

April 2018

Beyoncé as a Semiotic Resource: Visual and Linguistic Meaning Making and Gender in Twitter, Tumblr, and Pinterest

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Beyoncé as a Semiotic Resource:
Visual and Linguistic Meaning Making and Gender in Twitter, Tumblr, and Pinterest

by

Addie L. Sayers China

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Second Language Acquisition and Instructional Technology
College of Arts & Sciences and College of Education
University of South Florida

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Date of Approval:
March 29, 2018

Keywords: digital discourse analysis, multimodality, social networking, platform affordances,
social semiotics, entextualization

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my two sweet and kind children, Aubry June Sayers China, and John Giovanni Sayers China. I hope you know how much Mommy loves you, and I am sorry for the time spent on this dissertation away from you. I love you eternally.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my grandparents, Beulah “Bonnie” May Lofts, Imogene Casey Darst, and Leo Donovan Lofts, and especially to my grandmothers. You were my biggest fans and I miss you tremendously. I carry you forward in all I do.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to thank all of the members of committee, Dr. Michelle Hughes Miller, Dr. Amy Thompson, Dr. Nicole Tracy-Ventura, and Dr. Camilla Vásquez, without whom this work would not have been possible. I am especially grateful and appreciative to Dr. Vásquez, an extraordinary mentor, scholar, teacher, and person. She believed in me when I did not believe in myself, and helped guide my scholarship much more than can be expressed here. I am eternally thankful to have worked with Dr. Vásquez, and to have grown as a scholar because of her care and support.

I would also like to thank both of my parents, my mother, Marjorie Lofts, for always have encouraged my scholarly work, and my father, Michael Sayers, for his unwavering belief in me. I am particularly thankful for my mother-in-law, Jan China, an amazing mother-in-law and a shining light during the sometimes dark days of PhD scholarship. I would not be here without them.

I would also like to thank my friends in the SLAIT 2012 cohort, and also my friends Yoselis Ramos and Laura Keipert. I am so grateful for their love and care.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband, John China. Thank you for always loving me and believing in me. I could not have done this without you.

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ABSTRACT

At the intersection of digital identities and new language and social practice online is the concept of searchable talk (ST). ST describes the process of tagging discourse in a social networking service (SNS) with a hashtag (#), allowing it to be searchable by others. Although originating in Twitter, ST has expanded into other SNS, and is used therein not only to mark language-based posts, but also multimodal posts and images. While scholars have elucidated the structure and function of ST, their studies have primarily examined ST within language-based posts; few have researched ST with respect to images and other types of multimodal environments. In addition, ST has primarily been explored in its SNS of origin, Twitter. This project directly addresses these gaps by adopting a social semiotic approach to ST in three SNS with very different technological affordances, Twitter, Tumblr, and Pinterest. Through a multimodal discourse analysis (Kress, 2009) combining both linguistic and other visual methods, I ask how visual and linguistic choices operate semiotically across SNS environments with different affordances and constraints. Specifically, I uncover the multiple meanings of Beyoncé across a data set of 300 tweets, posts, and pins composed from entering #Beyoncé in the search engine of each SNS. I argue that 13 meaning-based identity categories emerge for Beyoncé, and link these meanings to their visual and linguistic expressions. I then compare these findings across modes and across platforms. Ultimately, I assert that this cross-platform approach elucidates Beyoncé as a cultural object subject to reinterpretation where #Beyoncé means much more than just “Beyoncé.” That is, when considering its multiple roles and meanings, #Beyoncé becomes a site of visual and linguistic *indexicality* in a process of entextualization. In this

process, it is SNS users' reinterpretations – linguistically and visually – that realize racist, sexist, and hegemonic Discourses, as well as those of emancipation and resistance.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Setting the Stage

On August 24, 2014, Beyoncé, an African-American singer, songwriter, entertainer, and entrepreneur, performed live on the MTV Video Music Awards (VMAs). The most nominated woman in Grammy history (with 53 Grammy nominations and 20 awards), who has sold over 120 million copies of her solo albums (Gottesman, 2016), projected the word *Feminist*, along with its definition from Nigerian author and feminist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, across the back of the stage during her performance (Figure 1 illustrates an image from the stage on that evening). In that moment, Beyoncé brought feminism into the households of 12.4 million Americans, and in the following 24 hours after this performance, 2/3 of all tweets in social networking site Twitter about feminism referenced Beyoncé (Bennett, 2014). Despite the fact that feminism as a movement has often ignored or silenced the voices of Black women, women of color, and colonized and oppressed women throughout the world (Chilisa, 2012; Thornton Dill & Kohlman, 2012), it was embraced by a popular cultural icon in a potentially socially-transformative and highly public venue. Beyoncé brought feminism to the masses (Bennett, 2014) along with the words and voice of African feminist, Adichie.

Approximately two years later, after a period of relative silence and without having spoken to the media for much of that time (Ex, 2016; Stokes, 2016), on February 7, 2016, Beyoncé performed her song “Formation” at the halftime show of Super Bowl 50 in artistic homage to deceased Black entertainer Michael Jackson, activist Malcolm X, and to the women of the Black Panthers – a performance that both celebrated Black History Month and

commemorated the 50 year anniversary of the start of the Black Panther movement. The night before, again in silence and with no media publicity, Beyoncé released a controversial new single and video, “Formation,” for free; within 24 hours it had been viewed by 7 million users on



Figure 1. Beyoncé on Ms. Magazine Cover. “Beyoncé” from 2013, *Ms. Magazine*, 23(2), Cover page. CC-BY-SA 4.0 by Ms. Magazine. Used with Permission.

YouTube (Ex, 2016; Gottesman, 2016; Stokes, 2016). In comparison to her other shows and songs, Beyoncé’s performance and video spawned controversy, analysis, and conversation online and off. Sample public reactions included a skit on TV comedy show *Saturday Night Live* entitled “The Day Beyoncé Turned Black” that went viral, online media commentary, including articles such as Ex’s (2016) *Why are People Suddenly Afraid of Beyoncé’s Black Pride?*, and

even the creation of the hashtag #BoycottBeyonce due to her alleged anti-cop and racist sentiment¹ (Falzone, 2016). Ex (2016) elaborates,

As the gigabytes of reactions to Beyoncé’s “Formation” -- the song, the video, the Super Bowl performance, the seismic event -- have shown, white America, white supremacy and patriarchy continue to live in fear of an actualized black woman who actually resonates with black women. (para. 1)

Just as Beyoncé had brought feminism to the masses in 2014, she was now bringing issues of race and racial justice into America’s living rooms, and doing so very clearly from a Black woman’s perspective.

Two months later, on April 23, 2016 Beyoncé released her sixth studio album, the visual album *Lemonade*, on which “Formation” appears. The record immediately received critical acclaim for its centering of the Black woman’s experience (Ex, 2016; Harris-Perry, 2016). The visual album not only featured several prominent Black women, a Black woman director, and the mothers of several slain sons most identified with the Black Lives Matter movement (Harris-Perry, 2016), but also multiple layers of imagery and artistry related to various aspects of Black womanhood and connections between and among Black women. Harris-Parry (2016) summarizes the album, saying “What would happen if we took the hopes, dreams, pain, joy, loss, bodies, voices, stories, expressions, styles, families, histories, futures of black girls and women and put them in the center and started from there?” (para. 1). This is what Beyoncé did in this record.

¹ Beyoncé (2016) actually says “...anyone who perceives my message as anti-police is completely mistaken. I have so much admiration and respect for officers and the families of officers who sacrifice themselves to keep us safe. But let's be clear: I am against police brutality and injustice. Those are two separate things.” (as cited in Gottesman, 2016, para. 11)

As the co-owner and designer of a woman's fashion line created with an ethos of self-love (Gottesman, 2016), with her humanitarian partnerships for girls and women's issues globally, as well as locally (including a partnership to benefit Flint, Michigan citizens), as a mother, entertainer, artist, and performer, Beyoncé is currently the public face of feminist discourse. When Beyoncé was chosen as one of *Time* magazine's *100 Most Influential People* in May 2014, while she was preparing for her photo shoot to appear on the magazine cover, she said "Shooting for *Time* magazine was definitely one of the goals of my life. It's something important to me as an artist because it's not about fashion or beauty or music, it's about the influence I've had on culture" (Knowles Carter, 2014, as cited in Bennett, 2014). Beyoncé represents, exemplifies, lives, and breathes feminism within contemporary popular culture; her cultural influence is undeniable.

In this project of gender and digital discourse, I examine Beyoncé as the embodied site of digital discourse practices and American cultural discourses. I introduce this study below.

The Internet and the Social

The affordances of early internet technology offered hopes for democratization and equality amongst users. Users, designers, and internet scholars perceived the internet as a space for new and alternative digital action potentials. That is, people could interact freely "online" without the visible and physical confines and demarcations of race, ethnicity, class, and gender (Tagg, 2015). Anonymity was thought to allow communication without social differences (Graddol & Swann, 1989) with an emphasis on words, not bodies (Turkle, 1995). Furthermore, internet affordances projected an apparent dichotomy between "online" and "offline" worlds, where anonymous, pseudonymous, and disembodied digital practices seemed to contrast heavily with social interactions in "offline" spaces. The potential privacy of conversations in the

independent, separate chats in the 1990s, and the ability to use pseudonyms in early newsgroup postings exemplified these initial interactive potentials. In essence, the conceivable differences and expectations of communicating “online” and “off” both underscored and highlighted the possibilities of distinct, novel, and egalitarian internet-based communicative practices.

The early 2000s, however, marked a shift in internet use and practice. The growth of increasingly interactive social networking sites (SNS) overshadowed the anonymous chatrooms of the 1990s. The internet now functions more as an interpersonal resource than just solely an information network (Zappavigna, 2013, p.2). More specifically, because of the changes in how people use it, the internet has now become synonymous with social media (Tagg, 2015, p.61), marked by expanded communication and interactions in *public*, rather than private or semi-private, contexts (Page, Barton, Unger, & Zappavigna, 2014, p.6). As a result, despite being “disembodied” in digital communication, users are often connected to others in SNS that they already know or have interacted with in person. The prior assumptions of dichotomous online and offline worlds – of disjointed and disconnected online and offline selves – do not hold in this contemporary *social* digital landscape.

Therefore, despite hopes that the affordances of disembodiment, privacy, and anonymity would result in democracy and egalitarianism in online spaces (Graddol & Swann, 1989; Turkle, 1995), researchers have argued instead that traditional offline social roles are both virtually performed and reproduced online (Herring & Stoerger, 2013; Jones, Chik, & Hafner, 2015b; Tagg, 2015). Particularly in the current near synonymy of the internet with SNS (Page et al., 2014), self-presentation online is not about creating alternative or new identities, but rather about “authentic” practices and performances that are closely related to offline identities (Tagg, 2015). That is, not only are race, gender, and other aspects of identity still present, visible, and relevant

in online spaces, but researchers have also demonstrated that the same biases, ideological assumptions, and social classifications of ‘old media’ are reflected and perpetuated in this authenticity of ‘new media’ (Jones et al., 2015b, p.13; Nakamura, 2002; Noble, 2013).

Therefore, in contrast to early hopes, the importance of authenticity in new media actually *centralizes* one’s social differences and practices, along with the prejudices, inequalities, and power differentials associated with such identity differences.

Social media changed everything, pushing the web from private to public and social, from disembodied to authentic, from disjoined online and offline worlds to conjoined online and offline identities, and from informational to interpersonal. The internet did *not* produce the vast changes in the presentation of the self with respect to social identities nor did the social distinctions promised by the early affordances disappear; instead, however, what *has* changed in the contemporary digital landscape are the digital practices and the linguistic, semiotic, visual, and discursive resources with which the self and identities are presented, (co-) constructed, and performed. Communication and communicative practices and *how* people express their identities have transformed; social classification and identity have not.

For scholars interested in social identity in new media, generally, and in gender in new media, specifically, the concern is not the presence or absence of gender online. Instead, the emphasis for contemporary gender and digital discourse research becomes a question of digital discourse practices and digital resources. These include examining how users perform and (co-) construct gender, and what digital practices users engage in to do so. This also involves interrogating the linguistic, semiotic, visual, and discursive resources users deploy for gender performances and (co-)constructions, particularly given the varying affordances and constraints of different resources across distinct platforms and sites. This study continues this line of inquiry,

questioning and exploring gender and social media by investigating digital practices and resources across three SNS with very different technological affordances and constraints.

In this project I explore digital multimodal meaning making and gender across SNS. More explicitly, I explore the visual and linguistic meanings of popular culture icon, Beyoncé, as they are realized in a sample of digital practices and posts from three SNS platforms, Twitter, Tumblr, and Pinterest. To this end, I interrogate a data set of 300 posts obtained from entering #Beyoncé² in the search engines of each SNS. I chose Beyoncé³ not only because of her influence as the popular culture face of feminism, but also because of her overwhelming presence as a topic of discussion in the contemporary digital world and her ubiquitous presence in each of these SNS domains. Through an eclectic and interpretive lens combining critical theoretical principles from sociolinguistics, anthropological linguistics, feminist theory, and cultural studies, I first interrogate the meaning(s) of Beyoncé in the immediate context of the post, tweet, and/or pin in which it is embedded, exploring users' utilization of Beyoncé as linguistic and visual resource. From these contextualized meanings I discuss any present issues of power – with specific emphasis on gender performance and/or (co-) construction, by considering the connection between micro-semiotic structures and meanings and macro, larger-scale social and political context. Finally, I explore any connections between meanings and

² Some users, for various reasons, including access to capabilities on some devices for inserting accents, spell *Beyoncé* without the accent on the final vowel. All search engines in each SNS returned instances both with and without the accent. When speaking about Beyoncé, out of respect for her and as part of my own feminist reflexive research practices, I will spell her name as she does; however, in examples of ST throughout this project there are some uses of *Beyonce* [sic] that are not of my doing. Thus, the searchable talk, or hashtagged piece of discourse that I am referencing, really has two realizations: #*Beyoncé* and #*Beyonce*.

³ I began this project by exploring #*Beyoncé* as used across the three SNS sites. However, the technological affordances changed throughout the data collection process. Not all sites utilize hashtagging equally and hashtags no longer appear in all posts, so I changed my focus to investigating the posts returned from searches using #*Beyoncé* as the keyword term for the search instead of posts that overtly contained #*Beyoncé* in the post body. The fact that digital practices of hashtagging differ across the posts of platforms, while search options all operate with a hashtagged search term underscores the importance of examining meaning-making and platform distinctions.

platform affordances and constraints, and compare and contrast meanings of Beyoncé, as well as macro issues of gender and power, across SNS.

From Discourse to Digital Discourse Practices

While the relevance of social differences may *not* have changed in the contemporary dominance of the social in current SNS and in new media, discourse, and communication, discourse analysis in online spaces *has*. That is, discourse transforms when moving from analog to digital text, as does the analysis of such discourse. Because of the ways that digital technologies mediate communication, interaction, social relationships, and the way people organize their lives (Jones et al., 2015b), these same technologies challenge the fundamental concepts that sociolinguists and discourse analysts take for granted when examining analog discourse. That is, digital technologies call into question the basic notions of what constitutes language, particularly given heightened multimodality and the use of multiple semiotic resources in digital spaces (Barton & Lee, 2013; Jones et al., 2015b; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Kress, 2012; Page et al., 2014), as well the boundaries, means, and conceptualizations of social interaction, community, voice, identity, and authorship (Jones et al., 2015b; Page et al., 2014; Tagg, 2015).

Instead of focusing exclusively on language, therefore, digital discourse analysis focuses on digital practices, the “situated social practices that people use discourse to perform,” (Jones et al., 2015b, p.2) and utilizes and applies the tools of discourse analysis as a means by which to understand the practices that people engage in when using digital media to mediate their social world (Jones et al., 2015b, p.1). The shifting emphasis on analysis of digital practices recognizes multiplicity, and particularly the dynamic, embedded, non-linear, nested, connected, re-conceptualized, and complex nature of language, text, media, and semiotic resources in online

spaces. Additionally, attending to digital practices acknowledges the transversal of boundaries between physical and the virtual, the 'online' and the 'offline,' and between technological and social systems (Jones et al., 2015b, p.3), the false dichotomies of early internet speculation.

In their discussion of discourse analysis (DA) and digital practice, Jones, Chik, and Hafner (2015b) argue that all discourse analysts attend to four aspects of discourse and strive to understand how they work together: text, contexts, actions and interactions, and power and ideology (p.4). They add that

all approaches to discourse seek in some way to understand the relationship between the 'micro' level of discourse (having to do with the way texts are put together and used to take specific actions in specific situations), and the 'macro' level of discourse (having to do with the way texts reflect and help perpetuate certain social orders). (Jones et al., 2015b, p.4)

The differences in the various approaches to DA, digital or otherwise, lie in their conceptualizations of those four key issues, and in how micro and macro levels are framed, realized, interconnected, and analytically explored. Jones et al. (2015b) assert that every DA methodology must contend with varying operationalizations and assumptions of text, context, interaction, and power inherent in different theoretical frameworks, but that analysis of digital discourse practices requires researchers to *rethink* text, context, interaction, and power (p.5). Text, for example, is more fluid and often increasingly more interactive online (Barton & Lee, 2013).

In this project of digital discourse practices, the 'micro' refers to linguistic, visual, and other semiotic resources embedded in, and used to create, posts and tweets in different SNS – in other words, the building blocks of multimodal, digital texts. To that end, I extend beyond an

operationalization of texts as purely linguistic and instead view texts as layers of semiotic resources interacting in embedded contexts to accomplish various social practices. Using the ‘micro’, I seek to investigate interaction, gender, and power – the ‘macro’ – in specific digital contexts. I assume that power, bias, and ideology are woven through such digital texts and practices, exposing new opportunities for power analysis in the digital world, particularly in the multiple and dispersed performances of identity and in the creation, maintenance, and strengthening of social bonds through the use of multimodal semiotic resources in different types of SNS.

Searchable Talk as Digital Discourse Practice

At the intersection of digital identities and new language and social practice online is the concept of *searchable talk*. Zappavigna (2011) coined searchable talk (ST) from her work on the SNS Twitter, and operationalized it most basically as the tagging of a piece of discourse with a hashtag (#), allowing this discourse to be searchable by others. Zappavigna (2011; 2013) argues that ST is simultaneously a discursive and social practice; hashtags serve as a linguistic convention for generally labeling topics of posts and microposts, but also allow users to bond around values, connect with other users on the same topics, and create alignments with other users with whom they have not necessarily connected directly before. Zappavigna (2013) explores how ST allows users to “commune within the aggregated gaze made possible with digital media” (p.1), a process she calls ambient affiliation, a type of virtual grouping made possible by affordances of electronic texts.

Given that ST both expresses identity and serves to link, bond, and collectively gaze with others, it offers a strong locus for studies of language, discourse, identity, ideology, and power. Most SNS function as sites of display, or interactive websites in which participants create

displays for one another and comment on one another's displays (Jones, 2009b, p.118). ST is an embedded practice in many of these sites. Goldhaber (1997) argues that the internet operates under an alternative economy whereby attention is the currency of value; that is, in SNS, generally, and in sites of display, specifically, users attempt to not only attract the attention of others, but also to display the attention that they have attracted (Jones, 2009b). ST increases attention; ST in SNS Twitter, for example, has been linked to aspects of micro-celebrity and self-promotion (Page, 2012). Given the size of SNS that utilize ST and the potential attention-getting role that ST may play, any expressions of power, bias, or ideology in ST have the possibility of reaching a large, and potentially diffuse, audience. While researchers have examined and elucidated different types of ST, its structure, and the ambient affiliations it creates (Zappavigna, 2011; Zappavigna, 2013; Zappavigna, 2014; Zhu, 2015), only a few have not adopted a critical approach to the research (for example, Page, 2012; Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014). The dynamics of power – including how gender and power work within and through ST – are under-researched.

In addition, while ST originated out of discourse practices in the SNS Twitter, it has now spread to other platforms of SNS, including Facebook, Instagram, and Tumblr, and it is present in analog, non-digital spaces, as well. However, to date all research on ST has examined it in its original site of emergence, Twitter (Cunha et al., 2011; Cunha, Magno, Almeida, Gonçalves, & Benevenuto, 2012; Page, 2012; Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014; Zappavigna, 2011; Zappavigna, 2013; Zappavigna, 2014; Zappavigna, 2015; Zhu, 2015). Despite the effects that different technological affordances have on user behavior and practices (Barton & Lee, 2013; Jones et al., 2015b; Tagg, 2015), and despite the very different constraints and affordances of the various SNS in which ST is embedded, little is known about its structure, function, and use in

different platforms. Additionally, ST functions, and is utilized, very differently across platforms. For example, while ST is found in posts in all three SNS, users of each site are not required to make use of ST in their posts, as ST is an optional affordance. In Tumblr and Pinterest, ST labels are often hidden, as users and platform engineers may create covert ST that does not directly appear within the body of the posts. However, despite the presence or absence of ST in posts across the SNS, ST nonetheless still occurs as a viable option for a key term search in each platform; either users or digital designers of the platform mark some posts, and not others, with either overt or covert ST. All posts with the same ST designations are then directly linked within each platform regardless of whether the link is opaque or transparent to SNS users. ST, therefore, when considered outside of SNS Twitter alone, is a digital practice that either directly or indirectly marks, labels, classifies, and identifies SNS posts and creates a digital semantic association among them; ST is thus a digital phenomenon worthy of examination, particularly on platforms other than Twitter. One of the goals of the present study, then, is to adopt an analytic lens that has not yet been adopted in explorations of ST. To this end, I investigate the role of affordances and constraints across platforms by examining posts *associated with ST* in three different SNS.

