intimacy or distance.	The viewer can see an RP in six different ways. • Intimate distance: The head and face only. • Close personal distance: The head and shoulders • Far personal distance: From the waist up • Close social distance: The whole figure • Far social distance: The whole figure with space around it • Public distance: Torsos of several people
Perspective—The Horizontal Angle and	**The frontal angle:** When an RP is

Involvement: This angle refers to the relationship between the position of the RP(s) and the viewer.	presented frontally to the viewer. This angle creates stronger involvement on the part of the viewer as it implies that the RP is "one of us."
	The oblique angle: When an RP is presented obliquely to the viewer. This angle creates greater detachment since it implies that the RP is "one of them."
Perspective—The Vertical Angle and Power: There are two possible vertical-angle relationships: 1) that of the RP(s) and the viewer, and 2) that between RPs within an image.	**High angle:** The RP "looking up" has less power.
	Medium angle: The RP "looking horizontally" has equal power.
	Low angle: The RP "looking down" has more power.

(Harrison, 2003, 53)

Compositional metafunction (CM) addresses how RM and IM relate to each other, comprising the meaningful whole. Harrison describes CM as equivalent to syntax in language – "a set of rules that enable the signs of language (words) to be arranged grammatically so they make sense to the reader" (2003, p. 55). CM allows the viewer to make sense of an image by taking RM and IM into consideration during the viewing process. By understanding the composition of an image, hidden meaning is revealed allowing for a more comprehensive analysis and understanding of an image. This analytical framework helps the viewer interpret the image through visual systems and elements: information value, salience, framing, and modality. Each system has accompanying elements that allow the viewer to understand the image in its entirety (See below).

System	Elements
Information Value: The placement of RPs	**Left/Right:** RPs on the left side of an

allows them to take on different information roles.	image have the value of being "given" knowledge while RPs on the right are "new." - Given: familiar, commonsense - New: an issue, a problem, a solution (Note: This value is based on how we read in Western cultures, that is, from left to right. This does not necessarily apply to cultures in which reading occurs from right to left or in columns.)
	Top/Bottom: RPs at the top of an image have the value of being "ideal" while RPs below represent the "real." - Ideal: emotive, imaginary, what might be, often the pictoral elements of an image - Real: factual, informative, down to earth, practical, often textual elements in an image
	Center/Margin: RPs in the center provide the nucleus of information to which surrounding elements are subservient.
Salience: Salience refers to the ability of an RP to capture the viewer's attention.	- Size: The larger the RP, the greater the salience. - Sharpness of focus: Out-of-focus RPs have less salience. - Tonal contrast: Areas of high tonal contrast have greater salience. - Colour contrast: Strongly saturated colors have greater salience than "soft" colors. - Foreground/Background: An RP in the foreground has greater salience than an RP in the background.
Framing: How RPs are framed affects whether they are seen as connected or separate.	**Framelines:** The lines within the image that divide RPs or hold them together.
	Pictorial framing devices: The stronger the lines around the image, the greater the connection.
Modality: Modality refers to how we feel about the visual message's validity and	❖ **Modality markers:** The visual cues that indicate "realness" generally run along a

reliability. Images with higher modality appear more real than those with a lesser modality.	spectrum of possibilities. **Color saturation, differentiation, and modulation:** • Full color: high modality • Black-and-white: low modality **Contextualization:** • Fully conceived background: high modality
	Elements
	Background completely absent: low modality
	Depth: • Deep perspective: high modality • No perspective: low modality
	Illumination: • Fullest representation of light and shade: high modality • Absence of light and shade: low modality

(Harrison, 2003, p. 58)

For the purposes of this project I will employ Harrison's structures, features and

systems drawing from the RM, IM, and CM models as the framework for my image

analysis. As stated above, I analyzed each image that contains the female celebrity

denoting the structures, features and systems contained within the image uploaded to

Instagram over the course of 12 months. This was achieved by cataloging each Instagram

image that contains the celebrity. After this, I created a spreadsheet for each celebrity

analyzing the images, noting which structures, features and systems are employed in each

image. After each block of celebrity images was analyzed, I assessed the data through a

qualitative lens to determine what overall trends exist to ascertain how the female

celebrity portrays herself on Instagram. Additionally, assessing trends aided in the

analysis of these images through Goffman's framing analysis. By combining these

methods, I will uncover the meanings behind the images, explained throughout the findings section below.