Finally, the digital practices and the meanings constructed within posts in digital semantic associations of ST are often multimodal, composed not only of language, but also of other semiotic and non-linguistic resources, such as hyperlinks, images, and emojis. SNS Pinterest, for example, allows ST to mark posts that consist only of images and contain no other linguistic forms, while Tumblr users may incorporate ST in their choice of linguistic, video, image, hyperlinked, and audio posts, in addition to those containing multiple modalities. However, thus far investigations of ST have not made use of expanded notions of digital “text”

where “text” accounts for, and includes, a large range of semiotic elements; the emphasis has been on ST as, and in relation to, language alone. As a result, no studies have considered the intersemiotic relationship between ST and the other meaning-making resources – particularly, images and hyperlinks – with which it appears. Zappavigna (2013) did explore memes in relation to ST, but limited memes to those composed of formulaic language rather than image-based and multimodal memes. In addition, Rightler-McDaniels and Hendrickson (2014) utilized Twitter users’ profile pictures of the tweets in their ST sample, but only in order to determine user demographics; they did not view images as elements of analysis that carry semantic, semiotic, and/or cultural sources of meaning.

Other researchers have explored gender through a multimodal lens, but not in connection to or in relation with ST or with digital meaning making practices. Although not focused on digital discourse, Jewitt (1997) examined masculinity, gender, and sexuality as presented in the images and language of sexual health pamphlets for men. Using a social semiotic framework, she argued that images presented aspects of male sexuality that would have been unacceptable to express in words, highlighting contradictory representations of masculinity between the verbal and visual modes (Jewitt, 1997, para. 5.6). Moving to digital discourse practices, Kapidzic and Herring (2011) analyzed gaze, posture, dress, and social distance in teen SNS users’ profile photographs; their quantitative and statistical content analysis found significant differences for young women and men that mirrored both face-to-face patterns of interaction and culturally dominant ideologies of both race and gender. While including aspects of multimodality in the digital domain, the authors focused solely on interpreting one visual mode available in SNS. Digital multimodal analyses that consider linguistic, visual, and other resources simultaneously are found primarily in research in literacy practices and multimodal literacy (Jewitt, 2006;

Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Rowsell, 2013; Street, Pahl, & Rowsell, 2009), and overwhelmingly exclude gender as a variable. Jones (2009a; 2009b; 2012) is a notable exception; his foundational research explores gender and sexuality in digital discourse practices within different SNS and analyzes linguistic, visual, and other semiotic elements simultaneously. His studies, however, investigate masculinity and practices of gay male communities through multimodal (co-) constructions and performances, and have not considered such practices with respect to ST. For this reason, this proposed study with its focus on practices, performances, and (co-) constructions associated with women and femininities contributes to this nascent area of inquiry.

Thus far I have overviewed ST as a new digital discourse practice in several SNS. I have illustrated that ST functions to mark topics and posts, align and bond with others, and gain notice in the attention economy of new media, while I also argued that its multi-functionality, variability in practice, and ubiquity positions it for perfectly for investigations of gender, digital practice, and power. In the process, I elucidated several research gaps with respect to gender, digital discourse practices, and ST in need of future study. These include the investigation of ST outside of SNS Twitter, the exploration of gender and ST through a critical lens, and the examination of ST through a multimodal approach that considers its relationship with, and meaning-making potential in, both visual and linguistic resources. Before explaining how this project directly addresses these research gaps, I now contextualize ST within three of its most prevalent SNS – and the three sites of investigation in this study – Twitter, Tumblr, and Pinterest.

ST in Situ – SNS of Twitter, Tumblr, and Pinterest

While early use of the internet was primarily as a means for obtaining and disseminating information, the mid 1990s witnessed a change in its functions and use. That is, the internet

shifted from an informational to an interactional space (Page et al., 2014) and interpersonal resource (Zappavigna, 2013) with the rise of social media, an umbrella term used to refer to any internet-based sites or digital environments that promote social interaction between participants (Barton & Lee, 2013; Page et al., 2014; Seargeant & Tagg, 2014b). Social media sites highlight the social nature of practices where the users of the sites are central to their nature, and the audience is actively engaged in production, and not just consumption, of the site (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014b, p.3). As a result, the users of such media often make use of the sites' differing affordances for specifically social means and ends as part of a repertoire of not only communicative, but also of social, practices.

SNS are a specific type of social media with their own varying affordances that relate specifically to social networks. Seargeant and Tagg (2014a) operationalize SNS as “internet based sites and platforms which facilitate the building and maintaining of networks or communities through the sharing of messages and other media” (p.3). As the most commonly used type of social media, SNS allow users to create online profiles about themselves with the goal of connecting with others (Zappavigna, 2013) as part of a networked public (boyd, 2010) that operates in real time; examples include Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. All SNS operate under three general principles with respect to network creation and maintenance, outlined by boyd and Ellison (2007): users can construct and present a member profile, establish (a network of) links with other members, and view and search the networked links of members in their networks (as cited in Tagg & Seargeant, 2016, p.342). As a result, SNS involve millions of users across the world, and do so in ways in which users very often play with aspects of an ‘authentic’ offline identity (Tagg, 2015, p.61) rather than remaining anonymous or creating new online identity configurations.

While ST originated as an affordance within SNS Twitter as a means of marking the topic of tweets (Zappavigna, 2013) and as a practice of networking within Twitter, it has now expanded into other SNS to mark other types of posts in differently-constructed networks of different affordances. I overview three of these sites below.

Twitter. Twitter, which began in 2006, is known as a micro-blogging SNS site; its users interact by posting messages of 140⁴ characters or less, known as tweets. Tweets can be posted to the internet public as a whole or to followers, a set of users who subscribe to that user's message 'stream'; tweets are also public and searchable to the public unless made private by an individual user (Zappavigna, 2013, p.3). What makes tweets searchable is the inclusion of a hashtag (#) used generally to mark the topic of a tweet; tweets may also contain other common structural features, such as @ to indicate an address or reference to another user, tiny URLs, or shortened versions of long hyperlinks in order to conserve characters, and links to other media and micro-media in the form of webpages, images, and video (Zappavigna, 2013, p.3). A sample tweet is displayed in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Sample tweet from Twitter.

As of January 2018, Twitter (Statistica, 2018) boasted 330 million active monthly users and over 500 million tweets sent each day (Twitter, 2018).

⁴ As of November 2017, Twitter changed the character limits for most languages, including English, to 280 characters. However, at the time of this data collection, the limit was 140.

In addition to constructing their own tweets, Twitter users also have several options with respect to following the tweets of others. As a Twitter user, one may follow others and/or be followed by others. Following someone means directly receiving all of her tweets without the need to search for them or to seek them out; in essence, the act of following creates direct links in Twitter users' networks by connecting one user with another. If a Twitter user follows someone else, the user will automatically receive all tweets of that person they have followed on their individual Twitter page, along with the all of the tweets of everyone they follow. This automatic display of tweets is known as "feed." A screenshot of one of my Twitter account feeds, for my account @add_china, is shown in Figure 3.

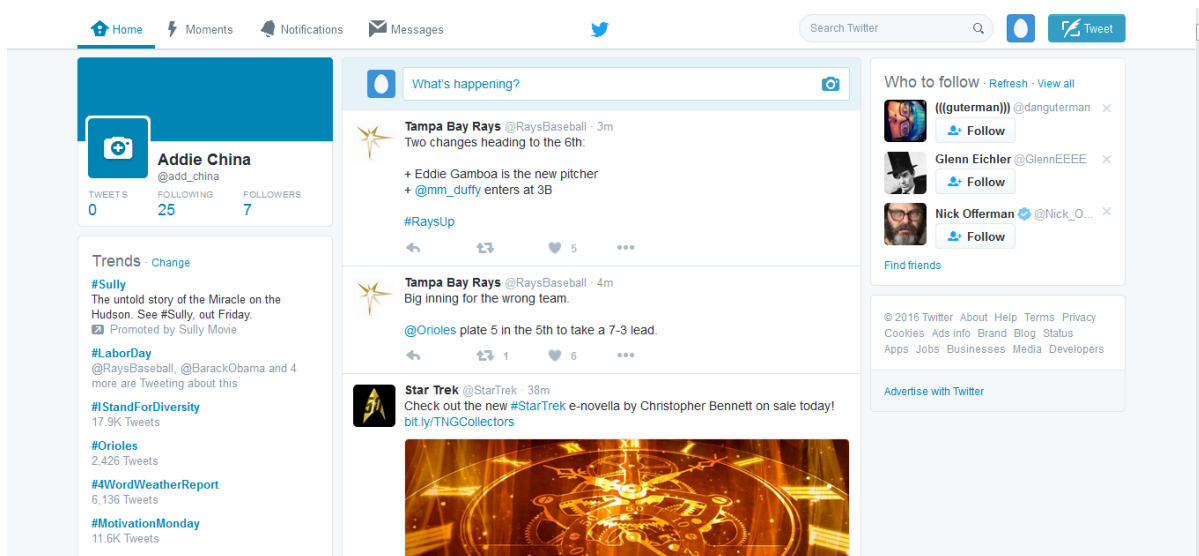


Figure 3. Sample Twitter feed.

In my sample feed above I have three visible tweets from two different users that I follow: two from Tampa Bay Rays, and one from Star Trek.

While anyone may access and read public tweets, only registered users can create their own tweets and formally follow others. Users may also visit the Twitter profile pages of anyone who they follow. When this happens, they will see profile a cover photo across the back of the

page, a profile picture, the Twitter user's account name (denoted by an @ sign) and full name, and a short profile description of the user; if the user account belongs to a celebrity, political figure, or corporation, the account may also be marked with a blue checkmark indicating that Twitter has verified the true identity of this user. In addition, the number of tweets, accounts followed, followers, and likes appear below the cover photo, as well as the interactive option of a user to follow this account. Finally, a list of the user's tweets appears in the center of the page in reverse chronological order. A partial screenshot of President Obama's Twitter profile page is displayed in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Partial screenshot of President Obama's Twitter profile page.

Finally, in addition to reading and following the tweets of other users, Twitter account holders also have several other options for interacting with and engaging with other users' tweets. These affordances are available through clicking one of four options at the bottom of a tweet: an arrow, which allows a user to reply to this tweet; two circular arrows, which allows the user to reblog this tweet, meaning they post it as one of their own tweets and send it out to their users; a heart, which means they mark this as a tweet that they like (and consequently, making that tweet accessible through the like option on the user's profile page); and an ellipsis, which

when activated opens a drop-down menu with the options to share the tweet as a direct message, copy the link to the tweet, embed the tweet in another format, mute the tweet and user, block the tweet and user, and/or report the tweet as a violation of a Twitter policy. Unlike other the other SNS in this study, Tumblr and Pinterest, Twitter does not allow the direct interactive potential to share a tweet across SNS platforms; all interactive potentials are contained within the platform itself. The four actions are highlighted in Figure 5 below. All of this matters because the affordances and constraints of different platforms shape the resulting discourse in such spaces.

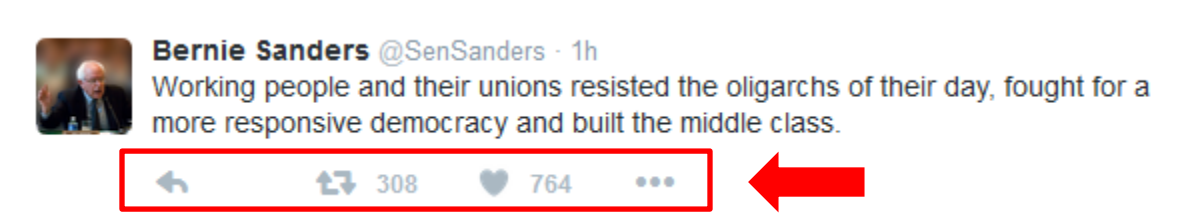


Figure 5. Sample Tweet with interactive potentials highlighted.

Tumblr. Tumblr is a micro-blogging SNS platform that has different constraints, affordances, and allowances for content than Twitter does. Tumblr users – who may use real names or pseudonyms – create blogs, and then can post several different types of media, including visual images, images of simulated conversations (known as chats) or of quotes, audio or mp3files, GIFs, video, links, or text – to their blog. Some Tumblr blogs typically fall into three categories, including personal journal, filter, or knowledge logs (Herring & Paolillo, 2006); they may also consist only of images or other non-textual media. Specifically, Tumblr allows for seven different types of posts that can appear on a posting-user’s blog, displayed in Figure 6: text, photo, quote, link, chat, audio, and video. Users may include text in posts of other modalities, however.

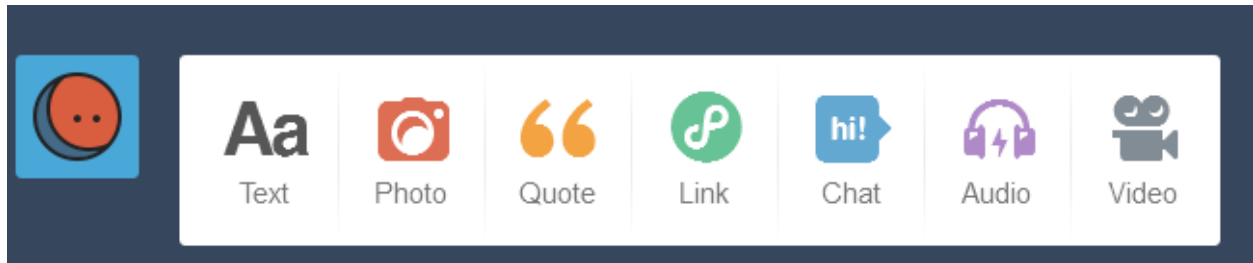


Figure 6. Seven post types in Tumblr.

Like Twitter, Tumblr posts can make use of hashtags (#), (known as “tags” in Tumblr), as searchable content markers for posts. Unlike Twitter, however, users may tag posts in a separate section of the post creation and not in the body of the post itself, allowing for tags to be “hidden” from other users; tags are also optional, but are often used by those who want a greater audience for their posts. Tumblr searches, for example, return searches of hashtagged-items whether the tag is hidden or explicitly visible. A sample multimodal blog post is shown in Figure 7. Here, Tumblr blogger *beyhive1992* created a video post, which included accompanying text, as well as several tags - *#beyonce*, *#chris martin*, *#coldplay*, and *#celebs*.

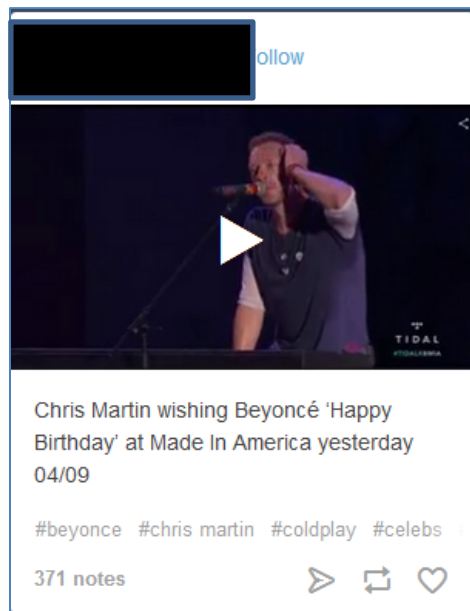


Figure 7. Sample multimodal Tumblr Post containing (hash)tags.

In addition to the slightly different potentials for using hashtags in Tumblr, Tumblr differs from Twitter in other distinct ways. Interactive affordances differ significantly, for example. Like Twitter, Tumblr allows users to follow each other (and thus become overtly connected in networks); they can also like and reblog, or repost to their own page, other users' posts. However, users are not allowed to directly comment on other users' posts, in contrast to Twitter's and other SNS' option to reply. Tumblr users can *only* comment on posts that they have specifically reblogged, which means that the post on which they seek to comment must appear on their own blog page first. Figure 8 shows a sample user's blog posts. Walker (2012)

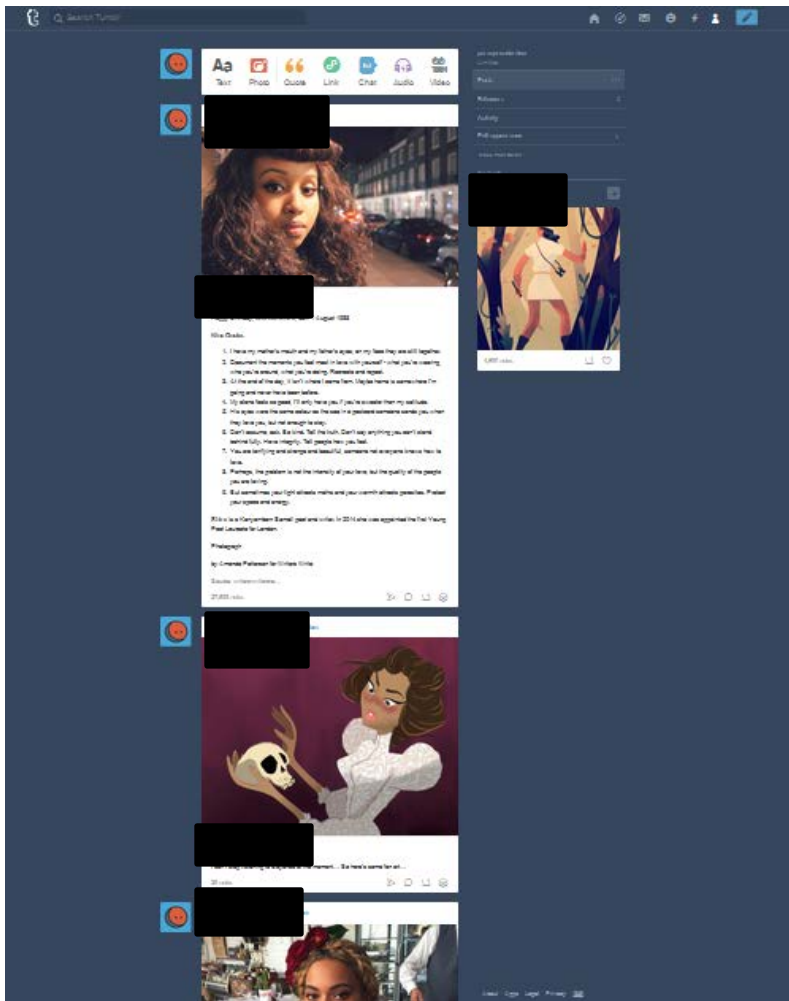


Figure 8. Sample Screenshot of Tumblr posts.

argues that Tumblr founder David Karp purposely designed this constraint in order to discourage and limit flaming and hostility, so that if people are going to act in negative ways they must do so on their own pages (as cited in Kanai, 2015, p. 4). Walker (2012) adds that 70% of Tumblr traffic occurs internally though the repurposing and reblogging of posts, rather than from external sources (as cited in Kanai, 2015, p. 4). In addition, despite the potentials for a variety of post types, images are a dominant form of communication on the site (Kanai, 2015), and it is known for its use of GIFs, or short video clips of moving graphics (Bourlai & Herring, 2014). All in all, however, Tumblr (2018) claims 158.6 billion posts made on 399.6 million blogs, but does not actively reveal its number of users.

With respect specifically to interactive potentials on posts, users have four options.

These are displayed under the post; a sample screenshot appears in Figure 9. The first choice

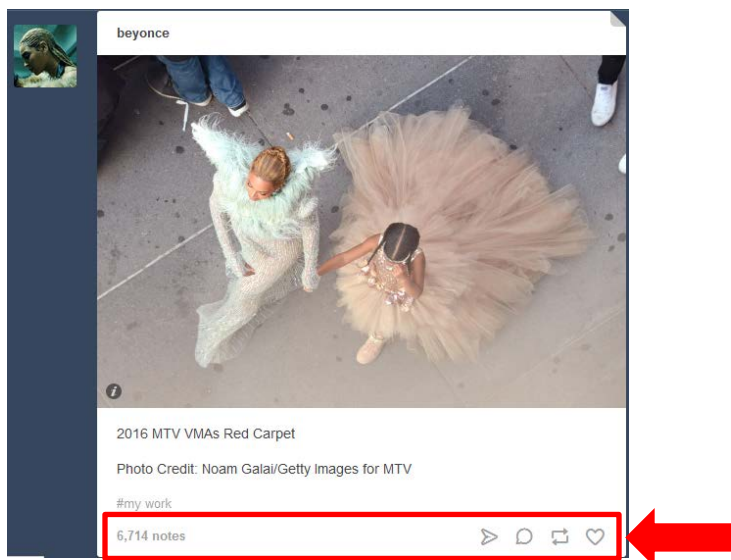


Figure 9. Sample screenshot of Tumblr post with interactive potentials highlighted.

appears as an arrow, and allows users to share the post in several ways, including as a message to another Tumblr users or as a permalink, to embed the post, to email to the post, to report the post as a violation (and thus share it with Tumblr moderators), or to post to other four other SNS,

including Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Reddit. Twitter does not allow such cross platform posting. Pinterest contains the interactive potentials to post across platforms, but to different platforms than Tumblr; Pinterest users can post to the Twitter, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp. This platform-sharing affordance highlights issues of context collapse in the digital environment (Tagg, 2015), or specifically here, the interconnection between SNS via affordances for cross-posting. It also suggests that Tumblr users may make use of different types of SNS than users of Pinterest; the SNS embedded as interactive potentials in Tumblr are all sites where information is shared and discussed publically. For Pinterest, two sites are public SNS, while the other two are private group and individually-based messaging SNS. Users of both sites may share to Twitter, but Twitter users are not offered the same direct interactive potential and instead rely on screenshots when sharing tweets across platforms; the interactive sharing relationship between Twitter versus Tumblr and Pinterest, therefore, is not reciprocal, and may relate to the heavy visual nature of Tumblr and Pinterest compared to the text-heavy posts in Twitter. The nature of cross-platform sharing, therefore, differs. Finally, “notes” also appear at the bottom of a Tumblr post; these are comments made by users who have either liked, or reblogged, the post.

Pinterest. Whereas Twitter and Tumblr are primarily considered text-based SNS despite their inherent multimodality, Pinterest is exclusively an image board SNS that functions partially as an image sharing site. Therefore, while Twitter users construct “tweets,” and Tumblr users construct “posts,” Pinterest users instead create “pin boards” by pinning objects; that is, as part of social networking practice, Pinterest users, or “pinners,” save images and videos to their profile page and can organize, sort, and store these saved images and videos to thematically-organized “pin boards” that they create. Pin boards, therefore, contain a user’s pinned, or stored,

images and videos. All of the user’s “pin boards” are then displayed on their profile page; users may also include a brief description of themselves on this page. A sample profile is displayed in Figure 10; this figure shows the profile of the user *Beyonce Sky* with her description *i am artistic* along with seven of her 15 boards as fully visible images here.

Pinterest users network and link to others by liking others’ individual pins and pin boards, as well as by following other users’ accounts or pin boards. Such connections appear on the user’s profile; in returning to Figure 10, *Beyonce Sky*’s profile indicates that she has 1,800 pins contained within her pin boards, 33 likes, 55 followers, and is following one other user.

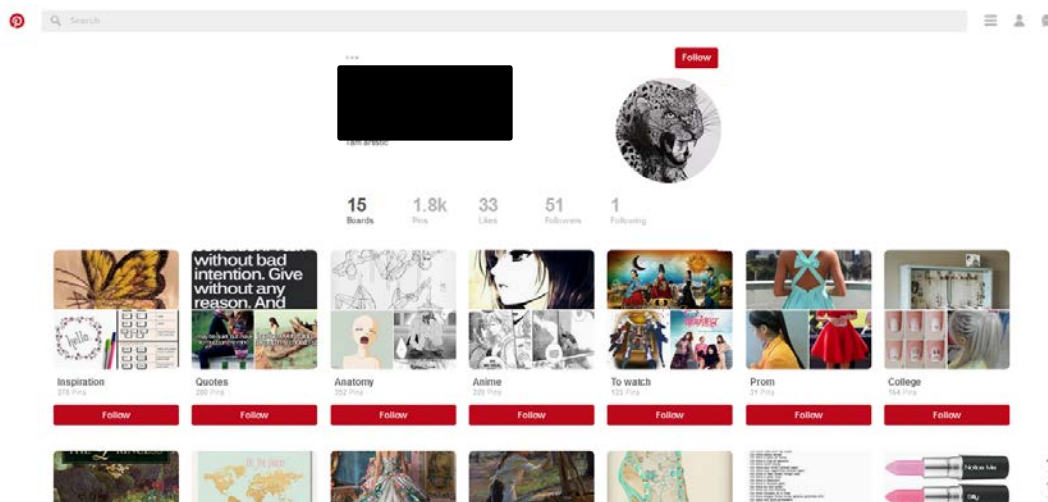


Figure 10. Partial screenshot of Pinterest user’s profile page.

When users follow another user or another user’s pin board, they receive notification of future pins in their own individual feed called a “Following Feed” (Ottoni et al., 2013). Figure 11 illustrates a pin board entitled *I love to dance*, which contains 212 pins and is followed by 11 users; every time a pin is added to *I love to dance*, for example, those 11 following users will receive notification and will be able to view this pin in their individual Following Feed.

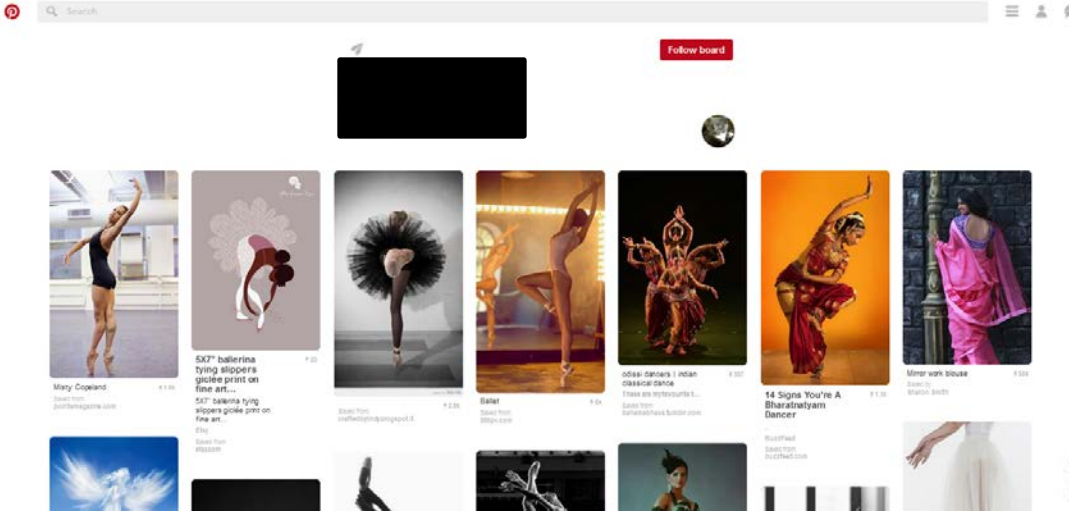


Figure 11. Partial screenshot of a Pinterest pin board.

Profile pages list all of a user's pin boards, or collections of pins. By clicking on a pin board, a Pinterest user can view each individual pin that is contained within that pin board. Figure 12 illustrates three sample image-based pins: one with a photographic image, one with an image-based infographic, and one with an image-based meme. Users, therefore, are afforded several options when creating both image-based and video-based pins; these include photographic images, infographics, memes, screenshots, text-only quotes saved as images, collages of multiple images combined into one, and electronic forms of hard-copy, paper-based items, such as digital forms of worksheets and posters, along with full videos, video clips, and GIFS, respectively. This means that although Pinterest is an image-based SNS,

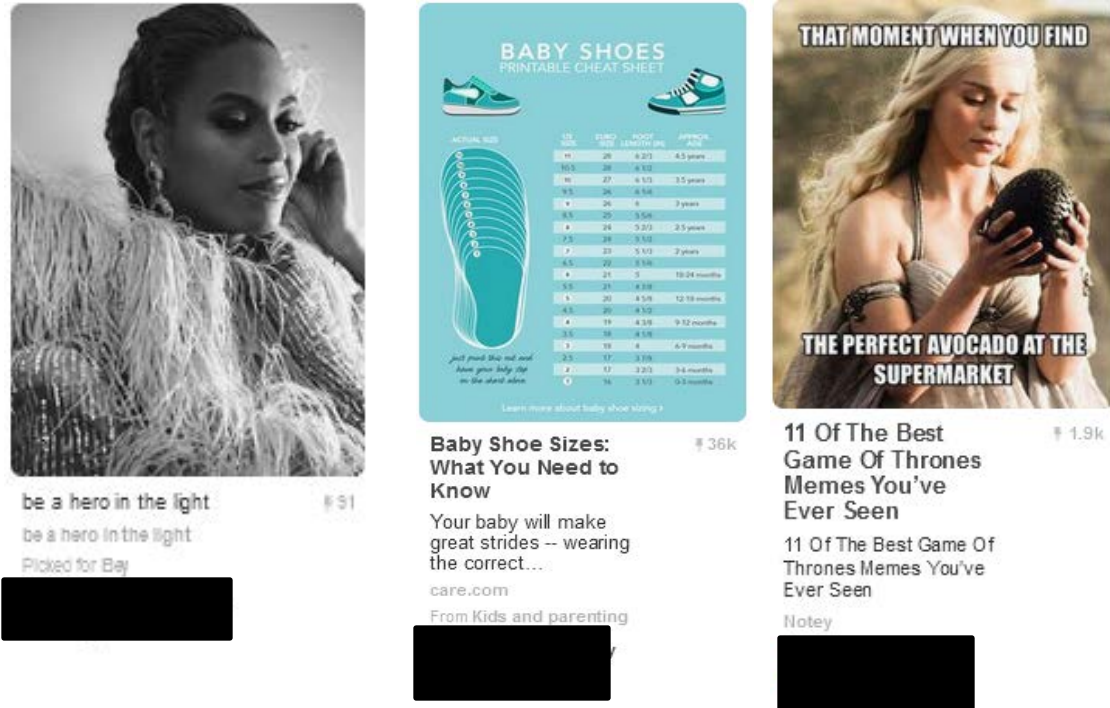


Figure 12. Sample screenshots of 3 different Pinterest pin types.

some pins therein may contain only written text, as illustrated in the quote pin of Figure 13. Therefore, even though Pinterest is an image-based SNS, multimodal texts still predominate; these Pinterest multimodal options illustrate the various different realizations of “texts” across social networking platforms.

When creating a pin, users may annotate the images and videos can by marking them with text as a supplemental feature; similar to in Twitter and Tumblr, Pinterest users can make use of hashtags to make their pins searchable and to search for others’ pins as part of this



One of my favorite quotes from one of my favorite books...

#705



Figure 13. Sample quote pin from Pinterest.

annotation. The use of hashtags, however, has changed slightly due to recent changes within Pinterest's structure (Hempel, 2016). That is, users can create hashtags or tags when saving or creating a post that are hidden (similarly to hidden tags in Tumblr) to outside users.

Consequently, hashtags within Pinterest, resultantly, are much less frequent than in other SNS as a direct, visible marker of pins; they are nonetheless a highly productive resource for conducting Pinterest searches and for finding pins, pin boards, and profiles of other users, and are still utilized heavily for commercial users of Pinterest as part of marketing strategies. Like Tumblr, pins containing both overtly expressed tags within the body of a post, as well as hidden tags, are returned when entering a hashtagged element in the Pinterest search engine. A sample pin with a hashtagged comment appears in Figure 14.



Figure 14. Sample pin from Pinterest containing a hashtag.

With respect to pin types, Pinterest users can create pins in three different categories. These categories only appear when directly clicking on a pin. When a user clicks on a given pin, the pin expands and indicates the source of the pinned image via one of three clickable links (one for each category). The expanded pin also contains any supplemental linguistic commentary, titles, headings, and/or captions used with the pin. The first type is an *Open* post; when clicking the *Open* link a new window or browser tab opens to display the image alone. These links most often internally redirect to Pinterest images or Tumblr images that have been directly uploaded by users. The second type is *Read It*. Clicking the *Read It* link opens a new tab or window with redirection to an online blog, article, or other source of news or personal narrative. These expanded pins generally contain the most amount of linguistic text, as they often either directly quote or paraphrase the attached link's written content. A sample *Read It* pin is displayed in Figure 15.

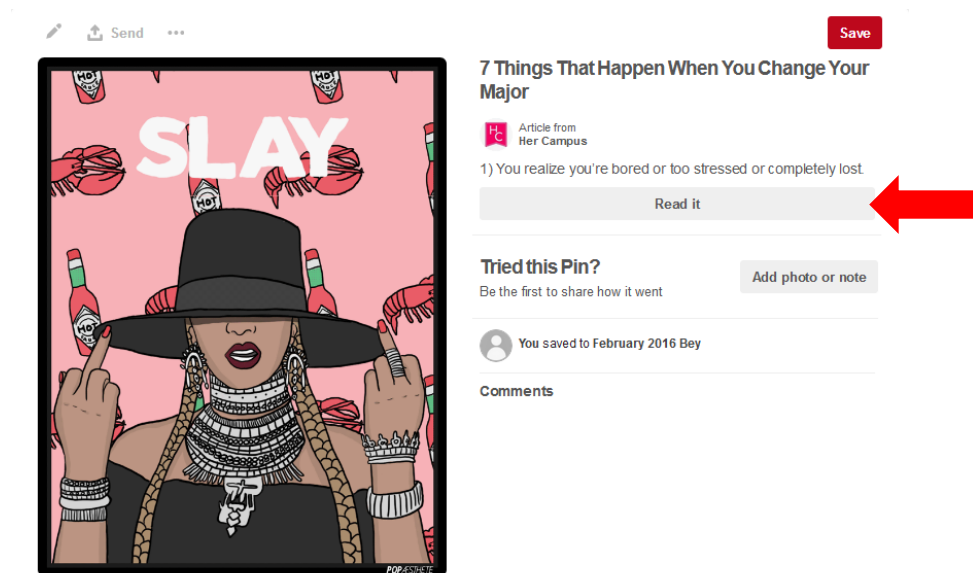


Figure 15. Sample *Read It* expanded pin with affordance marked.

The final pin type is a *Visit* pin. In these expanded pins, the *Visit* tab redirects users to external websites of varying content; some are commercial, like online marketplaces such as *Amazon* or *Etsy*, while some redirections link to entertainment, media, and other types of websites. 2 out of 3 possible pin types within Pinterest, therefore, link to external websites and foster context collapse (Tagg, 2015) and interactive digital associations.

Finally, within Pinterest, while users may send private messages to one another, public social interactions are enclosed inside the pins (Ottoni et al., 2013, p.2); that is, in addition to liking, sharing, or following a pin board or another user, Pinterest users can only comment directly on pins, either at the time they create them as a type of annotation or as a formal comment on already-constructed pins. When creating a pin, there is a 500-character limit per pin. Unlike other SNS, Pinterest users do not have the option of text-based posts that are not pre-constructed as images, compared to the tweets of Twitter or the text-post option in Tumblr. Social interaction thus differs in Pinterest compared to most other SNS (Ottoni et al., 2013), as social-based text is confined to the description of pins or to the comments on pins.

Statement of the Problem

Thus far in this introduction I have discussed ST as a digital practice of SNS and contextualized the specific affordances and unique features of three such SNS, Twitter, Tumblr, and Pinterest. I have illustrated that despite its different realizations within each SNS, ST most basically serves as a topic marker for posts, a resource for searches within sites, and as a device for gaining attention for one's pins, posts, and tweets. I have also briefly reviewed research that ST allows for users to bond and align with other users around specific topics. Finally, I have highlighted the importance of the various affordances of each SNS with respect to the structure, function, and use of ST therein. All of this matters because it illustrates what is presently known about ST, and also the gaps in ST research that I directly address in this project; these gaps include issues of ST, gender, and power, ST and multimodality, and ST across platforms with different allowances and limitations on practice. I elaborate these gaps below.

Given the multi-functionality, ubiquity, and differing uses of ST, ST serves as an ideal site for the investigation of gender, digital practice, and power in new media. As a result, I have illuminated several research gaps with respect to gender, digital discourse practices, and ST that are in need of examination. First, ST has primarily been researched in Twitter. Second, researchers have examined ST predominately through a mono-model lens, considering only ST with respect to text and language, and not images and other meaning-making digital resources. Third, few studies of ST adopt a critical approach, investigating the role of ST with respect to power, generally, and gender, specifically.

These gaps have several consequences for the understanding of digital discourse practices, meaning, gender, and power. One result is that little is known about ST outside of Twitter and how the distinct affordances in varying SNS and platforms underscore realizations of

ST as a digital practice; not only is the practice itself not questioned across different SNS, but consequently, *neither are the meanings of the larger pins, and posts, within which it is embedded*. The difficulty is that ST may be realized distinctly within each SNS – and either explicit or hidden in differing SNS posts, so cross-platform comparisons prove challenging to researchers. However, ST’s universally common function across all three SNS is to return search engine results; a shift from examining the structural forms and functions of ST itself, to an analysis of the SNS posts linked and connected via ST, allows for cross-platform investigations of digital meaning making through an expanded lens of ST. Thus far, no studies have explored digital meanings of posts united with the same ST via searches across SNS. Furthermore, almost no studies have examined if, how, and to what extent ST and its associated meanings maintain and/or challenge discourses of power (with Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014 a notable exception). Even fewer have explored ST and meaning in relation to non-textual, visual, and other types of deployable resources for meaning-making and communication in digital space through a multimodal lens, despite both the inherent multimodality online and the increased exhortations of digital discourse analysts to examine other modes outside of text alone (Barton & Lee, 2013; Jewitt, 2016; Jones, Chik, & Hafner, 2015a; Kress, 2009; Page et al., 2014; Thurlow & Mroczek, 2011).

Purpose of the Study

This project addresses each of these three major gaps. Through a qualitative multimodal discourse analytic methodology (Jewitt, 2016; Kress, 2012) informed most by an ethnographic and (Blommaert, 2013) social semiotic theoretical approach to discourse (Kress, 2009; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006), I explore a specific instance of ST, *#Beyoncé*, as realized in three different digital SNS platforms, Twitter, Tumblr, and Pinterest. More specifically, I use *#Beyoncé* as a

semiotic tool for returning SNS posts containing either explicit or hidden *#Beyoncé* and for creating a database of a digital practice data involving Beyoncé. From this snapshot of digital discourse practices, I first analyze the visual and linguistic meanings of Beyoncé within each post. I then examine meaning differences across modes and across platforms by considering the role that digital affordances play in meaning making across SNS. Finally, through an eclectic and interpretive lens combining critical theoretical principles from sociolinguistics, anthropological linguistics, feminist theory, and cultural studies, I discuss issues of power – with specific emphasis on gender performance and/or (co-) construction – by interrogating the connection between micro-semiotic structures and meanings and macro, larger-scale social and political context.

To summarize, the aim of this study is explore multimodal meaning-making with respect to ST in three SNS environments with differing affordances and constraints. Inspired by Gottesman’s (2016) assertion about Beyoncé’s impact, “there wasn’t anybody without a point of view on what Beyoncé should or shouldn’t do” (para. 4), I chose the highly influential public face of feminist discourse, Beyoncé, as my searchable talk in question (*#Beyoncé*). In this project I seek to critically interrogate meaning and its relation to gender performance and (co-) construction, as well as the connection between ST, gender, meaning, and linguistic and visual choices. I directly address the gaps of mono-modal approaches to both meaning and ST, the overwhelming emphasis of ST research in Twitter alone, and the paucity of studies exploring ST and digital meaning through a critical lens.

Research Questions

To examine ST, gender, and multimodal meaning-making within my data set, I ask the following major research questions (RQs) in this study:

1. What are the linguistic and visual meanings of Beyoncé in posts collected via *#Beyoncé* searches?
 - a. In images of Beyoncé, how is Beyoncé visually positioned in such posts?
2. How do the meanings of Beyoncé differ across modes?
3. How do the meanings of Beyoncé differ across SNS platforms?
4. How do these meaning distinctions connect to macro-contextual issues of gender and power?

In RQ 1, I analyze visual and linguistic **meanings** of Beyoncé. As a sub-question, I further examine visual meaning by examining how Beyoncé is positioned as a visual subject or a visual object within her images.

In RQ 2 I switch specifically to **meaning and modal distinctions**. Here I investigate both the linguistic and visual meanings of Beyoncé differ across modes.

In RQ 3 I explore **meaning and platform distinctions**. For this question, I investigate any meaning differences across each of the three SNS.

Finally, in RQ4 I explore the **multimodal construction of gender with respect to meanings of Beyoncé**. I question aspects of meaning, gender, and power, both in terms of inequalities and power imbalances, as well as resistance to such inequalities. In this question I seek to connect micro-semiotics to macro-social issues, or little “d” discourse to big “D” Discourses (Gee, 2014a; Gee, 2015). I then explore micro and macro-discourses with respect **platform affordances and constraints**. I ask how *what* is permitted, as well as *what is not* allowed within digital platforms, affects meanings, gender, and discursive practices.

Significance of the Study

This study aims to make an empirical contribution to the understanding of multimodal digital discourse practices in SNS, generally, and to both digital meaning making and the use of ST across SNS, specifically. This project contributes both to multimodal discourse analytic research and to social semiotic approaches to digital communication in new media. In addition, this study increases understanding of the construction of gender by and in SNS practices, and the role that digital affordances and constraints play in the construction of gender across platforms.

As it is fundamentally an interdisciplinary project, this work, therefore, has relevance to several audiences, and contributes to the scholarship in several fields, including digital discourse analysis, multimodality, digital humanities, social media, communication, visual studies, and gender studies. The application of this work, therefore, depends on the audience; visual scholars may find the connections between visual and linguistic modes intriguing, while those interested in social media marketing may better understand users' construction of meaning within different SNS. This project may serve an emancipatory purpose for those interested in gender studies by elucidating specifically how SNS practices either resist or perpetuate gender stereotypes.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Language, Gender, and Digital Discourse Practices

Macro level social concerns have always interested discourse analysts and sociolinguists. A central tenet of DA is questioning how microlinguistic features and structures of various types of “texts” interact with and connect to macro-level phenomena, such as social, cultural, and political discourses. Similarly, sociolinguists examine the intersection between social categories, constructs, and realities, and linguistic production and performance. Some discourse analysts and sociolinguists start with the micro and move to the macro, while others often do the opposite, beginning with more macro level identities, constructs, categories, and realities and examining linguistic features therein. The analysis of language and gender provides an example; in offline, analog environments, discourse analysts have examined how micro-level language use perpetuates sexist and hegemonic discourses (for example, Baker, 2011; Hardman, 1993), while sociolinguists have investigated women and men’s discursive styles, ways of talking and interacting, lexical choices, and use of other linguistic features (as in Tannen, 1991). Regardless, both types of researchers generally assume that discourse plays an important role in maintaining, reproducing, and transmitting social practices (Jones et al., 2015b, p.4).