The point of this method of analysis is not to generate quantitative information alone. As with many structures, meaning and understanding is manufactured and able to be understood over time. By analyzing female celebrity images posted to Instagram over a 12-month period, a greater sense of the celebrities' online identity and character can be understood. Also, due to the limitations of this project, each image cannot be described in detail through the analysis section, thus diachronic quantitative insight is needed in order to generate trends and a more comprehensive interpretation of the data.

Feminist Theory and Framing Analysis: Theoretical Analysis

When assessing media images from a feminist theory and framing analysis perspective it is crucial that a framework be established to mitigate subjectivity. While analyzing images from a socio-cultural perspective is a necessity when contextualizing the possible impact of media images on a social scale, it is difficult to ensure impartiality. With this in mind, an effort was made to develop an objective interpretative framework to assess images uploaded to Instagram by Goulding, Dennings and Beyonce. This framework was used to assess image content from a feminist perspective, which in turn influenced the framing analysis findings.

Gender, sexuality, dress and performance of identity across media are extremely difficult to assess from an objective perspective. The creator of an image may have particular motivations for curating image content; however, once a media image has been

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released into social mediated networks, interpretation of an image becomes subjective. Attempting to mitigate and negate ethical judgments from a feminist perspective, the images collected from Goulding, Dennings, and Beyonce were coded using specific identifies. Of particular interest was how the female celebrity dressed, whether they wore makeup, the state of their hair, and the suggestive nature of their body language. Each description and identifier was established through the image coding process.

Material Identifiers:

Description	Identifiers
Dress: assessing what clothing the individual is wearing. How revealing is the clothing? Is much of their body exposed?	**Sexual** – referring to exposure of breasts, buttocks, entire back, and legs, also referring to form of garments such as bras, underwear, stockings etc. **Formal** – referring to garments warn for formal events, ball gowns, long dresses, pantsuits etc. **Relaxed** – referring to garments warn without a manicured purpose, workout garb, pajamas, etc. **Tomboy** – referring to garments warn that are traditionally warn by males, including baseball caps, oversized shirts and pants etc.
Makeup: assessing if the individual is wearing makeup.	**None** – no visible makeup detected. **Makeup** – makeup is clearly visible on the individual. **Extreme Makeup** – makeup that alters the individual's features, pronounced nose, eyes, lips, etc.
Hair: assessing if the individual has their hair done.	**Wild** – hair is imperfect and messy without styling. **Did** – hair has been manicured in some way.
Body: assessing the individual's body language within the composition of the frame.	**Sexual** – the body is positioned in a sexually suggestive way. **Neutral** – the body is in a relaxed neutral state, which may or may not be active.

Having established these identifiers, some may appear subjective in nature. Nevertheless, the identifiers materialized from the data during the coding process, or from an inductive analysis perspective. With the scope of this project in mind, the identifiers were compiled and assessed through a feminist perspective. Meaning and content observed within the image as represented by the identifiers related to how the celebrity represented herself. For example, an image showing Beyonce with highly stylized hair and makeup in sexually suggestive dress and body language that assists in the exposure of her breasts reinforces sexualized stereotypes of women, and suggests a performed sexual representation of self (see below). Whether or not she gave her consent, or whether or not she dresses like this at all times is not of concern. The important piece is what the image represents, which is to say it reinforces female stereotypes of what being a women is, as a sexual object to be viewed.

Beyonce, Instagram, 2013-2014

These classifications allow for the assessment of images from Butler's performative and Barktly's stereotypical theoretical perspective. Again, it is not the intent of this project to assess the images with extreme scrutiny; indeed many more identifiers would have been established if this was the case. Nevertheless, this inductive classification system allows for a more objective assessment of the media images uploaded to Instagram from a feminist perspective.

In connection, Goffman's framing analysis was used to ascertain a framework of meaning relating to the selected Instagram media images of Goulding, Dennings and Beyonce. Meaning was established through trends observed from the findings of Harrison's visual social semiotics and material identifiers analysis. Goffman's framing analysis was used to observe overall trends from the data. Thus, there was no coding or identifiers created to analyze the content of the image from a framing analysis perspective, as the aforementioned analyses completed this. Assessing the trends that the findings revealed allowed for the application of Goffman's framing analysis.