The potential promises of new discursive realities afforded by the internet and digital technology, and the questioning of difference between ‘online’ and ‘offline’ worlds, particularly when coupled with the implications of changing linguistic and semiotic practices online, have motivated researchers to explore gender in digital space – or more specifically, the role of gender and digital practices in online contexts. The investigations have mirrored the emergence of

different types of technologies, ranging from early, foundational explorations of Usenet discussion boards and email listservs (Balka, 1993; Herring, 1993) to more recent social media platforms such as Tumblr (Kanai, 2015) and 4chan (Bernstein et al., 2011). Likewise, while some research focuses primarily on extensions of analog or face-to-face discourse and conversational analysis into the digital world, such as initial text-centered analyses (for example, Herring, 1993; Herring, 1999; Rodino, 1997), others have moved into multimodality, exploring visual, textual, and other semiotic elements, such as memes (Kanai, 2015; Noble, 2013).

In this section, I seek to synthesize the general findings of gender and digital discourse practice research across the wide range of diversity in platforms, affordances, and ever-changing and evolving content – the moving target – of digital technology. Therefore, I argue that the types of questions asked in such research, regardless of media platform, cluster in one of several domains. As a result, in this section of the literature review, I discuss four thematic groupings, or research domains, of gender and digital practice that emerged from examining diverse types of both historical and contemporary research; my goal was to incorporate research across spans of time, platform type, practice types, and affordances, in order to better situate and contextualize this current project. These four thematic domains are: gender, democracy, and anonymity; gender stereotyping and constructions of gender; variation in discourse practice by gender; and gender, feminism, and activist practices. Directly or indirectly, my present study concerns, touches upon, or converges with each of these domains. I overview each one below before narrowing specifically to focus on literature regarding gender and searchable talk research and gender and multimodality.

Gender, democracy, and anonymity. Several early scholars have highlighted the internet's potential for democratization, particularly with respect to gender and other aspects of

physical and social identity. Premised mostly on the affordances of anonymity and disembodiment, or a lack of physical cues connecting to one's sex and/or gender, researchers argued that gender online could become irrelevant (Graddol & Swann, 1989) and that users could focus on words, not bodies (Turkle, 1995). Graddol and Swann (1989) illustrated that women and men participated at near-equal levels in their case study of language used in a university computer conference system, and attributed equal participation to the public, anonymous, and non-hierarchical system of conferencing. They asserted that paralinguistic and physical contrasts between the discussion boards and face-to-face communication allowed for conversational patterns of male dominance to disappear in online spaces (Graddol & Swann, 1989).

Others take issue with the possibility of gender and sex disappearing. By observing how gender is highlighted in personal homepages, Wynn and Katz (1997) argue that the internet does not radically alter the nature of identities, including gender, but instead provides openings for variation as would any other change in medium (p.298). With specific emphasis on web-page construction, they suggest that web pages are less effective when used alone and not combined with other media; as a result, creators disfavor non-cohesive presentations of the self, such as those that challenge gender, in favor of cohesive presentations across social contexts (Wynn & Katz, 1997, p.324). In essence, they view the idea that anonymity is free from social boundaries as a myth, and argue that language and the orderliness of talk constrain social processes online and off (Wynn & Katz, 1997). In this project, I also argue that language and other semiotic practices constrain online social practices, as well.

Herring (2004) similarly suggests a linguistic constraint to gender and democracy online, concluding that gender is intrinsic to language (as cited in Marwick, 2014, p.65). For Herring

(2004) gender appeared in the form of a discourse or interactional style, with women providing politeness, support, and encouragement to one another. In her earlier pioneering work on gender and digital practices, Herring (1993) illustrated how men dominated women in an asynchronous college listservs, such that hierarchy and control – and the association of masculinity with assertiveness – carried over into digital space and undermined democracy online. In this project, however, Herring's (1993) participants were not anonymous, but used their real names, an issue critical to discussions of democracy, gender disembodiment, and digital practices online.

In order to determine an influence of gender, several researchers examined naming practices versus anonymity in digital space. Selfe and Meyer (1991) investigated women and men's longitudinal participation through discourse practices on an academic conference in a case study that allowed for participants to use their own names or pseudonyms. They found that men and higher-profile members dominated the discussions and contributed more, and that while more women than men utilized pseudonyms, there was no restructuring of power differentials with their use (Selfe & Meyer, 1991). Jaffe, Lee, Huang, and Oshagan (1995) also discovered that women were more both more likely to use pseudonyms and more likely to mask their gender than men in their experimental study of gender-based differences in computer-mediated communication (CMC) conferences. Regardless of using their pseudonyms or real names, women were more likely to exhibit social interdependence – such as the use references to others, supporting statements, and references to emotions – than men, while men were more likely to display social interdependence with pseudonyms than with real-names (Jaffe et al., 1995). Each gender participated more in pseudonymous contexts (Jaffe et al., 1995). In this project I gathered data from sites in which users have the ability to use their real names, create pseudonyms, or create such ambiguously-named profiles such that they may appear as if they were anonymous,

despite the tendency for users to perform online identity related to their offline social worlds, as is typical in SNS (Tagg, 2015)

Bruckman (1993), Rodino (1997), and Danet (1998) all discuss the abilities of gender play afforded by anonymity in different, albeit text-based, virtual environments. Bruckman (1993) interviewed players of Multi User Dungeons (MUDs), a text-based virtual reality environment that allows for multiple users to interact simultaneously. Calling MUDs “identity workshops,” she asserts that such platforms allow for virtual experiences of different genders; nonetheless, players often responded in predictable ways to the gender projected in the character’s name (Bruckman, 1993). Female-named characters, played by both women and men, often experienced excessive in-game attention, including offers of assistance and the expectation of sexual attention after assistance from male-named characters (Bruckman, 1993). Men who played as female characters did so to attract attention, and often acted as promiscuous and sexually-aggressive towards male-named characters, while women playing as male characters avoided most attention from others unless they were excessively boisterous or perceived as a threat (Bruckman, 1993). Switching to online chat and Internet Relay Chat (IRC), respectively, Danet (1998) and Rodino (1997), like Bruckman (1993), emphasized the possibility for trying, testing, and experiencing new gender in digital space. Unlike Bruckman’s (1993) project, which focused primarily on binary gender swapping, Danet (1998) and Rodino (1997) argue for freedom from gender binarization in online space. Danet (1998) metaphorized pseudonyms as masks, asserting their use for ‘carnavalesque’ plays with gender identity. Through a qualitative, in-depth analysis of IRC chat script, Rodino (1997) illustrated how users expressed gender in multiple, and often contradictory ways; she concluded that in her IRC data, some participants broke out of gender categories, while the binary gender system still operated simultaneously

overall. While both researchers assume gender as a performance, resonant of Butler's (1990) notion of gender performativity, Rodino (1997) argues that the very conceptualization of gender as a priori in research neglects the variation of gender identities in IRC. In this study I made no a priori assumptions about gender constructions, particularly with respect to gender binaries; I instead examine the constructions, performances, and Discourses of gender in the data.

However, I do hypothesize that given the subject of ST, Beyoncé, is a cis-gender⁵ heterosexual woman more realizations of gender as a binary system will appear than instances of gender play.

In their overview of anonymity in CMC, Herring and Stoerger (2013) ultimately conclude that gender differences and gender asymmetry persist in textual CMC environments despite the use of pseudonyms and anonymity. Going further, in fact, researchers also have found evidence of both women's sexual objectification and sexual harassment in anonymous and pseudonymous spaces. Although not directly an investigation of gender, Bernstein et al.'s (2011) content analysis of the image discussion board site 4chan highlights the connection between the affordances of anonymity and ephemerality in this platform and racist, sexist, and homophobic language; users of its first and most active discussion board, the "random board" known as /b/, touted for its intentional offensiveness, use "fag" as a suffix to show how group identities are maintained despite the rapid and fleeting nature of posts (p.53). Additionally, posts by women were often responded to with "tits or GTFO (get the fuck out)," encouraging women to post pictures of their breasts or leave the discussion (Bernstein et al., 2011, p.53).

Marwick (2014) discusses how this meme has spread beyond 4chan into other domains into mainstream internet culture, arguing that it systematically discredits women's contributions by reducing their value to that of sex objects, reinforces male entitlement and conventional

⁵ Cis-gender refers to a person whose gender category of self-identity matches the biological sex assigned to them at birth. This compares with transgender.

stereotypes, normalizes egregiously sexist behaviors, and forces women to play along to be accepted or stop playing altogether (p.66). While meme humor is supposed to target everyone, it is disproportionately leveraged at women, sexual minorities, and people of color, and serves as one means to reinforce the concept of all-male spaces across platforms and domains (Marwick, 2014, p.66). She argues that despite the “free culture” of mashups and creativity in digital space, “while this culture may resist dominant paradigms of economics, ownership, or intellectual property, it often hews to conventionally sexist tropes” (Marwick, 2014, p.66). Despite different affordances of current social media and SNS, these more recent explorations of gender and sexual objectification in memes and anonymous, ephemeral platforms echo findings of women’s sexual harassment in text-based listservs using real names (Herring, 1999) and women’s sexual objectification in text-based anonymous and pseudonymous virtual game play (Bruckman, 1993). Memes and GIFs make up a significant amount of posts in Tumblr, and also appear heavily in Pinterest as visual semiotic resources. In this current study I envision the potential for not only sexual objectification, but also racial objectification, as well, given the findings from SNS above.

Gender stereotypes and gender constructions in digital space. In addition to objectification and harassment, researchers have also explored overt gender stereotyping and digital practices. This occurs most in three specific areas: results of search engines, digital constructions of gender, and questions of specific technologies as being fundamentally gendered. Examinations of the search engine Google – both Google image and Google text search results – suggest that Google’s algorithmic answers to various types of inquiries perpetuate both gender and racial stereotyping, amongst other forms of bias, such as those of religion and sexuality (Baker & Potts, 2013; Kay, Matuszek, & Munson, 2015; Noble, 2013). Combining statistical analyses of Google

image search results with experimental interviews eliciting participants' evaluation of resulting images, and by comparing both with labor statistics, Kay, Matuszek, and Munson (2015) investigated gender and stereotyping in occupational image searches. Their results suggested both underrepresentation of women and exaggerations of stereotypes in search results versus statistics; furthermore, participants rated searches more highly when the search results were consistent with larger cultural stereotypes (Kay et al., 2015). They discovered an additional issue when they began qualitative coding, which they called "the sexy construction worker problem," whereby female images tended to be either sexualized versions of the occupation or caricatures thereof (Kay et al., 2015, p.5). Turning to intersections of gender and race, Noble (2013) examined both Google image and text searches for keywords related to black women and girls, as well as the results provided, including hyperlinks to both commercial and non-commercial content. Her findings overwhelmingly depicted black women and girls as stereotypically hypersexualized and presented through white male gaze, with many textual sites and advertising leading directly or indirectly to porn and/or deviant identification (Noble, 2013). Through a lens of critical race theory, black feminist thought, and critical discourse analysis, she argues that contrary to ideals of internet democracy, this digital sphere displays commercial control over black women's identity, such that search results render the social, political, and economic aspects of black women and girls' lives invisible (Noble, 2013, para. 46). Thus far, Noble's (2013) research was one of the few to consider digital practices with respect black women and girls, specifically. Her findings on hypersexualization and white male gaze is relevant in this data; I am interested in who has "control" of Beyoncé's identity, and the extent to which her self-identity may be visible, or like above, made invisible by ST within SNS.

Baker and Potts (2013) also examine Google search results with respect to intersectional aspects of identity, including race, gender, sexuality, and religion. They focused, however, on Google's automated completion function, based on algorithms that serve to predict answers to textual search queries based on common and previous Google searches (Baker & Potts, 2013). Drawing on Nakamura's (2002) discussion of cybertypes, stereotypical images that echo and reflect broader cultural logic that are created through machine-enabled interactivity and participant collaborations in online spaces (p.5), Baker and Potts (2013) conclude that auto-completion in search results reflects overall identity stereotyping. They summarize by saying that "humans may have already shaped the Internet in their image, having taught stereotypes to search engines and even trained them to hastily present these as results of 'top relevance' (Baker & Potts, 2013, p.201).

Moving from search engines to SNS, Rightler-McDaniels and Hendrickson (2014) examined how Twitter users constructed race and gender within a data set of a trending topic, the hashtag #becauseofhoes. Their motivation to choose this topic was twofold; the hashtag appeared as both a 24-hour trending topic and was more commonly associated with Black avatars on Twitter (Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014). By combining content analysis with critical discourse analysis informed by both feminist and critical race theories, the authors discovered six distinct semantic formulations that emerged in tweets containing this hashtag, with over half referencing morality or moral codes of conduct (Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014). These included references to popular culture, violence against women, sexual health, monogamous relationships, "loaded" terms (those with racist and sexist overtones and strong affective language), and morality specifically (Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014). Rightler-McDaniels and Hendrickson (2014) ultimately argue that #becauseofhoes serves

to mark discourses of moral “rights” and “wrongs” for the speech community of such users. They conclude that despite the gender or race of Twitter participants, and the potentially liberating discursive environment of Twitter where participants are positioned on equal grounds, the discourses of these participants nonetheless echo stereotypically gendered and racialized norms typically found in media discourse (Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014, p.186). This project is of particular interest to my study because it is one of the few to focus specifically on the link between ST and gender; I hope to build from this foundation to include visual analysis, as well.

Scholars have also questioned whether technology itself is fundamentally gendered. Earliest interrogations emphasized issues of access with respect to gender and digital practice, positing men as both creators of, and primary participants in, early internet technologies and questioning the influence of gender on both the design and use of such tech (Balka, 1993; Herring, 2003; Marwick, 2014). Marwick (2014) overviews how technology can unknowingly perpetuate sexism or exclusionary politics, illustrating how the commodification of online space projects women as both overtly “feminine” and as “consumers” in her discussion of social shopping sites like Polyvore and Pinterest; Pinterest assumes, for example, that users are interested in homemaking, fashion, decorating, shopping, and books, but not other areas, like sports, science politics, or activism (p.64). Van Zoonen (2001) relates this to commodification, arguing that normative models of women as shoppers are created by commodification in online space (as also cited in Marwick, 2014). In addition, blog research shows how online platforms can become gendered by greater public discourses; in one study, although women and young groups created most blogs, public discourse about blogging privileged the activities of a subset of adult white male bloggers and framed their blogs as more newsworthy (Herring, Kouper,

Scheidt, & Wright, 2004, p.12). Users of the same technology – in this case, bloggers – are made visible or invisible by discourses of value in internet space. Such practices of gendering technology relate directly to my SNS under investigation. Researchers argue that there are more female users of both Tumblr (Bourlai & Herring, 2014) and Pinterest (Marwick, 2014; Ottoni et al., 2013), but with some general user distinctions; Pinterest represents a white, middle-class consumer woman, while Tumblr allows for more gender fluidity and serves as a site for queer and feminist voices and practices. This may be partially related to the default interactive potentials of each site; when users self-identify as female (required in Pinterest but not in Tumblr), Pinterest provides default interactions targeted toward female users. As Marwick (2014) elaborates, with such default settings “Pinterest assumes that its [female] users are interested in homemaking, fashion, decorating, shopping, and books, but not sports, science, politics, or activism. Not only is its user model overtly feminine, but she is a feminine *consumer*” (p.64). As part of this current study I compare how the affordances of each site affect meaning-making visual and linguistic practices therein.

Variation in practices by gender. Marwick (2014) also underscores contextual differences surrounding different users of the same technologies but to a different end; she cautions that it is “necessary to understand the relationship between the technological affordances of a system and the cultural behavior reinforced by the community using the system” (p.65). This is critical in the next domain of gender and digital discourse practice research – that of variation in practices by gender – as findings in this area are often either contradictory, context-dependent, or both. The largest amount of gender and digital practice research also falls under this domain and reflects changing motivations of scholars over time along with evolving technological affordances; motivations, for example, range from sociolinguistically-driven questions of the

applicability of Tannen's (1991) dominance and difference paradigms from face-to-face conversation to online forums (Herring, 1993; Sussman & Tyson, 2000), to descriptive linguistic attempts to document and understand gender and structural forms of new media (Witmer & Katzman, 1997; Wolf, 2000), to issues of gender variation in digital practice to inform data mining procedures and the development of more accurate commercial algorithms (Grbovic, Radosavljevic, Djuric, Bhamidipati, & Nagarajan, 2015; Thelwall, Wilkinson, & Uppal, 2010).

The first type of gender variationist research questions connections between gender and interactional approach. Many of these works assume a priori that features of interaction are distinctly gendered, and that women and men "speak" differently, including differences in styles (such as supporting versus aggressive), pragmatics, syntax, and lexical choices. These distinctions stem from face-to-face (F2F), primarily spoken sociolinguistic research (Tannen, 1991), and often also seek, directly or not, to question the applicability of F2F gender correlations in digital environments. Herring's (1993) work provides a foundational early example, showing how men dominated listserv discussions and silenced women; her later syntheses of gender, power, and interaction in CMC found that gender correlated with interaction styles in text-based exchanges across digital domains, particularly with respect to male dominance and aggression (Herring, 2003; Herring & Stoerger, 2013). Sussman and Tyson (2000) also examined archived discussions of electronic newsgroups for "gendered" features such as length, frequency of communication, and discourse content. While women commented more frequently than men, and men utilized a greater number of words, men only showed a modest, and not statistically-significant, trend toward more opinionated posts and male dominance (Sussman & Tyson, 2000).

Operationalizing “style” primarily through lexical classification instead of models of interaction, Bamman, Eisenstein, and Schnoebelen (2014) combined large-scale quantitative analysis, computational linguistic models, and social theory to investigate gender in Twitter feeds. They began with clustered groups in their 14,000 Twitter feeds, in which sub-corpora reflecting both normative and non-normative gendered use emerged around different interests and linguistic styles; they then switched to individual analysis, emphasizing individuals who did not conform to “population-level language statistics” (p.135) with respect to gender (Bamman et al., 2014). This analysis illustrates the role of social networks in gendered-language use, such that network homophily correlated to use of same-gender markers, while those with non-homophilous social networks were most likely to incorporate other-gender markers (Bamman et al., 2014). In addition, the authors ultimately argued for a complex mix of variables at play, irreducible to gender alone, as well as the possibility for gender use that does not conform to binary assumptions; they concluded by complicating gender as a variable in SNS (Bamman et al., 2014). Although I am not examining the gender of the users of ST, I do question whether the affordances of the SNS affect gender construction and performance. The findings may likewise serve to complicate gender as a variable, or may suggest distinction between SNS which either have more female users or are perceived of as more “feminine” sites.

Utilization of emoticons, multiple punctuation marks, hedges, intensifiers, taboo topics and swear words, slang, and abbreviations grounded Fullwood, Morris, and Evan’s (2011) study of gender and language on the SNS MySpace – a similar topic, but though a different methodological lens and in an different SNS space than above. They analyzed teens’ digital practices of self-presentation in their ‘about me’ section, along with their forum commentaries, comparing the discourse in each domain (Fullwood et al., 2011). Overall they argued for

linguistic androgyny in ‘about me’ sections, suggesting that girls and boys were equally likely to use each aforementioned language form. In forums, however, language use aligned with stereotypical female and male distinctions, such as greater use of hedges and intensifiers and slang and taboo topics, respectively (Fullwood et al., 2011). Contextual affordances within the site, therefore, influence digital discourse practices with respect to gender.

Switching to a platform with different affordances, Kapidzic and Herring (2011) examined the multimodal self-presentation of young women and men in teen chat rooms, attending both to microlinguistic, discourse-pragmatic, and stylistic forms of language, as well as profile image characteristics, such as stance, and social differences. Their results suggest that girls and boys were both overwhelmingly flirtatious, but girls reacted more while boys invited; with respect to visual semiotics, boys showed less variation but a greater variety of behaviors, such as remoteness and dominance, while girls’ images invoked seductiveness in posture, gaze, and clothing (Kapidzic & Herring, 2011). My project also considers images, but more to examine various representations of Beyoncé rather than comparing images of women and men. In another unimodal examination of 78,000 messages, between couples of known genders, this time on the SNS Twitter, Kivran-Swaine, Brody, & Naaman (2013) examined the correlations between the gender of user and the style of messages, operationalized as a values of cluster of features, including intensifiers, pronoun type, and emoticons. They argued that distinct lexical tokens emerged based on gender (for example, “love” was distinctive in messages to women but not to men), and that women used greater amounts of intensifiers, personal pronouns, and emoticons than men, and especially with other women (Kivran-Swaine et al., 2013).

The greater use of emoticons by women, however, is not supported in all literature.

Witmer and Katzman (1997), for example, argue that in their sample corpus from publically

available digital newsgroup discussions, women and men did not use significantly more emoticons (operationalized as “graphic accents” in their work). Additionally, their study problematized assumptions of women’s lack of aggression, as their data suggested that women both challenged men more and flamed men more in their sample. Wolf (2000) also investigated emoticon use in newsgroups, arguing that while women used more emoticons, women and men used emoticons for different functions, with men adopting them in overwhelmingly sarcastic use. However, in mixed-gendered communications, both genders made more frequent use of emoticons than in single-sex groups (Wolf, 2000). These examples point to diverse – even contradictory – findings in variationist research. These studies underscore the critical importance of context, affordances, platform type, and other situational factors that can produce varying results in different digital spaces, and point to the potential complexity of factors affecting gender variation online. I hope to enrich these findings regarding contexts and affordances by contributing not only to linguistic research, but by considering the ways that visual resources and visual meaning making and gender may differ by SNS affordance types.