As Goffman observes (1986), it is through framing analysis that we come to know how groups view experience and how these experiences are important to that group. Once frames are identified, belief systems can be better understood. Having already established frameworks through the analysis, findings were analyzed to identify potential meaning. Therein, assessing the totality of the findings from an inductive reasoning perspective, a framework of meaning was suggested for each female celebrity, Goulding, Dennings, and Beyonce.

Combining Claire Harrison's visual social semiotic analysis, feminist theory, and Erving Goffman's framing analysis allows me to provide a more holistic and well-rounded analysis of how female celebrities are portraying themselves on Instagram and what messages these media images convey.

ANALYSIS

Having established the theoretical and methodological parameters of my project, I will now describe the process of my analysis. My process of analysis of media images uploaded to Instagram by female celebrities combined quantitatively inspired methods and a theoretical qualitative analysis. First I will describe the quantitative structure I used to assess the media images, and then I will discuss the theoretical analysis.

Quantitative Approach: Visual Social Semiotics

In order to answer the first research question of this project, it was necessary to understand the visual social semiotic composition of the media images uploaded to Instagram. As a result I combined and applied Claire Harrison's visual social semiotic metafunction analysis to the images collected of each female celebrity: Ellie Goulding, Kat Dennings and Beyonce. In order to allow for a comprehensive interpretation, a data collection time period of 12-months, from June 2013 to May 2014, was established. This period was used to ensure that the most recent data was used, and to observe trends

and/or consistencies over the 12-months. All images that contained the aforementioned

celebrities' bodies were collected.

After gathering the data, the images were organized based on the month in which

they were uploaded. Monthly totals of images depicting female celebrities were

calculated and compared against the monthly total of images uploaded to the profile.

Doing this allowed me to calculate the percentage of images depicting the celebrity

versus the images depicting their lives and social circles.

To quantitatively analyze the images collected I used Clair Harrison's visual

social semiotic metafunction approach. Using Harrison's classification structure I created

a spreadsheet for each female celebrity and analyzed each image based on Harrison's

representational metafunction (RM), interpersonal metafunction (IM) and compositional

metafunction (CM). For RM, I identified the structure and processes in each images, and

described actions and reactions in relation to the camera lens or, indeed, the audience.

Following from this, I identified feature processes using short-form denotations for both

IM and CM features:

Interpersonal Metafunction
Image Act/Gaze

D	Representing the Demand process (strong engagement with the viewer)
O	Representing the Offer process (object of contemplation)

Social Distance/Intimacy

ID	Representing intimate distance (head and face only)
CPD	Representing close personal distance (head and shoulders)
FPD	Representing far personal distance (from waist up)
CSD	Representing close social distance (whole figure)

FSD	Representing far social distance (whole figure with space around it)
PD	Representing public distance (torsos of several people)

Perspective - Horizontal Angle/Involvement

FA	Representing front angle (presented frontally to viewer)
O	Representing oblique angle (presented obliquely to viewer)

Perspective - Vertical Angle/Power

HA	Representing high angle (camera angle looking down)
MA	Representing medium angle (camera angle looking horizontal)
LA	Representing low angle (camera angle looking up)

Compositional Metafunction

Informational Value

R, L, M	Representing right, left, and middle (where the individual is located in the frame)
T=I, B=R	Representing top equaling ideal and bottom equaling real (where individual is located in the frame)
M, C	Representing margin and center (does the individual represent the nucleus of information – C)

Salience

L, M, S	Representing large, medium or small (the size of the individual in the frame)
F, Less F, Blurry	Representing focus, less focus or blurry (sharpness of focus of the image)
MS, LS	Representing more salience or less salience (colour vs. no colour)
FG, BG	Representing foreground or background (where the individual is located)

Modality

FC, BW	Representing full colour or black and white (high vs. low modality – how much colour is

	present)
FB, Less FB	Representing full background or less background (high vs. low modality – how visible is the background)
DP, Less DP	Representing deep perspective or less deep perspective (the depth of the photo)
L&S	Representing light and shade (any light or shading present

Upon completion of logging and coding all images, 1,086 media images were coded in total. Specifically, coding 659 media images depicting Ellie Goulding, 123 depicting Kat Dennings, and 304 depicting Beyonce.