In addition to the effects of gender on linguistic and semiotic variation, researchers have also questioned the effect of gender on other types of digital discourse practices. These include features and behaviors that generally arise directly from the affordances of different platforms and media. In a corpus of Twitter feed from the most frequently-posting female and male parent bloggers (mom and dad bloggers), Walton and Rice (2013) examined self-disclosure with respect to the poster’s gender. To this end, they coded for valence (poster’s attitude) and disclosure type (frontstage, impression-management based posts to influence others in a public domain versus backstage, more private, personal, and emotional posts to express needs, fantasies, or aspects of self-awareness) (Walton & Rice, 2013). They assert that disclosure in their data reflects the

gender role expectations of society at large, where women are expected to be more nurturing and emotional; in their data, tweets by women displayed more positive valence, showed more disclosure overall, and included more backstage disclosures than male-generated tweets (Walton & Rice, 2013). Twitter research also shows that women and men use different persuasive strategies in their construction of hashtags related to the same event (Cunha et al., 2012). In data sets of tweets about the Brazilian presidential election, Michael Jackson, and the outbreak of the Swine Flu, Cunha et al. (2012) questioned if women and men used different hashtags in their tweets. They discovered that women were more likely to use transparent hashtags, expressing full, clear information on the topic, while men used more opaque and innovative forms; likewise, women used more personal involvement as a persuasive strategy in their tweets, while men used more direct persuasive strategies (Cunha et al., 2012).

Adopting an expansive and multi-layered approach to digital practice, Ottoni et al. (2013) combined an algorithmic, statistical, and text-based analysis to investigate women and men's different behaviors on Pinterest, a pin-board style image sharing SNS. Pinterest is unique in that it only allows comments on content (Ottoni et al., 2013, p.2), and social interaction differs from other SNS platforms. In the data, women participated in more lightweight interactions, and made more efforts to reciprocate in social links as more active and more generalist posters; men, on the other hand, acted more as specialists by expressing themselves self-assertively and curating content more of personal, rather than social, interest (Ottoni et al., 2013). Women also made use of different networked affordances within Pinterest, participating more in commercial activities compared to those only of curation (Ottoni et al., 2013). My study seeks to connect the aforementioned Twitter work with this research on Pinterest by comparing a phenomenon across

sites. I also include Tumblr, as both Pinterest and Tumblr are under-researched SNS, particularly with respect to gender, multimodality, and ST.

Gender, feminism, and activist practices. Finally, keeping with Marwick's (2014) emphasis on the importance of context, the last category of research on gender and digital discourse practice reflects the affordances of technology in certain contexts to enhance feminism, activism, and the assertion of women and girls' voices. Early internet scholars, for example, suggested the power of women's connection to other women afforded by both the internet and social networks (Balka, 1993; Balka, 1996; Smith & Balka, 1988). Harris (2008) and Marwick (2014) likewise discuss how women use blogs and SNS to take up alternative subject positions in response to lack of sociopolitical agency. For example, although facing criticism, blogger Julia Alison in "presenting herself as an object suggests and agented subjectivity that threatens the male dominated social hierarchy" (Marwick, 2014, p.69). Women and girls also use SNS and blogs as part of a DIY (Do It Yourself) cultural framework in which they seek control to construct their own public selves, build spaces for public peer communities, and develop new modes of activism and political subjectivities, as well (Harris, 2008, p.492). In this study I argue that the Beyoncé may on occasion serve as a semiotic resource for activist practice and alternative subjectivities.

Some platforms, such as the blogging SNS Tumblr, appear as critical sites for female and feminine subjectivities. Kanai (2015) examined the construction of feminine authenticity – a combination of individual authenticity and authentic belonging – in female Tumblr bloggers' use of 6 memes. She argues that some memes are used to express situated community knowingness, a specific knowledge of shared experience, and to demonstrate insider knowledge as a form of authentic belonging and social connection (Kanai, 2015, p.10); in addition, other memes, predicated on notions of "bestfriendship" served as strategies for feminine self-branding and

expressions of individual authenticity (Kanai, 2015, p.7). Kanai (2015) locates practices of feminine authenticity at the intersection of SNS and remix culture afforded by Tumblr (p.10). Shorey (2015) also underscores the importance of Tumblr affordances for providing spaces for girls for self-expression, particularly with respect to expression of culturally-devalued emotions for women, such as sadness and anger. Shorey's (2015) participants felt that Tumblr's affordances of common norms, anonymity, and audience specificity allowed for truer self-expression. They contrasted freer discussions on Tumblr with their own reticence and silence on the same issues on Facebook; in Tumblr they were absolved from the requirement of excessive explanations and argumentation with relatives and acquaintances that marked their Facebook interactions (Shorey, 2015). Finally, Connelly (2015) illustrated through textual, thematic analysis how the affordance of anonymity in Tumblr contrasts with anonymity in other feminist spaces online, creating a space for feminist "world" building – in part through streamed collective consciousness. In this project I expect the potential for feminist world building around Beyoncé, and investigate her meanings across platforms; I examine, if, how, and to what extent such feminist world building occurs, and to question the link between meaning-making potentials and platform affordances.

Digital Discourse Practice, Searchable Talk, and Gender

As I already mentioned in the introduction, ST is Zappavigna's (2011) operationalization of marking a piece of discourse with a hashtag (#) to allow this discourse to be searchable by others. Zappavigna's (2011; 2013) research presents a foundational understanding of ST as a new digital discourse practice. In this section, I will overview the research on ST very generally, and then narrow my focus on the topic of this study to examine the literature on ST, gender, and digital discourse practices.

As searchable talk is a relatively new research subject, several scholars have recently attempted to understand its structure and function. While in practice, searchable talk is utilized in several SNS, including Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, and Instagram, all of these projects investigated Twitter, the platform in which searchable talk as hashtagged-speech emerged. With the aim of informing and increasing the effectiveness of search algorithms, Cunha et al. (2011) investigated the nature of spread of popular hashtags across Twitter in an attempt to determine linguistic motivations for propagations of various forms. Inspired by F2F models of spoken language change and dispersion, they examined length and frequency of hashtags through a statistical approach; they ultimately argued that a few common terms were the most popular in a “preferential attachment process” (p.58), and that hashtag length correlated with frequency, such that shorter tags were overwhelmingly more popular than longer ones (Cunha et al., 2011).

Page (2012) also examined frequency types and grammatical contexts of hashtags in large corpus of hashtagged Twitter speech (92,000 tweets), but with a different purpose. Grounding her analysis in Bourdieu’s (1977) work by arguing for Twitter as a linguistic marketplace, and drawing from Marwick’s (2010) concepts of self-branding and micro-celebrity, Page (2012) compared the discourse style of three types of Twitter users – corporations, celebrities, and “ordinary” posters. She argued that hashtags served as a resource in a continuum of self-branding and micro-celebrity that reflected social and economic hierarchies of offline contexts (Page, 2012, p.181). More specifically, she suggests that Twitter’s participatory culture is not evenly distributed; celebrities and corporations used the discourse surrounding hashtags as a type of to make their products visible in a type of promotion of their commodities, while ordinary users’ discourse around hashtags related more to their personal identities and identity affiliations (Page, 2012, p.181). She concludes by challenging the assumption that hashtagged

interactions within Twitter always function like conversations among peers, and asserts instead that some discourse *simulates* conversational qualities to project engagement with an audience, more like that of broadcast talk found in traditional mainstream media (Page, 2012, p.199).

Zhu (2015) also compared users – in this case, journalists versus ordinary users – in their use of “#bindersfullofwomen” as searchable talk. Arguing that the relationship between journalists and other users is blurred by the participatory affordances of Twitter (p.2), Zhu (2015) examined the discourse categories within, and the temporal development of, tweets involving “#bindersfullofwomen.” Three structural categories emerged from the data: those composed of only a hashtag, those with a hashtag and text, and those with a link or retweet (Zhu, 2015). For both journalistic and ordinary users, hashtags combined with text, used as informative tweets to present information, were most prominent (Zhu, 2015). The only difference between the two groups of users was that journalists more likely to initiate topics in early stages of communication, while ordinary users began to dominate the discourse shortly thereafter. Zhu (2015) argues for an indistinct boundary between journalistic and ordinary Twitter users.

Shifting to identity construction and searchable talk, Zappavigna (2014) combined the analysis of a large scale corpus of tweets (a 100 million-word HERMES corpus) with corpus and textual analyses of a smaller corpus of all of one specific Twitter user’s tweets (the LUCIA corpus) to examine how Twitter users perform relational identities using searchable talk. She questioned how users of searchable talk construe identities by aligning with others in ambient affiliation, which she operationalizes as the interpersonal affordance of SNS as a communicative channel that allows users to commune with others without necessarily engaging in direct conversational exchanges (Zappavigna, 2014, p.223). She proposed three quotidian social bonds in the single users’ post data that she then investigated, and confirmed as being enacted across

different types of communities, in the larger corpus (Zappavigna, 2014). These bonds invoked shared feelings; Zappavigna (2014) shows how “self-deprecation” served as a means for users to admit fallibility through humor (p.216), “frazzle” highlighted fatigue or exasperation by engaging in a core activity of the given searchable talk-defined community (p.221), and “addiction” worked as a process by which users rallied around a specific item of their daily life, such as wine, coffee, or technology (p.220). Her concluding assertion “recognizes that identities are patterns of meaning inflected by membership in networks of fellowship that dispose personae to enact particular configurations of bonds” (Zappavigna, 2014, p.223) – complexes of bonds that are enacted with the use of searchable talk.

Searchable talk has also been examined as a semiotic resource to explore its communicative function in Twitter micro-discourses. Extracting data again from the HERMES corpus, Zappavigna (2015) illustrates how hashtags in Twitter have moved from purely topical-marking functions into three other domains: they serve to construe experience and indicate evaluative stances, enact interact interpersonal relationships, and they help organize text (p.274). Hashtags also support ambient intertextuality, as they presuppose the existence of other texts (Zappavigna, 2015, p.288). She argues that searchable talk serves as a flexible social semiotic resource, acting simultaneously at the level of lexicogrammar and discourse as both a social and linguistic tag (Zappavigna, 2015, p.288). My project also investigates semiotic resources, but does so through a slightly different, albeit complementary, lens. This study referenced above focuses on the linguistic aspects of semiosis; while my theoretical framework is also inspired by functional linguistics, I align more with social semioticians here (for example, Jewitt, 2016; Kress, 2009; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001) and include visual analysis in my project.

Only a relatively small number of projects explore gender and digital discourse practices related to searchable talk. Cunha et al. (2012) used statistical analyses to create and analyze three corpora of tweets from Twitter around three events: the 2010 Brazilian presidential election, Michael Jackson, and the Swine Flu; they then explored gender differences in creating hashtags in each corpora. Ultimately, they argued that women used more transparent, direct hashtags than men, as hashtags from men were more opaque and innovative (Cunha et al., 2012). Additionally, they asserted that the surrounding discourse of women's tweets included more strategies linked to personal persuasion compared to men's direct and impersonal attempts to persuade (Cunha et al., 2012).

Rightler-McDaniels and Hendrickson (2014) turned their attention to a content analysis of a specific trending piece of searchable talk, #becauseofhoes. Informed by critical race theory and feminist theory, the authors combined critical discourse analysis and semantic analysis to examine the intersection of race and gender in 195 randomly-sampled tweets of this searchable talk discourse tweeted primarily by those with Black avatars (Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014). They discovered eight semantic formations for this tweet that they then coded into six categories: popular culture, violence against women, sexual health, monogamous relationships, emotionally "loaded" terms (including those that are conventionally racist or sexist), and morality (Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014). They assert that the findings conform to gendered norms, and to a lesser degree, racialized standards within media discourse, with women being blamed for the actions of themselves and others, and identified in demoralizing and demeaning terms, while white males were associated with intellectual abilities and wealth and black males were discussed in conjunction with athletic abilities and philandering ways (Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014, p.186). The authors ultimately challenge the

notion that although Twitter users exist in a liberating discursive environment and are positioned as equals, stereotypical sexist and racist discourse was prevalent despite users' race and gender (Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014).

Two final non-empirical works outline examples of searchable talk for feminist activism. Rentschler (2015) overviews how the searchable talk piece #Safetytipsforladies serves a site of hashtag activism against rape culture and victim blaming. #Safetytipsforladies emerged with suggestions for women, framed as potential victims, to defend themselves against rape (Rentschler, 2015). With feminist reappropriation of the this piece of searchable talk, Twitter users were able to focus the discourse away from victims and survivors in a type of collective and humorous feminist action and turn the attention instead to those who rape, providing tips for would-be rapists as an alternative (Rentschler, 2015). She ultimately argues that “feminist hashtag humor asserts the value of highjacking spaces of discussion and commentary online, articulating feminist critique” (Rentschler, 2015, p.355). In a similar vein, Thrift (2014) argues for, and illustrates how, the searchable talk #YesAllWomen, became a feminist meme event Originally created by two women in Twitter after a shooting spree in which the shooter cited revenge against women as his motivation, #YesAllWomen transcended its original intention to voice dissent with the shooting spree, but also served to push back against the male-centered and often anti-feminist #NotAllMen (Thrift, 2014). #YesAllWomen also gave birth not only to a massive digital archive of women's testimonies of personal experience, but also to a network of feminist criticism, include an eponymous Twitter account, Facebook page, and Wikipedia page (Thrift, 2014, p.1091). Thrift (2014) conceptualizes #YesAllWomen as a memetic disruption to dominant discourse of misogyny and violence against women. My study will contribute to the

empirical investigation of gender and ST and perhaps may indicate the potential for feminist meaning making through visual and linguistic resources.

A summary of findings on ST, gender, and digital discourse practices

A synthesis of research on searchable talk generally, and in connection with gender or gendered digital practices, specifically, illustrates both several key trends as well as gaps in the investigation of this topic. First, studies overwhelmingly examine searchable talk in the platform of Twitter, where searchable talk originated. In fact, all of the empirical projects (Cunha et al., 2011; Cunha et al., 2012; Page, 2012; Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014; Zappavigna, 2011; Zappavigna, 2013; Zappavigna, 2014; Zappavigna, 2015) researched Twitter; only the non-empirical feminist commentaries mention searchable talk in other domains, and did so specifically with respect to how such hashtags spread from Twitter into other platforms (Rentschler, 2015; Thrift, 2014). Quantitative and mixed-methods approaches also predominate. In their content analysis combining semantic and textual analyses, Rightler-McDaniels and Hendrickson's (2014) work is a notable exception of a purely qualitative framework. Zhu (2015) couples content analysis with descriptive statistics, while Cunha et al. (2011; 2012) operate from statistical and computational linguistic models. The remaining scholars adopt corpus-linguistic approaches, using concordancing tools such as Wordsmith tools (for example, Zappavigna, 2015) or AntConc (as in Zappavigna, 2011), to first organize and interrogate their data, and then pair that with close discourse analysis of smaller samples (Zappavigna, 2011), detailed discourse analysis (Zappavigna, 2014; Zappavigna, 2015), or other types of manual qualitative coding (Page, 2012). Therefore, while the sample "populations" of each study consists of collections of tweets as instances of searchable talk, the frameworks adopted by each scholar affect the specific corpus of tweets examined. Zappavigna (2013; 2015) uses the HERMES corpus, a specialty

corpus composed of 100 million random Twitter tweets, as her sampling population; she also combines analysis of a small corpus consisting of one single Twitter user's entire Twitter stream, the diachronic LUCIA corpus, a smaller dataset of 3,717 tweets spanning from 2011-2013 with HERMES (Zappavigna, 2014). Other researchers build data sets and corpora based on searches of topicalized tweets. Cuhna et al. (2011; 2012) collected all tweets pertaining to three events over given time periods in each of their projects (65,000 tweets about Michael Jackson, the Swine Flu, and Music Monday, and the over 1,000,000 tweets about the Brazilian Presidential Election of 2010, Michael Jackson, and the Swine Flu, respectively). Zappavigna (2011) also utilized a topical approach to building her corpus, collecting 45,000 tweets about Barack Obama's presidential election win in 2008. Both Zhu (2015) and Rightler-McDaniels and Henrickson (2014) built their data sets around searches tweets containing a specific example of searchable talk (#bindersfullofwomen and #becauseofhoes), and then limited their sample by selecting either every other tweet or every tweet in a given time period of key importance in Twitter (resulting in a corpus of 2,587 tweets), and by randomly selecting each 1/100th tweet, respectively (completing a set of 195 tweets). In contrast, Page (2012) selected an equal amount of female and male Twitter users first to represent her three groups of interest: 40 Twitter corporate Twitter account holders, such as Carnival Cruise, Marvel, Dell, and Whole Foods, 30 celebrities users, including Lady Gaga, Shaquille O'Neal, William Shatner, and Oprah Winfrey, and 30 ordinary users, yielding her a dataset of 92,000 tweets. Thus far, only a few studies have investigated a specific sample of a given piece of ST in fine detail like I will in this project.

Research questions (RQs) involving searchable talk cluster around three foci: the description, structure, and function of searchable talk; user differences regarding searchable talk, and connections between searchable talk, discourse patterns, and cultural meaning. First,

scholars seek to understand the structural and functional nature of searchable talk. To this end, they have studied the role of hashtags with respect to meaning-making (Zappavigna, 2011), have questioned the dissemination process and success and failure features of highly-dispersed hashtags (Cunha et al., 2011), and have discovered the basic structure and purpose of searchable talk in a type of large-scale descriptive analysis with special attention to structures of affiliation (Zappavigna, 2013). Researchers have also asked how users differ in discourse practices involving searchable talk, such as if women and men vary in constructing hashtags on the same topic (Cunha et al., 2012), how journalists versus ordinary users engage in political discussions and the variation in their types of engagement (Zhu, 2015), and how the grammatical content and discourse styles of different user types, corporations, celebrities, and ordinary users differ with respect to issues of self-branding and micro-celebrity (Page, 2012). Finally, RQs probe connections between searchable talk, its surrounding discourse patterns, and macro-level cultural context. Examples include investigations of the semiosis of “cultural communication” via hashtags, or the way semantic properties of a specific hashtag emerge with respect to gender and race (Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014); others inspect how searchable talk functions with respect to societal metadata and what sociocultural and semiotic functions it performs (Zappavigna, 2015), and how searchable talk construes identities through semiotic bonds in the social complex of networked bonding (Zappavigna, 2014). Although a growing amount of studies are considering ST through a social semiotic, or semiotic lens, these approaches either do not investigate gender or do not adopt a multimodal approach like I do in this study.

Finally, Systemic Functional Linguistic theory – specifically the work of Halliday (1978; 1994) – along with correlating corpus-based linguistic theories (for example, Baker, 2006; Bednarek, 2010) inform much of the research of searchable talk, including all of the studies by

Zappavigna (2011; 2013; 2014; 2015). Critical discourse analysis (CDA), (arguably a method and theory, or methodology), also provided the lens for two projects. Using CDA as an interpretive framework, Page (2012) specifically draws on Fairclough's (1989) concept of synthetic personalization; CDA underscored with feminist thought and critical race theory served as the interpretive frame for the project investigating race, gender, and digital language (Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014). Other works are less clear about their specific theoretical underpinnings, citing linguistic theory in general (Cunha et al., 2012) and a discourse pragmatic approach (Zhu, 2015).

The most major research gap in regards to searchable talk is simply the paucity of research in this domain. Hashtags and searchable talk constitute a critical discursive component when communicating on Twitter and have bled over into other SNS. The amount of discursive practices enacted daily in the post popular sites of digital "networked publics" (boyd, 2010) – Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Tumblr, for example – vastly outnumber scholarly understanding and investigations of them. Furthermore, the only research in this domain has examined Twitter. While scholars have alluded to searchable talk moving from Twitter to other platforms (Rentschler, 2015; Thrift, 2014), as well as increased convergence in digital spaces (Tagg, 2015), little is known empirically about this phenomenon. Given the importance of varying affordances in digital platforms, a critical and holistic understanding of searchable talk requires its investigations in other platforms and online space; hashtags in Tumblr, for example, remain critically under-researched, as does Tumblr in general. Additionally, qualitative and ethnographic approaches are rare with such data, as almost all investigations of hashtags involve corpus-based and/or statistical methods. Finally, while researchers have elucidated the link between identities, evaluations, affiliations, bonding, discursive practices, and searchable talk

(Page, 2012; Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014; Zappavigna, 2013; Zappavigna, 2014; Zappavigna, 2015; Zhu, 2015), scholars still know very little about the types of affiliations, bonds, and identities enacted, the nature, structures, and types of evaluations, and surrounding discursive practices – multimodality and discursive practices, for example – within which searchable talk is embedded. Additionally, no studies discuss ST as a hidden, covert phenomenon and as of yet only explored instantiations of ST in posts; none have examined meaning making and meaning making associations built by employing ST in search engines. I will shift the focus now to the final area of literature informing this study – that of gender, multimodality, and digital discourse practices.