Qualitative Approach: Feminist Theory and Framing Analysis

Once all media images depicting female celebrities were coded, I used the coding findings and short RM descriptions to inform and add to my theoretical analysis. Using Judith Butler's performativity theory and Sandra Lee Bartkly's feminist theoretical perspective of oppression I analyzed all images that had sexual, body centric, or beautifying RM descriptions. By first coding the images using Harrison's categories I was able to analyze the images that were denoted with such descriptors. I used the coding findings to identify trends and specific images of interest to analyze from a feminist and framing analysis perspective.

After reviewing the images containing Ellie Goulding, Kat Dennings, and Beyonce, I assessed the images from a feminist theory and framing analysis perspective, referencing the material identifiers observed. I employed Judith Butler and Sandra Lee Bartkly's theories by reviewing images of interest as well as analyzing overall trends

from the images collected over the 12-month span. More specifically, from the feminist perspective I analyzed what stereotypical representations of gender were performed through dress, makeup, body language, and composition. In addition, from a framing analysis perspective, aided by the results from the social visual semiotic analysis, I analyzed what types of images were most often uploaded per month. Identifying the most popular styles of images that were uploaded informed the overall analysis and revealed the social frameworks employed by each female celebrity. Since this portion of my analysis was an open interpretative, theoretical, and cultural studies-inspired approach, these findings were documented through transcription of themes identified.

As a result of data gathered and analyzed through both quantitative and qualitative methods the second research question of this project was addressed: What messages do these images convey? The messages the media images convey were unique to each celebrity. Analyzing the social framing employed by the celebrities through the images uploaded to their Instagram profiles revealed stark differences. All images uploaded over the 12-month period created an interpretative framework of meaning punctuated by uniquely vivid visual messages.

Overall, the analysis of the images was successful and informative. At the same time, certain limitations in my analysis became apparent. Though every image containing a celebrity was analyzed using Harrison's framework, due to the volume of images, an extremely detailed qualitative analysis of the images could not be comprehensively achieved. Such an undertaking would be appropriate for a larger scale project.

FINDINGS: QUANTITATIVE AND INTERPRETATIVE RESULTS

Having described the structure of my analysis, I turn now to my findings. Divided

into qualitative and interpretative result subsections, my findings emphasize the repetition

of stereotypical and objectifying representations of women, as well as a variety of

examples of self-representation. Instagram allows Internet-enabled viewers to consume

user generated media images of the private lives of individuals. The portrayal of female

celebrities on Instagram, and the messages disseminated through their uploaded images

appear to be personal and calculated. The findings from the analysis of the media images

uploaded to Instagram by Ellie Goulding, Kat Dennings, and Beyonce differ on many

levels, but thematic overlap exists. Regardless, the media images analyzed are

individualized, to an extent, through the way the communicative channel is used by each

celebrity.

Quantitative Findings: Social Visual Semiotics

Using Harrison's quantitative metafunction analysis framework, images were

collected and analyzed revealing unique differences between each female celebrity. The

total number of images uploaded over the course of the 12-month data collection period

was:

Female Celebrity	Total Images Uploaded to Celebrity Profile	Number of Images Containing Celebrity	Percentage of Total
Ellie Goulding	1,063	659	61.99%
Kat Dennings	412	123	29.85%
Beyonce	494	304	61.53%

From this information it is apparent that Ellie Goulding and Beyonce uploaded proportionately more images of themselves. This suggests that Goulding and Beyonce are more concerned with sharing voluminous visual representations of themselves exhibiting possible narcissistic tendencies, as seen in a majority of female celebrity behavior (Young & Pinsky, 2006), in comparison to Dennings.

Overall, Ellie Goulding is the most prolific Instagram user out of the three celebrities. By analyzing Ellie Goulding's RM descriptors per month, she uploaded the most personally taken photographs, or "selfies," compared to the other two celebrities. Also, depicted by the RM descriptor words standing and sitting, combined with the IM social distance/intimacy identifiers, Ellie Goulding uploaded 146 innocuous media images of herself in an inactive state where she was simply staring at the camera. From the IM perspective, even though she is inactive these images create a strong engagement between the viewer and the celebrity (Harrison, 2003, p. 53). Any eye contact between the individual represented in the image and the viewer, or the camera lens, creates engagement where the viewer feels more connected to the individual represented (Harrison, 2003, p. 53). Out of the three female celebrities, Ellie Goulding had the most selfies and the most that demand eye contact with the viewer. Over 95% of images uploaded by Goulding were taken at a medium angle, representing equal power to that of the viewer (Harrison, 2003, p. 53). This can be interpreted as Goulding portraying herself as being accessible to her fans.

Analyzing Kat Dennings' media images reveals that they rarely contained her alone in the frame. Only 12 of 123 images contained Kat Dennings alone with an IM

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demand image gaze. She had the least amount of innocuous images or images depicting a posing stature. Almost all of Kat Dennings images depicted her with other individuals, animals, or various images of her body limbs for entertaining effect. Twenty-two of her media images had social distance or intimate distance, thereby creating a heightened sense of intimacy with the viewer (Harrison, 2003, p. 53). Additionally, 74 of Dennings' images had less focus or a blurry consistency, which refers to salience, or the ability to capture the viewer's attention (Harrison, p. 57). Though she had a high proportionate number of intimate distance images most of these images were out of focus or blurry. Out of the three female celebrities Kat Dennings chose to depict herself and her life through images that contained actions, other individuals and entertaining expressions, with less attention on herself. Furthermore, over 99% of Dennings photos are taken at a medium angle, thus she is portraying herself as having equal power to the viewer.

Comparatively, Beyonce had the most images uploaded with no eye contact with the audience, or as Harrison terms such behavior, offer act. Offer act or gaze represents no eye contact with the viewer, meaning that the individual becomes an object of contemplation for the viewer rather than creating a sense of engagement (Harrison, 2003, p. 52). Additionally, Beyonce had the most stylized and sexually explicit images uploaded to her profile. Also, by analyzing the images from a CM perspective, Beyonce had the most vividly coloured and dramatic images depicting herself in various shades and lighting. By uploading such a range of images with differing information value, salience, and modality Beyonce is able to establish a comparatively more dramatic viewing experience for her audience. Furthermore, Beyonce had the most dynamic range

of vertical angle feature – correlating to power asymmetries between the individual depicted in the image and to that of the viewer (Harrison, 2003, p. 2003). As a result, Beyonce is seen as both accessible and, inaccessible and more powerful than her fans, as represented by the medium and low angle shots uploaded.

In opposition to Dennings, both Beyonce and Goulding have an overwhelming amount of images of strong salience depicting their bodies and facial expressions in focus. According to Harrison, this creates a stronger connection with the viewer or audience (2003, p. 57). Beyonce had the most offer gaze depicting her more as an object of contemplation, as stated above. Also, Beyonce and Goulding had the most images depicting their bodies at close social distance. According to Harrison, from the IM perspective this relates to the intimacy or distance felt by the viewer (2003. p. 53). Though Dennings had the greatest amount of images at intimate distance, showing the body fully at close social distance allows the viewer and audience to conceive of the body as a whole, which conveys a relatable message (Harrison, 2003, p. 54).

Overall, using Harrison's metafunction structure and analysis affords a quantitative interpretation of the media images uploaded to Instagram by female celebrities. Using this quantitative analysis structure to analyze the media images uploaded by Goulding, Dennings and Beyonce, viewers are able to gain insight into (what they believe to be) the persona or personality traits of each celebrity. This analysis reveals that each celebrity interacts with the Instagram platform in a variety of different ways. Goulding is prolific in her use, and enjoys uploading images of herself – perhaps suggesting narcissistic tendencies. In contrast to this, Dennings uses the platform

regularly, but shares more images of objects, choosing to upload less accessible images of herself, which suggests a desire to involve the audience in her life, but in a less narcissistic way. Finally, Beyonce uses the Instagram platform to appear as an object of contemplation to her network and fans, choosing to upload images that depict her body in a more sexualized manner than the other celebrities.

Interpretive: Feminist Perspective

Following from the social visual semiotic quantitative analysis, I will now analyze the feminist thematic elements of the media images uploaded to Instagram by Goulding, Dennings, and Beyonce. Beginning with a feminist interpretation of the media images, I will use Judith Butler's performativity theory and Sandra Lee Bartkly's oppression feminist theory to analyze specific trends. Following this, I will analyze the general themes conveyed through the images as a whole, using Erving Goffman's framing analysis, in combination with the quantitative findings, to analyze how each female celebrity is creating a framework of frameworks – or meaning – through these images.