Digital Discourse Practices, Multimodality, and Gender

In Jewitt's (2016) overview of multimodal analysis, she argues that a multimodal perspective attends to a full range of communicative forms and the relationships between them by providing the concepts, methods, and framework for the analysis of visual, spatial, and other aspects of texts, in addition to language (p.75). She adds that in multimodality communication and representation are understood as more than just language, and so a multimodal approach attends systematically to the social interpretation of a range of forms of meaning making (Jewitt, 2016, p.75). One aspect of meaning making that is critical to my study is the construction and realizations of gender discourses in multimodal domains. For example, a foundational study of gender in an analog environment examined the images, the text, and the relationships between them in male sexual health pamphlets and illustrated how both the images and text were critical components for realizing discourses of masculinity (Jewitt, 1997). In addition, within the printed leaflets contradictory discourses were realized by each mode: the writing revealed more positive and more progressive discourses of both femininity and masculinity, while the images presented

and perpetuated negative discourses, including some that would not be typically appropriate if expressed as written text in public health pamphlets (Jewitt, 1997). In this section, I review literature that specifically focuses on multimodal investigations of gender in digital practices and spaces.

Multimodal investigation of gender in digital domains is a burgeoning, yet still nascent area of research. Within such studies researchers have explored gender in several discourse practices (searches, profile pics, and selfies, for example) and across various platforms; the primary modes examined, however, are overwhelmingly written text (language) and images (often photographs of some kind). An early example includes Noble's (2013) study of black women and girls as represented in both Google image and text searches. After generating both image and text searches, and following all links to the content of the private results, Noble (2013) found that the images of black women and girls depicted them as stereotypically hypersexualized. In textual results, black women's bodies were sexualized in half of the first ten results (50%), and only three of ten (30%) focused on social or cultural life of black girls (Noble, 2013, para. 23). By combining critical race theory, Black Feminism, and critical discourse analysis, Noble (2013) ultimately argues that the commodification of black women's bodies, as well as the lack of agency available within the first page of search results, presents no options of non-pornified versions of black women and girls' identities; she concludes by asserting that through both the text and images black women and girls' identities are commodities sold to the highest bidder.

One of the most foundational scholars of multimodal, or what he calls *mediated*, discourse analysis is Rodney H. Jones. Jones' (2005; 2008; 2009a; 2009b; 2012) works consider a variety of digital discourses practices and how the mediation of technology affects social

interactions, situations, and practices. Jones does not always *directly* focus on gender, but several of his mediated discourse analytic projects discuss issues of gay male identity and masculinity, performances associated with gay male identities, and social practices common to gay male communities of practice (Jones, 2005; Jones, 2009a; Jones, 2009b). Regardless of focus, however, Jones' studies thoughtfully weave together digital environments and tools, including affordances of SNS sites, digital photography, and digital video, social and discursive practices, multiple theories of the social, and analyses of linguistic, visual, and other semiotic resources; as such they serve as exemplary models of multimodal DA projects that both inform, and inspire, the direction of this project.

Assuming that different modes take on different kinds of functions and different kinds of social meanings, Jones (2009b) examines sites of display – social occasions in which particular configurations of modes and media converge in a particular time and space in order to make particular social actions possible – in gay men's profile pages on Fridae.com, a web portal catering to gay men and lesbians in Asia (p.114). Drawing from Goldhaber's (1997) notion of the "attention economy" of the internet, as well as Iedma's (2001; 2003) concept of resemiotization, Jones (2009b) illustrates how users attempt to attract the attention of other users, and then display that attention as part of their own displays; focusing on the role of the male body in sites of display, he then argues that the affordances of the website make possible a multimodal display of the body involving icons, written text, and photographs, in which the body is semiotized and resemiotized (p.118-119). More specifically, in analyzing each mode, he illustrates, for example, how the username is resemiotized into an identity label, how the website icons index identity and allow users to negotiate identity, how pictures are multifunctional as aesthetic objects, documents of identity, and communicative gestures in the ongoing interaction

amongst users, functioning as what Goffman calls “body idioms,” and how text serves to create textual displays of the body that index social categorization, “anchoring and constraining the kinds of selves which this site of display makes possible” (Jones, 2009b, p.123). Jones (2009b) argues that the display of the body is a form of social action and that users manipulate the affordances of this site as a new type of social practice; the body becomes more discursive, negotiated, and reflexive in this space (p.125). He concludes by asserting that sites of display not only affect the kinds of meanings users can make, but also the kinds of social actions users can perform and the kinds of social identities they can enact (Jones, 2009b, p.125).

In Jones’ (2009a) project he continues to explore the ways that technologies affect possible social actions and identities, but this time specifically focuses on how digital photography and digital video at the moment of entextualization – at the time that these elements are extracted from their original contexts and recontextualized into other social situations. Through the examples of taking digital photos at a night club and then sharing them and having others comment on them on SNS Facebook, of digital video of skateboarding being edited and shared on YouTube, and on the digital photographing of sexual acts being used on a gay male hookup site, Gaydar, Jones (2009a) argues that digital imaging technology has “in many ways begun to colonize these [sex and dancing] and many other everyday practices, and, in so doing, to change the ways that they are socially organized” (p.286). The author presents mediated DA as his method of analysis, which focuses on digital multimodality and semiotic interpretation beyond just language, but does so in a way different from, yet complementary to, semiotic multimodality. Mediated DA assumes that texts and other cultural tools we appropriate to take social action are the sites upon which social interactions and social identities are constructed, so this method seeks to understand the relationship among text, action, and the material world

(Jones, 2009a, p.286); he draws heavily from the DA work of the Scollons (for example, Scollon, 2001). By examining the concrete social actions that occur when texts and social actors come together in real time social situations, Jones (2009a) emphasizes the different actions and social identities made possible by entextualization at the moment texts are produced; he concludes by arguing that digital entextualization is more immediate, negotiable, communal, and interactive than other types of “disembodied” entextualization, such as analog photography and writing (p.289). He thus considers such practices more analogous to the mode of orality; as a result, such practices have the potential to challenge traditional structures of power as they make changes in participation structures possible (Jones, 2009a, p.289). I hypothesize that digital, multimodal, and entextualized practices surrounding Beyoncé may also challenge traditional structures of power.

Jones (2005; 2008) continues to explore multimodality (and indirectly, gender) by comparing the functions and uses of different modes in digital environments, examining the shift from textual to video modes in gay male online chatrooms, and the role of text in gay male televideo cybersex, respectively. In these projects, as in his other studies using mediated DA, Jones assumes again that different modes of communication and the interaction between such modes within various digital sites not only provide users with different communicative resources, but also allow for different types of social interaction therein. To that end, in his first study, rather than analyzing the meanings of the images themselves, which more commonly occurs in social semiotic multimodal DA projects, Jones (2005) instead examines the logic and structure of visual communication within chat and how it allows for social transactions and expressions of both social action and identity with the chat framework. More specifically, he argues that affordances of each mode allow users to control how much and what information

they provide; because users make use of computer mediated communication (CMC) to organize their social and sexual lives, users also utilize different modes in order to affect the flow of information between parties and thus minimize the social risks involved in different types and contexts of chats. The crux of Jones' (2005) argument is that "deploying visual images for communication, and the negotiations around this act, serve as a site for claims and imputations of identity" (p.88). For example, switching from textual mode (chatting) to images (the sharing of pics) is a critical point in interaction which affects future actions, as it may eventually lead to the two parties meeting; a certain reciprocity is expected, and if users do not provide pictures they may be deemed as untrustworthy causing the chat session to end (Jones, 2005, p.76). Ultimately, the context and course of social action judges whether the use of a given mode constrains or amplifies specific social actions; Jones (2005) concludes, however, by arguing that attention to the ways gay men negotiate mode shifts as they move from virtual interaction to physical interaction may provide important hints as to why subsequent sexual encounters occur the way they do (such as participation in unsafe sex practices) (p.89). While such work in synchronous, "real time" CMC differs from the asynchronous posting and CMC of SNS, Jones' (2005; 2008) research nonetheless highlights the importance of the interaction between modal affordances, interactive potentials, users' actions, and information flows between users. Jones's (2005; 2008) work, therefore, serves as an indirect guide for exploring contextualized multimodal meaning in asynchronous SNS. Whereas he examines connections between modality and action in highly contextualized synchronous CMC data, in my project I instead examine connections between modality and meaning in highly contextualized asynchronous CMC data. Our inquiry is analogous, but the synchronicity of his data emphasizes action, while the asynchronicity of my data emphasizes meaning.

In his study of role of televideo cybersex, Jones (2008) also investigates the role that the textual mode plays in this primarily visual practice emphasizing male body performance. Again the author adopts a multimodal approach through the use of mediated DA. He argues that text serves several functions with respect to the visual mode: it increases the sense of ‘presence’ that the participants feel, it regulates the rhythm of unfolding interactions, it helps manage the orderly exchange of information, and it creates narrative frames within which bodily displays can be interpreted and made coherent (Jones, 2008, p.453). Jones (2008) contrasts this with typical F2F conversations, where the spoken language plays the primary role, and the body a supportive one through the use of gestures, gaze, and other paralinguistic cues; in such televideo practices, the roles of the modes are reversed. He elaborates, “one might say that in televideo cybersex, while the images is the body, the text is the face” (Jones, 2008, p.470). He concludes that in this context modes serve not only to elaborate one another, but also to regulate one another, and that the semiotic minimalism of each mode is what makes these encounters so exciting (Jones, 2008, p.470). In this current project I also explore the function of modes in interaction with one another in specific SNS contexts, and also across SNS contexts. Like Jones (2008), I am interested in intersemiotic relationships between visual modes and text in a given multimodal ensemble and how these relationships relate within a given SNS context. Unlike Jones (2008), however, I investigate intersemiotic relationships in asynchronous CMC (static images versus televideo), and thus focus more on multimodality and meaning compared to multimodality and action.

One final study explores multimodal communication, but not gender. However, this project makes an important contribution to the literature as it is the only project to study Tumblr images; it also, like my work, makes use of Tumblr hashtags as means for searching for the data.

Bourlai and Herring (2014) collected two data sets for their content analysis to examine expressions of emotion in images from Tumblr posts; the first consisted of posts containing only text, while the second was comprised of posts with images and text, or of images alone. In order to develop their content analysis codebook, they collected the first 100 most recent posts over 5 days using the five most popular hashtags from common fandom communities (including *#onedirection*, *#tomhiddleston*, and *#loki*) and collected the first 200 most recent posts over 5 days using the generic hashtag, *#feels*; after reducing their data to eliminate for languages other than English, reblogging, and identical posts, they ended up with a dataset of 1,067 image posts and 1,085 text posts (Bourlai & Herring, 2014). From their grounded theory approach, three general categories realized by several variables therein emerged from the data to form the basis of their codebook: post demographics, post structure, and post function (Bourlai & Herring, 2014). To then specifically assess sentiment and emotion, Bourlai and Herring (2014) coded a subset of data, taking the first 50 image and text posts both the *#tomhiddleston* and *#feels* tags for a total of 200 posts; they coded and analyzed the posts for emotional presence, emotional polarity, emotional intensity, and sarcasm (or non-bona fide communication). As a result, the authors found that with respect to demographics, both text and image posts were equally distributed among women, but that 60% of men use image communication while 40% use textual (Bourlai & Herring, 2014, p.172). In addition, although there was more sarcasm in textual communication than in image-based communication, Bourlai and Herring (2014), assert that communication in Tumblr is mostly bona fide and quite emotional overall (p.174). Ultimately, with respect to modal differences, the researchers conclude that posts containing images expressed more emotion, more intense emotion, and also showed more positivity in emotional valence than posts with only text, whereas text posts described personal situations, expressed

sarcasm, and displayed more negative emotion; they conclude that mode choice on Tumblr is not arbitrary (Bourlai & Herring, 2014, p.174).

Gender and images in SNS.

There has been increasing interest in visual analysis in digital environments. While not technically multimodal in that they focus on only one mode, several recent studies have adopted various approaches, including content analysis and social semiotic analysis, to examining gender, images, and photographs in SNS. Since one component of my analysis is visual analysis, these studies are particularly relevant for this current project. In addition, this line of research illustrates how discourse analysts and sociolinguistics, once concerned primarily with language and linguistic analyses, have recently adapted their DA approaches in order to attend to images and visuals in digital space.

Kapidzic and Herring (2014), for example, examined teens' profile pictures in a teen chat site. Using content analysis, they coded for gender, race, gaze, dress, behavior, and distance, and conducted a statistical analysis to examine differences by gender and race in image features (Kapidzic & Herring, 2014). They report two findings: racial differences were greater for boys than they were for girls, and there were statistically significant differences in gaze, posture, dress, and distance for gender and for race (Kapidzic & Herring, 2014). The authors assert that both the images replicate hegemonic discourses typically found in face-to-face (F2F), analog investigations; they contribute this to the fact that both modalities – that of F2F, spoken conversation, and profile pictures online – serve to communicate self-presentation, such that “in both modalities communicators are presenting social selves that are available for interaction” (Kapidzic & Herring, 2014, p.971). They also argue that subtle differences in images help to

create and re-create gendered and racialized discourses in online space (Kapidzic & Herring, 2014).

Zappavigna's (2016) recent case study was particularly inspirational for guiding my visual analysis in this study. Zappavigna (2016) begins by arguing a key point that is also critical to my current work, stating "there has been little research on social photography that explores the meanings made through the visual choices constructed in social media images" (p.272). As a result she collected a data set of 500 images from the photo stream of a single user in the photography SNS Instagram. She narrowed images to those found by searching for #motherhood and classified the interpersonal meaning potential of such images; to this end, she coded images using a subjectification network inspired by the point of view and focalization classification by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006). The subjectification network divided images into those with the photographer and those with the subject as photographer; the latter category then further distinguished between those in which the photographer was represented (such as the traditional "selfie"), the photographer's presence in the visual structure was implied, or the photographer's presence in the visual structure was inferred. Zappavigna (2016) then examines how such visual choices construe relationships between the represented participants, the photographer, and the social media viewer of the photographs, arguing that such images create alignments with the ambient social media viewer who is positioned as 'sharing' in the experience (p. 288); in this case, the shared experience is motherhood. She concludes by asserting that subjective social media images foreground the photographer-viewer relationship in visual structure as a type of ambient social connection; such practices comprise part of emerging visual genres in social media discourse (Zappavigna, 2016, p.289).

Two other research studies also examined images in social media, but did not explore gender. However, each project informs my current study in different ways. The first project is Barton and Lee's (2013) two case studies on multimodal stance-taking on Flickr, a photo sharing website included in their guide to researching language online. In many ways Flickr photos are similar to pins in Pinterest, as both are fundamentally image-based sites that allow for comments when posting the image and after posting only. The visual mode predominates over the linguistic in each site. Considering a photo page as a cohesive piece of text in which words and images work together to make meaning (Barton & Lee, 2013, p.96), the authors examine several aspects of stance-making on such pages. They begin by positioning their own reading paths, interactions with, and observations of the various modes of the page, and then move to cross-modal coherence, or the ways the layout, image, and words make a coherent layout and form a cohesive internal structure, to the intertextual links, and to the other voices on the page, such as the tags, the notes on the photo, and the user comments; they contextualize their interpretations by moving to the page user's personal information, and then position this page within the user's entire photo stream (Barton & Lee, 2013). Because the ultimate goal of their book is to guide researchers who are interested in language online, Barton and Lee (2013) argue two main points as a result: researcher stance is critical to interpretation, so researchers need to make their own stances as explicit as possible, and also, stance-taking online is a multimodal act. Like this study, my project also considers multimodality in a primarily image-based SNS, taking account both the linguistic and the visual resources as meaning-making devices; I also make my critical, feminist interpretive stance explicit in this work.

Finally, Thelwall et al. (2015) conducted an exploratory content analysis in order to examine images in Twitter. After using a web crawling service to gather all Twitter images over

a period of seven days, the researchers randomly sampled 400 images from US tweets and 400 images from UK tweets for their coding and subsequent analyses (Thelwall et al., 2015). They began by inductively coding to identify common themes, and ultimately coded for image type, image content, image purpose, and image time relationship; they found that photographs, containing other types of content (not photos, places, food or drink, animals, large groups, small groups, a single person, or selfies), with other types of purposes (outside of memes, news about celebrities, event information, jokes, and advertising), and displaying content in real time were most common (Thelwall et al., 2015). Interpreting their results through a framework of users as meformers (sharers of personal information) versus informers (sharers of news information), Thelwall et al.(2015) conclude that the primary purpose of Twitter photographs is to update users' friends and acquaintances about their everyday lives, which serve like as visual extension of F2F interaction (Thelwall et al., 2015, p.9). Because I also examine images in Twitter, but from a sample formed through use of a hashtag, #Beyoncé, I am interested to see how results compare and contrast with the findings of this study. I also adopt a slightly different approach as I explore the use of a celebrity as a resource compared to images from “everyday life.”

In this review of literature I situated my study both within the larger, general framework of gender and digital discourse practice research, as well as within the specific smaller subfields of studies of ST and gender, multimodality and gender, and images in SNS.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The overarching methodological approach used to analyze Beyoncé data within this project is an ethnographically-informed multimodal discourse analysis. All discourse analytic approaches have two things in common: they examine both micro and macro levels of discourse and seek to understand the relationship between them, and in doing so, they attend to four things – text, contexts, actions and interactions, and power and ideology (Jones et al., 2015b, p.4). The differences in the various approaches to DA, therefore, lie in their conceptualizations of those four key issues, and in how micro and macro levels are framed, realized, interconnected, and analytically explored. So, while part of their purpose is to interrogate the application of DA in digital media – Jones et al. (2015b) assert that analysis of digital discourse practices requires us to rethink text, context, interaction, and power (p.5) – they also remind us that any approach to DA, in digital space or otherwise, must contend with operationalizations and assumptions of text, context, interaction, and power inherent in different theoretical frameworks.

Approaches to DA that specifically seek to interrogate aspects of power in discourse are generally united under the conceptual umbrella of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), associated most with the work of Fairclough (1989), van Dijk (1995), and Wodak (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). While in practice analysts of CDA view text, context, and interaction differently, they all share a critical approach that prioritizes the uncovering of sources of power and hegemony in micro and macro levels of discourse. Theoretically they also draw from diverse sources, including functional linguistics and symbolic interactionism, as well as theory from Marx, Foucault, and

Halliday, amongst others (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p.20). As a result, in both theory and method those adopting CDA do so with divergent notions of the four central DA concepts.

While many discourse analysts who are interested in the issues of language and power, or language and social identity, have adopted CDA approaches to their research, their use of CDA is not without critique. Some scholars take issue with the explicitly critical agenda of CDA, while others problematize the varying uses of *critical* across disciplines, questioning, for example, whether *critical* denotes a Marxist tradition and history, or *critical* means to confront imbalances of power, the status quo, and/or liberal, humanist perspectives (Breeze, 2011, p. 499). Methodologically, CDA has been challenged for its lack of systematicity in sampling, such that CDA researchers are accused of “cherry-picking” and emphasizing only certain linguistic forms and features while ignoring others; in addition, critics cast doubt on the possibility that ideological conclusions can be drawn from specific samples of text while overlooking other aspects of text⁶ (Breeze, 2011, p. 503). As a result, to adopt CDA as a methodology for DA can be problematic when examining notions of text, context, actions and interactions, and ideology and power.

A multimodal approach, or more specifically, a social semiotic multimodal approach to DA, also highlights the typically critical issues of power, ideology, and epistemology, but resolves some of the methodological tensions of CDA. That is, multimodality aligns with the criticality of CDA, but diverges from CDA methodologically, theoretically, and analytically. Most basically, social semiotics is concerned with meaning making in all forms, and assumes

⁶ Some of these critiques express valid concerns. Some, however, arise from the predominant notion that linguistic theory is inherently asocial (for example, Chomsky’s (1965) Generative Grammar), and from the perceived dichotomy between core linguistics (the cognitive and theoretical) and studies of language-in-use (the social), such as functional linguistics sociolinguistics, anthropological linguistics, and pragmatics, for example. Scholars in these latter fields are as equally theoretical as those who prefer asocial language models; the difference, however, is that in their theoretical frameworks the social and linguistic operate together.

that the social is generative of meaning; that is, because meaning arises in all social environments and in social interactions, the social is the source, the origin, and the generator of meaning of semiotic processes and forms, including language and other types of communication (Kress, 2009, p. 54). Unlike traditional linguistic theories that separate form from function, where syntax is the study of form, semantics is the study of meaning, and pragmatics and sociolinguistics are the study of language in use, social semiotic multimodality obfuscates such division, and instead unites meaning and form into integrated wholes, into *signs* (Kress, 2009, p. 61). That is, social semiotic multimodality assumes that signs are made in and for the conditions of their use and that all occasions of sign-making are embedded in and shaped by social environments (Kress, 2009, p. 62); the influence of Halliday's (1978; 1994) theories of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Functional Grammar, and language as a semiotic system are apparent here. As Kress (2009) explains, "the environments and circumstances of 'use' are, therefore, always an absolutely integral part of (the making of) the sign: they are at the centre of the concerns of the theory" (p.62).

As a result, in contrast to CDA, which operates with an overtly critical research agenda, criticality is *inherent* in social semiotic multimodal theory itself. Kress (2009) elaborates,

The crucial point is the unnoticed, near invisible social and ideological effects of the signs of the everyday, the signs of ordinary life, of the unremarkable and the banal, in which *discourse* and *genre* and with them *ideology* are potently at work – nearly invisibly – as or more effective than in heightened, clearly visible, and therefore resistible instances...The social, its histories, knowledges, its forms of social relations, its discourses and genres, are here, manifested in these unremarkable, everyday, banal objects as signs...The makers of signs 'stamp' present social conditions into the signs

they make and make these signs into the bearers of social histories. (p.69)

In this theory, what is meant by *critical* is clarified; it is realized as a consideration of the workings of power and ideology that may be present in the social at the time of the making of the sign. This inherent criticality arises because of the importance of social context, the resources available for meaning making, and the attention to people's situated choice of resources (Jewitt, 2009, p.69) central to the theory, that, when considered, position power, ideology, and epistemology as concerns weaving through such choices. In addition, the required attention to the elements of the social environment – and to the modes and resources being used for meaning making in such environments – provides grounds for greater methodological systematicity that was allegedly lacking in some CDA projects. As Jewitt (2016) succinctly explains in her discussion of multimodal analysis, a key question for multimodality is “how people make meaning in context to achieve specific aims” (p.70). It is this theoretical vision of social semiotic multimodality that shapes considerations of text, context, interaction, and power, and that also positions this approach an alternative to, rather than a form of, traditional realizations of CDA.

Theoretical Assumptions and Principles of the Social Semiotic Multimodality

A common feature to all methods of social semiotic multimodality, and henceforth, multimodality⁷, is to attend systematically to the social interpretation of a range of forms of meaning making, known as *modes*, as well as to the interaction of these modes; the focus on different modes, including language, image, gesture, and gaze, for example, expands communication and representation beyond investigations of language as the only form (Jewitt, 2009; Jewitt, 2016). To this end, a multimodal approach to discourse makes the following

⁷ Some scholars use the terms *social semiotic multimodality* and *multimodality* somewhat interchangeably, despite Kress' (2009) assertion that scholars of multimodality should make their theoretical frame explicit. Henceforth in this project, I will use *multimodality* to refer specifically to *social semiotic multimodality* unless otherwise specified.

assumptions and simultaneously considers them fundamental theoretical principles of the approach: (1) while language is widely taken as the most significant mode of communication, speech or writing are always part of a multimodal ensemble; (2) each mode in a multimodal ensemble is understood as realizing different communicative work; (3) all modes, like language, have been shaped through their cultural, historical, and social uses to realize social functions as required by different communities; (4) people orchestrate meaning through their selection and configuration of modes, and thus, the interaction between modes is significant for meaning making; and (5) the meanings of signs made from multimodal semiotic resources are shaped by the norms and rules operating at the moment of sign-making, influenced by the motivations and interests of a sign-maker in a specific social context (Jewitt, 2009, pp.14-16; Jewitt, 2016, pp.69-70). As a result of these assumptions, therefore, Kress (2009) argues that a social semiotic approach to multimodality can describe and analyze all signs in all modes as well as their interrelation in any one text (p.59). This also means that examining the constitution of a given sign can lead to an understanding of the sign-maker's position in their world at the moment of the making of the sign (Kress, 2009, p.65), a theoretical link also missing in some other approaches, such as certain realizations of CDA. In other words, social semiotics assumes that as sources of representation, images, like language, display regularities which can be made the subject of relatively formal description; this culturally produced regularity is called a grammar (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p.20). A corollary of this is Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) argument that the visual means of communication are rational expressions of cultural meaning, amenable to rational accounts and analysis (p.23). Underscoring several of these assumptions, once again, is the influence of Halliday's (1978; 1994) theoretical argument of language as a social system driven by functional concerns and specific contexts.

As a result of these theoretical assumptions and principles, social semiotic multimodality makes use of several key concepts that I will operationalize for clarity. First, is *mode*, or a socially and culturally shaped resource for meaning making; put more concretely, a mode is a channel of representation or communication that is recognized as a usable system of communication within a community (Jewitt, 2016, p.72). Examples of mode include language, images of several varieties, and items typically labeled in linguistics as *paralanguage* or *suprasegmental features*, such as body language and gesture, gaze, and proxemics, as well as prosody and voice quality.

Next are *semiotic resources*, or means of meaning making that are simultaneously material, social, and cultural resources. Elements of language are semiotic resources, as are elements of visual, aural, gestural, and other modal systems. Jewitt and Oyama (2004) present semiotic resources as at once the products of cultural histories and the cognitive resources people use to create meaning in the production and interpretation of visual and other types of messages (p.4). The notion of modes being constructed by the use of semiotic resources is analogous and complementary to contemporary sociolinguistic theoretical views of language as a set of linguistic resources. For example, Blommaert (2010) proposes that in contrast to language as a spatial-temporally fixed, static, and essentialist construct, it should instead be viewed as a dynamic, multiple, and complex, mobile system, or more specifically, as a *repertoire* of linguistic resources – bits of language, language varieties, registers, genres, and language and literacy practices. This idea of language as a set of resources and practices (Blommaert, 2010; Heller, 2007; Pennycook, 2007) is fundamentally a post-structuralist view of language (as cited in Androutsopoulos, 2014, p.7); the notion of a repertoire of resources better accounts for current multilingual practices, and the influence of digital technologies and communication,

globalization, commodification, and mediatization on language practices and use (Androutsopoulos, 2014). A multimodal approach parallels these ideas, but expands these notions beyond just the linguistic to include other types of resources and practices of meaning making.

An additional key concept in need of operationalization is the *multimodal ensemble*. A multimodal ensemble is basically a representation, social interaction, or a communicative event that consists of more than one mode, wherein all modes combine to represent message's meaning (Jewitt, 2016, p.73). Examples of multimodal ensembles include a written text, a website, a conversation in an elevator, a formal political speech, a store sign, and in the case of this project, a pin, a post, and a tweet. Several assumption underscore multimodal ensembles: (1) that the meaning of any message is distributed across all modes, but not necessarily evenly; (2) that each mode is therefore partial in relation to the whole of the meaning of the ensemble; (3) the interplay between modes affects meaning; and (4) modes may occur in several types of relationships with other modes, including being 'aligned' or complementary, as well as in contrast with, or contradictory to, one another (Jewitt, 2016, p.73).

The final key concept refers to the relationships between or among modes within an ensemble, and is called an *intersemiotic relationship*; these intersemiotic relationships contribute meaning to the ensemble. Focusing specifically on image-text intersemiotic relationships, Martinec (2013) and Martinec and Salway (2005) argued for three types of interactions between images and text – elaboration, extension, and enhancement. In a tangible example, Martinec (2013) illustrates how text can function as subordinate to an image, thus affecting not only meaning but how users interact with the text; the example documents an image from a children's website on climate change, and includes a central visual of several forms of pollution, with the

text that focuses the users, *Take a good look at the sketch below...* and *What do you notice in that sketch?* (p.154). Jewitt (2016) provides an additional example of the structure of hyperlinks in digital texts, asserting that these links may realize either connections or disconnections between elements of the text that may contribute to the expansion of meaning relations between elements (p.73).

Underscoring the aforementioned theoretical assumptions and key principles multimodality is a functional theory of meaning, inspired most heavily through the work of functional linguist M.A.K Halliday (1978; 1994). Halliday, who adopted a systemic-functional approach to grammar and viewed language as a semiotic and social system, argued for three distinct, yet iterative and interconnected categories of meaning choices, called meta-functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual or organizational meaning. In multimodality, this translates to the idea of meaning as social action realized through people's situated modal choices and the way they combine and organize these resources into multimodal ensembles (Jewitt, 2016, p.73). In addition, social semiotic multimodality recognizes these three meta-functions with respect to meaning. The first type of meaning choice for people communicating is *ideational meaning*⁸, which refers to how people realize content meanings, such as processes, relations, events, participants, and circumstances in their worlds (Jewitt, 2009; Jewitt, 2016; Kress, 2009; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). The second type of meaning choice, *interpersonal meaning*, refers to how people represent social relationships between themselves and others with whom they are communicating or interacting in any mode (Jewitt, 2009; Jewitt, 2016; Kress, 2009; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Finally, *textual or organizational meaning*, relates to the use of choices that provide structure, organization, cohesion, layout, and composition to a text, interaction, or other

⁸ Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) use slightly different terminology for these three concepts: representational, interactive, and compositional functions, respectively.

type of multimodal ensemble (Jewitt, 2009; Jewitt, 2016; Kress, 2009; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Meta-functions substantiate the analytical and interpretative processes of multimodal discourse analysis.

Given the theoretical assumptions of social semiotic multimodality, as well as its key concepts and principles, this framework is particularly well suited for the analysis of digital texts and of practices mediated through digital technologies. In digital environments people communicate through a range of resources, such as images, writing, layout, sound, video, and colour (Jewitt, 2016, p.69) deployed in various types of multimodal ensembles, including websites, posts, tweets, status updates, emails, and chats. They realize several meanings simultaneously: organizational meaning appears in the layout and arrangement of multimodal elements in their tweets; elements such as the angle of the camera and the distance of the person in the image they embed into their tweet frame interpersonal meanings; and the written text of the tweet, and the subject of the photo appearing with the tweet, presents ideational content. The intrinsic multimodality of SNS is addressed through this methodological framework and underlies my choice of this approach for my project.

Social Semiotic Multimodality and Digital Ethnography

In addition to social semiotic multimodality, I also adopt an ethnographically-informed approach to the study of communication, inspired most by Varis' (2016) discussion of digital ethnography and Blommaert's (2005) analog critical ethnographic approach to DA. A common feature to all ethnographic methods used to interpret texts is to do so against the background of cultural structures (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, & Vetter, 2000, p.91). For example, a critical ethnographic approach (CEA) to DA makes the following assumptions and simultaneously considers them fundamental theoretical principles of the approach: (1) analysis of language is an

analysis of language-in-society with a focus on what language means to its users; (2) language operates differently in different environments, so contextualization is critical; (3) analysis centers not on abstract 'language' but on the actual and deeply contextualized forms in which language occurs in society; (4) language users have repertoires containing different sets of varieties and the distribution of elements of the repertoires in any society is unequal; and (5) communication events are influenced by the structure of the world system (Blommaert, 2005, pp.14-15). In many ways CEA overlaps with social semiotics; however, social semiotic approaches extend the definition of text beyond language alone.

Varis (2016) draws from Blommaert, but applies ethnography directly to digital communication practices; she discusses and outlines the methodological and epistemological challenges that digital technology and mobility pose for ethnography of digital spaces. Varis (2016) argues that the fundamental assumption of digital ethnography is that the micro-level only makes sense when seen within the macro levels, and as such, contextual understanding is of critical importance; in addition, digital ethnography attends to small, rich, and detailed descriptions of everyday communicative digital practices, including both "online" and "offline" dynamics, and tries to capture the complexity of such phenomena rather than reduce such complexity. She asserts that digital ethnography is not a method, but rather an approach to communication and communicative practices based on a holistic view of society and culture; for him, digital ethnography is not reducible to a specific set of techniques, but rather is methodologically flexible and adaptive (Varis, 2016). That is, there is no one size fits all solution to ethnography online (Varis, 2016). Instead, digital ethnography is a learning process where research is guided by experience in the field as a mode of discovery and learning (Blommaert & Dong, 2010; Varis, 2016).

Just as a digital discourse analytic approach requires a reframing of what constitutes “text,” ethnography in linguistic analysis also requires a reframing from its use in the “traditional” sense found in other social sciences. Linguistic ethnography, as utilized and operationalized here in my study, is an approach to examining text and discourse, and not a method (Blommaert & Dong, 2010; Varis, 2016). Social scientific ethnographic methods seek to deeply describe the emic perspectives of cultural insiders through engagement and interaction with human participants. However, in my project, discourse and text are my data and the site of my engagement and interaction. Within foundational theoretical linguistic theory, however, language, discourse, and text are viewed as mental and cognitive phenomena, so analysis of language within such frameworks is an analysis of decontextualized, abstract language forms (see Chomsky (1965), for example). Ethnographic approaches to DA emerged in contradistinction (Allen, 2013); as a result, ethnographic approaches to DA realize and interpret all texts as embedded in layers of context and meaning, and seek to explore language in real, culturally-rich, and highly contextualized instances. In other words, ethnographic approaches to DA recognize language as a social, rather than only a cognitive and mental, system.

To enrich my ethnographic understanding of my data, for this project I have immersed myself for 2 years in learning about Beyoncé in the social world, with attention to both online and offline sources of information. As my goal with this “field” experience has been to increase my contextual understanding of digital discourse practices surrounding Beyoncé and #Beyoncé, my project is also particularly suited for by adding a digital ethnographic approach to my investigation of meaning making online.

Social Semiotic Multimodality and Additional Social Theories

While social semiotics and multimodality are frameworks that centralize the social in meaning-making, they are not theories of the social in and of themselves, they are theories of meaning. Social semiotic multimodal analyses must also be combined with other theoretical approaches for analysis and interpretation. Jewitt (2016) explains,

It [multimodality] is primarily concerned with the micro-world of interactions and communication and can be used to give a strong semiotic account of a range of social issues, such as how the power dynamics between people are materially realized through their interaction with one another and with objects and devices in digital environments. To move toward stronger sociological or theoretical explanations of the character of these interactions, however, multimodality needs to be combined with social theories...to understand, for example, how issues of power dynamics revealed by a multimodal analysis are infused by gender, class, and race. (p.82)

To this end, social semiotic multimodality is always interdisciplinary, drawing from other fields, including sociolinguistics, anthropological linguistics, sociology and anthropology, art history and theory, iconography, and cultural studies. Such interdisciplinarity is not unique to social semiotic multimodality, but highlights a commonality with other approaches to DA.

I adopt social semiotic multimodality as the primary theoretical approach to my analysis of digital discourse and ST. Like other discourse analysts, such as the discourse analytic approach of Blommaert (2005), as well as scholars of both analog and digital multimodality, including Jewitt (1997) and Jones (2009b; 2009a; 2012), I too, however, will draw from eclectic theoretical sources that enable me to examine the multiple layers of meaning making in ST practices, particularly with respect to notions of power, and gender and race as relevant. For example, feminist theorist Butler's (1990) notion of gender performativity, which elucidates the

ways that iterative practices, like those of text and discourse, serve to gender the body, is relevant, as are theories of Black Feminism. Additionally, tenets of critical race theory applied to DA, as in the work of Hill (2008), is also fruitful; these assume that racist effects can be produced in discourse without the intention of discrimination through the structures in discourse itself and its interaction in society (Hill, 2008, p.7). Hill (2008) and Blommaert (2005) both utilize Foucault's (1972) theoretical notion that power exists in both what is present what is and absent in discourse, as well as Silverstein's (1976) concept of indexicality, the idea that meaning that emerges out of text-context relations such that semiotic signs suggest shared metapragmatic, metalinguistic, and metadiscursive features of meaning (Blommaert, 2005, p.252). Finally, notions of intertextuality, interdiscursivity, (as in Vásquez, 2015) and Bakhtin's theory of "double voicing" (as in Davies, 2013) have been applied to digital discourse practices. These concepts are theoretically insightful in my study.

Operationalization of Key DA Constructs: Discourse, Text, Context, and Power

Given the vastly different realizations of key DA elements across theories, it is crucial that my understandings of the key constructs of DA are clear. To that end, in this project, I consider discourse as meaningful semiotic behavior (Blommaert, 2005, p.2) – the ways people build and manage their worlds using various semiotic systems (Jones et al., 2015b). As such, it is both linguistic and semiotic, as well as social and cultural, accounting for more traditionally linguistic conceptualizations of discourse, viewing discourse as a type of social action, and including Foucault's (1972) concept of discourse as metanarratives and norms. As Blommaert (2005) explains,

we have to use discourse to render meaningful every aspect of our social, cultural, political environment: an event becomes 'a problem' as soon as it is being recognized as

such by people, and discursive work is crucial to this...discourse it what transforms our environment into a socially and culturally meaningful one. (p.4)

For the purpose of analysis, my operationalization of discourse, then, is twofold, following Gee's (2015) distinction; that is, like Gee (2015), I use little-d "discourse" for language and other semiotic resources in use among people, and big-D "Discourse," for "the ways in which people enact and recognize socially and historically significant identities as 'kind of people' through well-integrated combinations of language, actions, interactions, objects, tools, technologies, beliefs, and values" (p.1). Gee (2015) argues that "discourses" are always conversations between historically formed "Discourses" (p.1). In this project the only change I make is to expand "discourses" to include other semiotic resources. I use this expanded notion of "discourses" to make sense of, understand, and examine the "Discourses" of Beyoncé.

If discourse is a tool for performing social practices, then texts are the aggregate of semiotic tools used (Jones et al., 2015b, p.4), or the linguistic and non-linguistic building blocks of discourse. In my project, texts are formed with the little-d "discourses" (Gee, 2015); texts are multimodal ensembles which may themselves be embedded or nested in, like fractals, other multimodal ensembles. With respect to this project, then, the "text" would depend on the platform; in Twitter, for example, it would encompass the entire tweet, including any hyperlinks, emojis, and images along with the linguistic content. My definition of text again is multimodal, and encompasses non-linguistic resources; this also underscores my motivation for a multimodal analysis.

In a social semiotic multimodal paradigm, context is multilayered. That is, context ranges from the individual, micro-situatedness of the text and its properties, to larger structures, patterns, and rules; it is not only linguistic and semiotic, but also social, political, cultural, and

historical (Blommaert, 2005, p.67). Context encompasses consideration of modes, resources, and intersemiotic relationships. With respect to digital discourse practices, especially, context is also spatial and temporal; time and space matter critically with respect to digital technologies. Jones et al. (2015b) elaborate about the importance “of the way texts (and the meanings, social relationships, and identities associated with them) change as they travel from context to context moving across virtual and physical spaces” (p.9). When I examine context, therefore, I do so with multiplicity in mind and explore three specific online sites to account for platform and spatially-based contextual differences.

Finally, the social semiotic concern for the social underscores my operationalization of power. In this project, I view power as discursive and systemic, as an effect of discourse that results in inequalities that include, seclude, and exclude (Blommaert, 2005). I align with Wodak and Meyer (2009) here when they argue that “language indexes and expresses power in many ways, and is involved when there is a contention over and a challenge to power” (p.10), but extend this to include other semiotic resources. I do not assume a priori assumptions of what shape power takes in discourse, such as the “predefined power of which text is only illustrative or symptomatic, as in CDA” nor with the “explicitized, visible, and event-centered power within the grasp of individual practices, as in CA (Conversation Analysis)” (Blommaert, 2005, p.67). Instead, I share the idea that power resides both in language and is perpetuated through language (Blommaert, 2005, p.67) and leads to inequalities; once again, in adopting a social semiotic multimodal perspective, I expand from language alone to include other modes. Considering Foucault’s (1980) claim that there are no relations of power without resistance (p.142, as cited in Flowerdew, 2008, p.205), however, I also see power as leading to subaltern emancipatory practices, as well (Flowerdew, 2008). Kress (2009) summarizes succinctly, “all sign making has

to be founded on careful assessment of the social environment and the relations of power in that environment” (p.72). Therefore, in this project, while there may be various realizations of power, power is discursive; discourses and Discourses may contain examples of power effects both of inequality and of resistance.

Research Questions

To examine ST, gender, and multimodal meaning-making within my data set, I ask the following major research questions (RQs) and sub-RQ in this study:

1. What are the linguistic and visual meanings of Beyoncé in posts collected via *#Beyoncé* searches?
 - a. In images of Beyoncé, how is Beyoncé visually positioned in such posts?
2. How do the meanings of Beyoncé differ across modes?
3. How do the meanings of Beyoncé differ across SNS platforms?
4. How do these meaning distinctions connect to macro-contextual issues of gender and power?

I am interested, therefore, in meaning in specific samples of data gathered via ST; I then examine in how meaning in such discourses illustrate, perpetuate, create, and are created by Discourses of power in digital space. That is, I want to examine what a specific set of temporal little-d discourses (Gee, 2015) containing Beyoncé have to say about big-D Discourses (Gee, 2015) in Twitter, Tumblr, and Pinterest, and how these Discourses differ across platforms. More specifically, the ultimate goal of my project is to use a multimodal social semiotic analysis to examine the multiple layers of situated multimodal meaning of Beyoncé in posts, and the multimodal ensembles in which Beyoncé is embedded, within snapshots of practices in Twitter, Tumblr, and Pinterest, how these meanings differ by mode and platform, and finally, how these

meaning connect to issues of power and gender. I answer these questions based on a sample data set described below.

Data Sampling and Management

In their guide to researching social media, Page, Barton, Unger, and Zappavigna (2014) argue that discourse analysis of social media is not only an emerging area, but also that there have not been many critical, multimodal discourse analyses of social media (p.99). Therefore, methodological models of multimodal discourse analysis of SNS are very rare, causing researchers interested in this area to develop their own sampling guidelines that still reflect systemic sampling principles, but that also allow for the finely detailed and close analyses of the linguistic, visual, and other modal data of interest. Page et al. (2014) provide a list of main criteria to guide social media data collection for qualitative research that considers the context of new media, as well as its dynamic and ever changing nature; these include the following sampling considerations: platform, time, number of utterances/texts or word length, author(s) identity, text popularity, topic, presence or absence of features, and language variety (pp.92-3). Ultimately, they argue that research questions, sampling procedures, and scopes of claims should interrelate, that often new media researchers consider more than one of the main criteria above, and most importantly, that regardless of what criteria a researcher uses, she remains transparent in her sampling decisions in the write up of the research (Page et al., 2014).

As a result of these considerations, in this project I have selected two primary criteria to underscore and guide my sampling: presence of the feature #Beyoncé used in search engines to gather systematic data from each platform and platform distinctions (and the affordances therein). Therefore, when deliberating about what constitutes a representative sample, I utilize the feature #Beyoncé in the search engines because that is the only universally-allowable

platform affordance across all three SNS to gain comparable samples. In designing the sample for the data set, I contemplated how the affordances, allowances, and constraints within each platform structure how, when, and to what extent I could collect the sample; I took into account how these considerations would affect my ability to make claims about the sample data that is collected. For example, Twitter allows for historical searches, where Tumblr and Pinterest do not; Tumblr limits reblogged posts per day, Pinterest limits total pins to 200,000 per account, and Twitter has no limits. In essence, the fundamental structural differences across platforms affect data collection, and therefore shaped my data collection process. I discuss how each of my social media criteria affected my sampling below.