As discussed above, Judith Butler and Sandra Lee Bartkly's theoretical perspectives can be combined to analyze how media images may impact gendered roles and social stereotypes. Butler's focus on performativity of gender, that which is observed is often imitated and reinforced (Butler, 1988), can be applied to how women view and understand other women and women in power (i.e. celebrities), and how these representations can be interpreted and reinforced. To begin, it is appropriate to analyze the media images from a performativity perspective to describe how Goulding, Dennings,

and Beyonce are portraying themselves and their bodies through media images uploaded to Instagram.

On the whole, the way Goulding, Dennings, and Beyonce chose to represent themselves did not embody the complexity of female experience, engagement or empowerment. First, when analyzing Goulding's images the viewer is brought into a world of apparent authenticity. A closer look, however, reveals that in nearly every image Goulding's makeup has been done, often showcasing her flawless face in the form of a selfie. Departing from Harrison's metafunction analysis, many of the images uploaded by Goulding depict her hair, face, and clothes from a close personal distance inviting the viewer to take in her static being. Again, many of these images are not dynamic, and from a performative perspective they offer a rather one-dimensional depiction of Goulding. Further, as the 12-month observation period progressed, from late 2013 and into early 2014, it is apparent that Goulding's images become more stylized, coiffed, and polished. As a result, Goulding is reinforcing stereotypical conceptions of beauty (Bartkly, 1990). By performing conventional acts of beautification in her selfies, Goulding conveys a need to regenerate or perform representations that are similar to the mainstream status quo (Butler). Thus, Goulding appears to be overly concerned with her exterior and performative expression of self.

Nevertheless, Goulding does attempt to offer a somewhat complex representation of femininity by dressing in a boyish and relaxed style in some images, while maintaining an extremely coiffed appearance in others. This plays upon laddishness actions performed by women for self-definition and in order to be recognized as equal to men in a world

dominated by over sexualized images of women (Dobson, 2014). Goulding, however,

mixes it up, routinely performing a mixture of boyish style, glamorous femininity, and

overly sexualized objectification, as represented in the selected images (see below).

Additionally, through these performed roles she perpetuates the stereotype of women as

objects to be looked at (Bartkly). Though she offers dynamic images of her

performances, all images are highly stylized with Goulding looking impeccable. She

seems to never have a bad "hair," "makeup," or "clothes" day, contrary, we might

assume, to reality. However, this seems to diminish the complexity she attempts to insert

through laddish clothing (represented below by a casual t-shirt and backwards hat) with

perfectly managed hair, makeup and wardrobe selection.

Ellie Goulding, Instagram, 2013-2014

Kat Dennings, on the other hand, reveals that she appears to want to portray

herself as more accessible using more relatable image representations. Her images are

more relatable to her followers through her choice of dress, action, makeup, and image

composition, in comparison to Goulding and Beyonce. For instance, Dennings does not

have hyper sexualized images of herself, nor many images with elaborate dress. Thus, she

appears to have a more relatable or accessible persona. With clearly more authentic

selfies, Dennings portrays herself as a relatable – or a less coiffed – individual.

Unlike Goulding and Beyonce, Dennings' media images often portray her in

action shots in various states of unkempt or "style distressed" looks, clearly opting for

comfort over a coiffed image. From a performative perspective, Dennings seems to

embrace various states of unkempt femininity representing a more relatable portrayal of

female experience. Her images are more relatable to female experience in that she allows

herself to be seen in unflattering images with unkempt hair – an experience that is had by

all females yet is not often shown in public through media images. As referenced by

Bartkly (1990), women are routinely looked upon as sexual objects or sexualized

stereotypes; Dennings' images problematize these assumptions and stereotypes.

However, this relatable normalcy is somewhat lost through a more comprehensive

interpretation of all images posted by Dennings. She is, after all, a popular television and

movie actress, dawning glamorous attire to attend galas or for promotional photo-shoots.

Taking into account Bartkly's notion of stereotyping as a form of oppression,

Dennings does offer a more complex and relatable representation of the female

experience; however, in a few images certain scopophilic and objectification reinforcing

stereotypes are present (see below). Regardless, given how few images Dennings posts in

relation to other female celebrities, Goulding and Beyonce in particular, she does a good

job offering complexity in a world of overly coiffed celebrity images.

Kat Dennings, Instagram, 2013-2014

Last, Beyonce's media images posted to Instagram are stylized and dynamic. Where Goulding uploads and shares various images displaying the dynamism of her live performances, Beyonce excels at keeping the viewer engaged through contrasting images that make her seem tangible and accessible to the viewer. From a performative feminist perspective, there has been debate whether Beyonce's mainstream appeal is positive or negative for black females and women in general (bell hooks, YouTube). She is an extremely successful and sought after individual representing a minority and racialized demographic. In comparison to the other two female celebrities, Beyonce has uploaded the most sexually revealing and objectifying images. This conveys an almost self-objectifying message or performance (Harper & Tiggemann, 2008, & Myers & Crowther, 2007).

Furthermore, she does little to combat gender and racial stereotypes. The images uploaded that contain depictions of Beyonce are extremely stylized. Even images that portray Beyonce in a relaxed or natural environment come across as imaginary dreamlike depictions of a woman who is simply fabulous all the time. Constantly represented as

coiffed or relaxed and styled, Beyonce's Instagram account reinforces popular culture's scopophiliac tendencies and objectifying stereotypes.

Beyonce, Instagram, 2013-2014

Overall, through the media images uploaded by each female celebrity the viewer gains access to what appears to be the celebrities' private lives. Regardless of how obscure, idealized, real or isolated female celebrities' realities appear, the viewer ultimately gains a sense of how Goulding, Dennings, and Beyonce prefer to depict themselves to their audiences. Though each celebrity could never fully communicate their individually complex female experience through an image uploaded to a social media platform, in each of their Instagram accounts more or less conventional gender roles are perpetuated and reinforced. Also, with perhaps the exception of Kat Dennings, stereotypical and objectified female forms are recreated and reinforced.

Interpretive: Frameworks, Meaning and Understanding

Overall, the qualitative analysis reveals that each female celebrity has created her own framework and system of visual understanding. By observing the media images as

cultural artifacts a richer persona and self-representation of the female celebrity can be observed. Erving Goffman argues that we interact and view the world through social frames influenced by our social and cultural circles (1986, p.27). The cultural artifacts and expressions we create and share are expressions and representations of our social framework, how we see reality, and how and where we see ourselves in this reality. These cultural artifacts are represented in this project by the media images of female celebrities uploaded to Instagram.

With this understanding of media images as a representation of social framing, each celebrity, Goulding, Dennings, and Beyonce, creates an experience for the viewer that provides a lens into their reality (or the reality they are interested in performing for the public). With the nature of social media platforms being selective and able to be directed by the uploader, female celebrities upload images they wish their followers to see. Thus, by selecting particular media images representing their bodies and selves they communicate how they want their reality to be interpreted.

For instance, Ellie Goulding predominantly uploads images that were shot from a medium angle wherein she is represented as coiffed yet relaxed. As per Harrison's visual social semiotic structure, this reflects Goulding's apparent desire to be seen as an equal to her followers, with a relatable persona. Though she attends various industry events, as evidenced by her media images, Goulding uploads many of herself sitting and waiting at airports or spending travel days in vans or buses. The changing scenery and her propensity to allow followers to see the everyday side of her experience conveys a strong message of inclusion in her life in an all too often dynamic and isolating mediascape.

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Similarly, Kat Dennings creates an accessible social framework through the media images she has uploaded to Instagram. With only 12 media images depicting her alone or selfies over the course of 12-months, Dennings has a less narcissistic social media presence. The images uploaded that include Dennings often depict her performing tasks with other individuals, or inspiring laughter through silly facial expressions. With many media images blurred out it is clear that she does not wish to be the center of attention on a regular basis. From these images, it is apparent that Dennings' social framework is relatable and often relaxed, with more images depicting information or objects that relate to her rather than depictions of her.

Finally, Beyonce has an inaccessible and distant social framework and persona. Few images depict a relatable side of the performer. Though her life may be quite extraordinary, the over stylized images uploaded give a sense of a removed and idealized individual. Portraying herself in such a way relates to how she views herself and her reality. Things appear on the surface. The colour and imagery used suggests a fantastic existence while connection to the average follower appears to be nil.

Overall, each female celebrity uses the medium differently. Since social media allows each user to use the medium as they see fit, the user can shape and create a social world that best represents their lives or can manipulate the channel to create an inaccessible persona. All users, celebrity or not, have the ability to cultivate, facilitate, and create social frameworks, or systems of meaning and beliefs, that visually reveal their relationship to the world, themselves, and their audiences.

DISCUSSION: IMPLICATIONS AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE

In reviewing the analysis and findings it is clear that media images uploaded to Instagram can be extremely influential. How many followers a celebrity has on Instagram correlates to the popularity and potential social influence the celebrity may wield. Ultimately, as referenced above, being a well-known celebrity in the twenty-first century is a powerful position. With this power, followers and fans may be more reluctant to question the authenticity or stereotypical sexual representation of a celebrity in an image, accepting the content of the image and using it as a source of comparison rather than innately questioning its message (as per Myers & Crowther, 2007). Following from the findings, it is clear that female celebrities are recognizable role models perpetuating gendered and sexual stereotypes. Depending on the content of the media images, stereotypes and socially conventional gender roles are all too easily reinforced.

Regardless of their varying degrees of influence, it is clear that media images uploaded to Instagram help to develop celebrities' personas. Based on what media images are uploaded a celebrity can generate wider social interest through the use of a racy or counter-cultural visual (People, 2014). To garner more attention and publicity, celebrities may use the medium to push the limits of sexualized imagery to differentiate themselves from their competition. With the ability to easily cultivate a persona through self-generated media images, manipulation of reality and messaging may further influence audiences.

Though it is difficult to know the full impact of these images and the stereotypes they perpetuate, studies exist describing the impact of visual advertisements on girls and

young women (Myers & Crowther, 2007; Harper & Tiggemann, 2007; and Simon & Hoyt, 2012). Amazingly, many of these studies cite one time exposure to stereotypical imagery as having a lasting affect on the viewer. Thus, female celebrities may unknowingly be influencing their followers and fans in complex, unpredictable, and potentially negative ways.

Ultimately, individuals no matter what their social status will use social media channels to their benefit (or what they perceive to be their benefit). Instagram was created so you can share your life, or your perceived understanding of your reality, with users and the wider public. If the goal and desire is to create publicity and cultivate a particular persona through calculated visual messages, it is the right of the user. This medium has wide reaching and unknown effects, yet it is autonomous and mostly controlled by the user through uploaded images. The platform and messaging are to a great extent in the hands of the user and their followers. As a result there are potentially positive and negative effects of images uploaded and distributed on social media.

Overall, though social implications are difficult to predict at best, images affect us in a different and arguably more visceral way in comparison to text (Harrison, 2003). That being the case, visual media image literacy is needed to equip those who view image content regularly with a critical perspective, especially since social networks are increasingly being developed through image based cultural channels (Forbes, 2013). Though this solution may seem unrealistic at this time, further studies could shed more light on the influence of social media images and how best to educate the public about their power. Such research could help inform education policy at various levels. Overall,

additional research is required to understand the larger social implications of Instagram and other image based social media channels.

CONCLUSION

Though Instagram is a new social media channel, its influence is already being felt globally. This study has attempted to ascertain some of the ways female celebrities are portraying themselves through media images uploaded to Instagarm, and what messages these images convey. This was accomplished through the analysis of media images through social visual semiotic analysis, feminist theoretical perspectives, and framing analysis methodologies. Over 1,000 images were coded and reviewed to reveal what messages and representations these visual performances conveyed.

Ultimately, each female celebrity used Instagram in different ways; however, there were commonalities to their self-representation. Ellie Goulding, Kat Dennings, and Beyonce all used the medium as more or less a self-promotion tool. Goulding created a somewhat accessible persona, though this was done through self-objectifying, body-centric, and sexually explicit images and messaging; Dennings created an accessible persona through humor and less objectifying visual messaging; and Beyonce created a dynamic and distant persona through sexualized and dream-like imagery and subject matter.

As western society's fascination with celebrity continues to increase, there is a need for further study about the ways social media imagery influences the web surfing

and social media using public. To gain additional access and insight, academic and market research could be combined to further analyze the effects of these images.

Regardless of beauty, persona, longevity, profit, wealth, or popularity, female celebrities are human and the images they post of themselves are representations that exist within a field of social and cultural conventions and expectations. As such, it is important to educate and equip younger generations with social media literacy and visual literacy skills to combat the potentially unhealthy messages that so often permeate our culture.

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