#Beyoncé as a searchable feature. To collect my data sample across all 3 platforms I used the search option within each SNS to obtain datasets; for my given dates, I entered *#Beyoncé* into each search engine and collected the first 50 not-repeated posts. I did this for two reasons. First, as mentioned previously, while all 3 SNS allow ST in the body of their posts, ST is optional and is not used consistently. The only universal use of ST across platforms is within search engines. Therefore, rather than comparing instances of *#Beyoncé* within posts, which would vary greatly across the SNS, I instead used *#Beyoncé* as a data-gathering tool. The second motivation for using the search feature was primarily to maintain face validity with each platforms' search engines and storage potentials; that is, I used this sampling procedure to account for *what would actually be available in a given users' search* and would also meet the guidelines for re-blogging, pinning, or re-tweeting within each SNS. I am trying to replicate what a typical user may find if she were to conduct the same search within the same time frame across all 3 sites.

I realize that each SNS maintains its own search engines with their own algorithmic patterns to both present and prioritize results, so the data gathered through SNS searches may not

represent all of the possible thousands or millions of available tweets, pins, and posts in each platform. There are several readily-available web-crawling services for Twitter that capture large amounts of data, including every instance of a #; some researchers utilize these services to build a preliminary data set, and then use stratified random sampling (for example, Rightler-McDaniels & Hendrickson, 2014) to reduce the data set to workable size. This approach, however, is problematic for my project for two reasons. First, such sophisticated web crawlers are not readily available for Tumblr and Pinterest. In addition, I am more interested in the results that are *directly available to “typical” users through the search engine* feature. This collection strategy not only mirrors typical user practices of searching within SNS, but also, such search data subtly illustrates another influence of platform affordances and constraints on what is readily available in searches in SNS. That is, the platform, for some reason, *has already prioritized* these results for the user, as discussed in Noble’s (2013) study of Google search and image search results. This searching strategy, therefore, aligns with my research goals, particularly since one of my research goals is to examine platform affordances and meaning making.

Within each SNS search engine, therefore, I used the search feature to build a sample of tweets, pins, and posts. I gathered each sample by use of the feature *#Beyoncé* in each respective search engine.

Platform distinctions. My second major consideration regarding sampling was platform distinctions. Platform distinctions affected my both the size of the data sample collected for each SNS, as well as the time frames of collection. I explain more below.

Twitter offers users fewer restrictions with respect to searching, retweeting, and thus the availability of finding others’ posts than Pinterest or Tumblr do. Users can freely use the search

function to search by keyword, hashtag, topic, emoticon, time, location, language, and other key features, including advanced search capabilities; search results are not limited to a specific number of results. Twitter, however, at the time of data collection, capped tweets at 140-characters. While other modes are available for use (such as attached hyperlinks, emojis, and images), these additional features must be contained within the 140-character limit; as such, tiny URLs often occur embedded within the tweet, while a preview of the linked video or image appears below the tweet. Twitter posts (“tweets”), as a consequence, are generally smaller in size than posts on the other SNS in my study. Typical sample sizes for qualitative projects on Twitter, therefore, range from 150 to 500 tweets.

Tumblr limits its search features to keywords and hashtags, as well as post type (video, audio, text, etc.). Users cannot search by date. In addition, Tumblr limits re-blogging, or the saving of others’ posts, to 200 posts per day. Posts, otherwise, have no other limits, and may be realized as one of seven modes: image, chat, text, video, link, quote, and audio. Tumblr posts can be quite large, taking up half of a computer screen, or quite small in size and number of features. Likewise, very few linguistic or DA-based studies have been conducted on Tumblr, so there are fewer methodological guidelines to follow in this mostly uncharted domain (Bourlai & Herring, 2014; Connelly, 2015 are notable exceptions). Bourlai and Herring (2014) collected samples of 100 and 200 posts per day over 5 days for their quantitative and multimodal content analysis of Tumblr image and text posts, resulting in a total of data set of approximately 2,000 items; for their fine grained analysis of emotion within their large data set, however, they focused on only a subset of the data, analyzing 100 image posts and 100 text-only posts. Connelly (2015) also analyzed 200 posts in her qualitative project; she specifically used the reblogging limit of 200 posts as a guide.

Pinterest limits its search features, also, to keywords and hashtags. Like Tumblr, Pinterest users can also not search by date. Pinterest limits pins to 500 characters per pin, and imposes lifetime limits on the number of saved pins, likes, saved boards, and followers, but not on daily search results. Like Tumblr, Pinterest is also under-researched (with exception of Ottoni et al., 2013), and consists heavily of various types of videos and images; there are no qualitative DA analyses of Pinterest to guide my project sampling. The size of sample for deep, fine-grained image analysis, however, often varies from one of primarily text-based tweets.

Therefore, given the different affordances of Twitter, Tumblr, and Pinterest, including limits on creating posts and on posting types – for example, Twitter limited posts to 140 characters or fewer (at the time of data collection), while posts in Tumblr are unlimited and may also take one of seven multimodal forms – my samples in Twitter, Tumblr, and Pinterest cannot truly be equal in terms of quantities of posts, but rather my goal has been to make them roughly equivalent in terms of the overall amount of content. In designing this project, I kept in mind limiting data samples that would be too difficult to collect and manage, as these are two key considerations for sampling in social media research in general (Page et al., 2014), and specifically for qualitative and multimodal analyses. Additionally, while all 3 search engines use *#Beyoncé* as their search token, their return dates of posts vary slightly; both Twitter and Tumblr searches, as sites with higher daily posting turnover, returned posts from only the date of the searches (February 8th and May 28th, 2016, respectively), Pinterest searches expanded dates slightly, and returned some pins within (+/-) 7 days of the searches. This brings me to my next sampling consideration.

Temporality. In addition to other affordances, the notion of temporality also differs across SNS platforms. For example, time is a critical variable at play in Twitter, linked heavily to the notion

of “trending,” or the emphasis on currently highly popular topics, hashtags, and other features. Twitter searches, therefore, allow for time as a search variable; they allow users to even delimit hour and minutes of search results along with date of the post. Time and date stamps are also marked on posts by the Twitter interface. In contrast, in Tumblr time is realized differently; there are trending posts and trending user accounts, but these are visible only by clicking on a trending tab; in Twitter these are *always* displayed at the side of a user’s screen in almost all screen modes. Within Tumblr, time or date stamps are not marked on posts unless added by users, and Tumblr does not allow for searching by time or date; time appears to be less germane in this site.

As Pinterest is a curation-based site time appears to be even *less* relevant in this domain. Like Tumblr, time and date do not appear in pins unless users overtly add them, which is a rare practice. There is no section for “trending” pins or pin boards. In a series of topics of choice for exploring new content, there is a section called *Popular*, but that is based more on number of interested users rather than time. Pinterest does not allow time or date as a searchable variable; “recommended” posts are suggested to Pinterest users by the Pinterest interface based on content, and not time, of posting.

Because time matters in Twitter, but less so in Tumblr and Pinterest, I collected samples across 2 time periods (February 8th, 2016 and May 28th, 2016) to account for potential variation in user practices and meanings of Beyoncé. As mentioned above, both Twitter and Tumblr searches returned posts for those dates only, while Pinterest pins occurred within 7 days before or after the search dates. Once again, platform affordances and constraints affected data collection, as analog methodological variables do not apply equally in all digital domains. I

utilized different and flexible types of data collection and methods to conduct research in relatively-new domains and of newer types of social, communicative, and discursive practices.

I also understand that temporality matters heavily with respect to interpreting my results. That is, in remaining true to my data analytical procedures and ethnographically-informed approach I considered the macro social and cultural context when interpreting the visual and linguistic resources used, particularly with respect to meaning making. I know that “offline” cultural events affect “online” digital practices, and cogitated the date of collection when interpreting individual tweets, pins, and posts.

Sample specifics. Therefore, in consideration of the aforementioned conditioning factors for data sampling, my sampling procedure was as follows. To answer my questions I collected 3 data sets: one of 100 tweets from Twitter, one of 100 posts from Tumblr, and one of 100 pins from Pinterest to build my full final data sample of 300 SNS posts.

To obtain my Twitter data set, I conducted two historical searches by entering *#Beyoncé* and a given date in the search engine; I then collected the first 100 tweets displayed for each date that were in English (after deleting any exact repeats - or exact “retweets”). My final Twitter contains 100 tweets composed of 50 tweets from February 8th, 2016 and 50 tweets from May 28th, 2016. These dates correspond to a range of activities related to Beyoncé: the date of her Super Bowl performance that caused such Twitter controversy, one month after the release of her album, *Lemonade*, and several months later during her *Formation World Tour*.

To gather my Tumblr data set, I also collected the first 50 posts for each date after eliminating exact posts (or reblogs) or posts that were not in English. Because historical searches are not allowed, I entered *#Beyoncé* into the Tumblr search engine on February 8th, 2016 and May 28th, 2016. My final Tumblr data set contains 100 posts, inspired by sampling

procedures of Bourlai and Herring (2014) and Connelly (2015), and considering reblog limits of 200 posts or fewer.

To gather my Pinterest data set, I collected the first 50 pins for each date after eliminating exact pins (or repins) or posts that were not in English. Because historical searches are not allowed, I entered #Beyoncé and the date of the search into the Pinterest search engine for both February 8th, 2016 and May 28th, 2016. My final Pinterest data contains 100 pins to maintain an analogous amount of content with the aforementioned data sets from Tumblr and Twitter.

I then combined each data set of 100 pins, posts, and tweets into a total data set of 300 posts. A summary of my sampling procedures is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1.

Summarization of Data Sampling Procedure by Date and Social Networking Site (SNS).

<u>SNS</u>	<u>Totals by Date of Collection</u>		<u>Total Sample Size</u>
	<u>2.8.2016</u>	<u>5.28.2016</u>	
Twitter	50 tweets	50 tweets	100 tweets
Tumblr	50 posts	50 posts	100 posts
Pinterest	50 pins	50 pins	100 pins
TOTAL	150 posts	150 posts	300 posts

Storage. Because of the dynamic and ever-changing content in digital space, data storage is a critical consideration for any empirical analysis of internet data (Page et al., 2014). To this end, here I explain my data storage procedures. For my Twitter data set, I saved data by collecting screenshots of each tweet and by cutting and pasting each tweet into Microsoft Word files. I labeled each tweet from with the date, site abbreviation, and two-digit number, as in 528TW05,

which means the 5th sample from Twitter from May, 28th. I then saved each screenshot as a PDF file with the same file label indicating the hashtag used, sample number, and date (for example, *528TW05.pdf*). I followed the same labeling for each Word file; the only difference is that I kept the files as Word documents. I also expanded each tweet that has additional comments attached and saved these comments both as screenshot pdfs and as Word documents; I followed a similar labeling procedure as above (for example, *TwitterComments_528TW05.pdf*). I stored all appropriate files by platform and date and backed them up in two additional cloud-based storage locations and on my computer hard drive.

My management and storage practices for Tumblr and Pinterest differed slightly from Twitter, again due to different affordances. I followed Connelly's (2015) sampling and storage procedures from her Tumblr research as inspiration. Like she did, I first created researcher accounts in Tumblr and Pinterest (creating new accounts with no background information also allowed for more neutral search returns; if I had used existing accounts my search results could potentially be algorithmically influenced). After searching and finding the first 100 posts in each collection cycle, I reblogged or pinned them; that is, I was able to save them in their original formats as an unchangeable archive. In total, I collected a total of 100 reblogged posts from Tumblr and 100 pins in Pinterest. To quote Connelly (2015) for my motivation,

Once I reblogged the posts, they are static on my blog and any derivations of that post from other users will not be shown in my archive...This helps counteract a constant stream of new information by essentially freezing the content at one point in time. (p.7)

In addition, I still followed the same procedures for numbering and storing Twitter samples above. Like the samples from Twitter, I screenshotted my re-blogged posts and pins and stored them as both pdfs and Word files in the two cloud-based storage backup systems. I also labeled

them in the same way: 528PIN05 and 528TUM05. I expanded and included any comments, as well, maintained as both screenshots pdfs and Word files.

In sum, I finished data collection and storage with three datasets of all 100 tweets, 100 posts, and 100 pins, along with all relevant comments, labeled, filed, and saved minimally as pdfs of screenshots and as Word documents.

Procedure and Data Analysis

In this section I explain my analytical procedures. My analytical procedure is inspired fundamentally by two analytical and methodological schemata: Gee's (2014a) DA "toolkit" for analyzing language, the linguistic mode, and linguistic resources, and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) social semiotic framework for analyzing images from their guidebook *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*.

Gee (2014a) proposes 28 tools to study "language at use in the world" (p.1) at different linguistic levels (semantically, syntactically, and intertextually, for example). These tools differ in that they derive from various theoretical origins of both language and DA, such as from discursive psychology, literary criticism, sociolinguistics, and anthropology, but serve in partnerships to connect little-d discourses to big-D Discourses and larger social phenomena (Gee, 2014a). Because they emphasize different aspects of speech events and texts that may not apply to all context (including gaze or intonation, for example), not all tools are applicable to every DA study; for this project, I focus on the ones most relevant for attending to micro-linguistic details of language and the multiplicity of structure, form, and/or meaning found in digital discursive practices. I combine Gee's (2014a) DA tools with social semiotic visual analysis.

Drawing on SFL, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) outline a framework for describing and analyzing the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions of visual structures of representation; because they argue that the visual semiotic has a range of structural devices which have no equivalent in language, they provide a vocabulary for expressing what can be done in visual texts and how (p.44). Two examples elucidate their framework. First, somewhat analogous to pragmatics in linguistics, the size of the photographic frame realizes social distance. In addition, images of people in which the represented participants in the photo look directly in the viewer's eyes creates a type of "image act," similar to a speech act, whereby the image is used to do something to the viewer; the direct gaze itself also creates a direct form of visual address, related to the use of personal pronouns when speaking (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p.117). Such structural features can be "read" and used to interpret visual meaning making in images.

Combining these frameworks allows for a more holistic and multi-faceted approach to classifying and analyzing digital meaning making and digital discursive practices, while also allowing for meaning to emerge from the data. That is, while Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) approach to image analysis applies directly to visuals in digital space, my other analytical schemata were designed around analog DA. As such, I use Gee's (2014a) tools more as general, rather than rigid, guidelines for data analysis. As I seek to better understand a snapshot of digital discourse practices in this project, I grounded my coding schemata around the structures, functions, and meanings as they presented themselves in the data set, and not necessarily from how other analog discourse analysts have examined them within their models. With this caveat in mind, after an introduction to my data set creation, I then turn to each RQ and explain how I

applied Gee's (2014b) tools, alongside Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework, in order to code and analyze my data below.

I began coding by utilizing Microsoft Excel as a data management and coding tool. I used Excel for both my qualitative, discourse analytic coding and for basic quantitative frequency calculations. I created spread sheets for each platform and coded them individually; I then later combined all three spread sheets for a representation of the entire data set. Within each spread sheet I devoted columns to basic "demographic"-type information about each post, including site, item number, and post type (to indicate mode); depending on platform affordances, I then created columns for different types of additional coding information, including gaze, visual meanings, linguistic meanings, intersemiotic relationships, intertextual relationships, and later, after iterations of coding cycles, primary meanings, secondary meanings, and meaning categories (and other data coded for, but not utilized in, this dissertation project).

In addition to my codes, I also created two formats for capturing and documenting for my own researcher reflection and analytical memos. First, I created a comments column in each Excel spread sheet, allowing for comments attached to individual posts. In addition, I kept an analytical notebook and researcher journal that I utilized anytime I interacted with data, as well as whenever I had an idea come to mind outside of formally working on the project. For each entry, I made notes, wrote questions, and listed ideas. Each entry was data and chronologically order in my notebook. As referenced by Saldaña (2016), analytical memos in my spread sheets and journal served as both as additional data and as interpretative tools for my iterations of coding, categorizing, and ultimately, interpreting my data sets. I now discuss my data analysis greater deal by presenting detailed analysis procedures by research question.

RQ1: What are the linguistic and visual meanings of Beyoncé in posts collected via #Beyoncé searches?

For this RQ, I applied a mix of in vivo (codes taken directly from the data) and descriptive codes (short words or phrases that summarize the data) (Saldaña, 2016) to code for the visual and linguistic meanings of Beyoncé within each post. I utilized 4 of Gee's (2014a) tools as sensitizing and guiding questions for my data: (1) the "doing and not just saying tool," to capture the pragmatics of the post, (2) the "why this way and not that way tool," to explore why structures were expressed in one way and not another way, exploring how alternative structures would create variability in meaning, (3) the "topic and theme tool," to examine subjects, topics, themes, and markedness, to explore correlations between various types of forms of linguistic structures and how they are realized to create perspectives in a text, and (4) the "context is reflexive" tool, which uses sub-questions to examine how what is being communicated shapes or creates context, how it helps reproduce contexts, how it may reproduce contexts unconsciously, and how it replicates, repeats, and or transforms context. I also considered Halliday's (1994) discussion of functional grammatical structures, such as actors, goals, and instruments, to help further underscore fine meaning distinctions.

As part of my coding process to help delineate and reduce the data, I coded inductively for both primary and secondary meanings. Because meaning, generally, and in digital contexts, specifically, is naturally multiple, or polysemous, I operationalize **primary meaning** as meanings of Beyoncé, expressed visually, linguistically, or through interaction of the two elements, that are the essential, explicit, repeated, primary, and/or required meaning elements, analogous to a linguistic argument in formal syntactic theory⁹. For images alone, without

⁹ Linguistic arguments are grammatical structures that are required in a given syntactic frame. For example, in most Standard American English sentences, an overt subject is required, as in *Mika runs* versus **runs*. Arguments

supporting linguistic text, I utilized participant relations as the primary distinction (for example, whether Beyoncé was featured in the image, and if so, was she alone or with others); here, I followed Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) fundamental and primary categorization of visual meaning. I **define secondary meanings** as those that are implicit, implied, of singular reference or occurrence, and/or optional, analogous to linguistic adjuncts in formal syntax. For images alone, without linguistic text, I utilized Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) consideration of either action processes or representation of Beyoncé in images, related to notions of what participants in images are doing or what attributes they are possessing. For primary meaning, I tried to code for only one element per post; however, in some instances, dual codes emerged. In all of these instances, posts were multimodal and the intersemiotic relationships between the codes represented multiple meanings rather than one singular cohesive and primary meaning of Beyoncé. For secondary meanings, I coded for as many as were present in the data; these range from one to four per post.

Utilizing my analytical memos and researcher journal, I went through three iterations of coding for both primary and secondary meanings. I began with first-cycle multiple in vivo and descriptive meaning codes. On the second iteration, I categorized meaning codes into aspects of Beyoncé's identity. On the third iteration of coding, a second-cycle coding with code mapping (Saldaña, 2016), I re-categorized Beyoncé's identities into one of 13 identity categories. For example, an initial descriptive code of *mother* became *Bey as mother* in the second iteration, and then *Relational identity* in the final iteration.

RQ1a: In images of Beyoncé, how is Beyoncé visually positioned in such posts?

contrast with syntactic adjuncts, which are optional syntactic structures in a given frame. For example, the adjunct prepositional phrase *to the field* is not required for *Mika runs to the field* to be grammatical. However, removing *Mika*, the argument, results in ungrammaticality, as in **runs to the field*.

For this sub-RQ, I aimed to account for one aspect of Beyoncé's visual meaning that connects directly to issues of gender and power – Beyoncé's visual positioning. To assess this aspect of visual meaning, I followed Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework for assessing interactive meaning in images, or more specifically, for the realization of social relations represented in images. To this end, I followed their pre-formulated coding schema, using their framework deductively as a codebook for the meanings of visual resources. While I coded for other aspects of visual meaning, for this sub-RQ and this dissertation project I only focus on coding for **contact**, or visual gaze.

Visual contact is one aspect of visual interactive meaning. Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) argue that visual contact in an image establishes the relationship between the represented participant(s) in a photo and the viewer; it is the site of interactivity between the viewer of the image and the represented participant in any image in visual communication. Visual contact, therefore, or lack thereof, positions both the viewer and the participant(s) in image acts and allows them to realize specific interactive roles as visual subjects or visual objects. Image acts, therefore, are analogous to speech acts in language (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006).

There are two types of image acts based on the two types of visual contact possible in images: demand image acts and offer image acts. In demand image acts, some sort of contact is made by the represented participant and the viewer, usually through the participant's direct gaze (but also by certain gestures) whereby the participant enters into an imaginary relationship with the viewer; because the participant does something to the viewer, the viewer becomes the object of the demand image act and the participant is the visual subject. Extending the analogy of speech acts to image acts, this type of contact functions as a visual direct address to the viewer (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006). In contrast, in offer image acts, there is no contact made

between the viewer and the participant, either with gesture or gaze. In such instances, the participant is the object of the viewer's scrutiny, the object of the viewer's impersonal contemplation, and the visual object of the offer image act (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006). The viewer, as invisible onlooker, indirectly addresses the participant as the visual subject of the image act. A visual representation of these types of contact and images acts as interactive meanings is displayed in Figure 16.

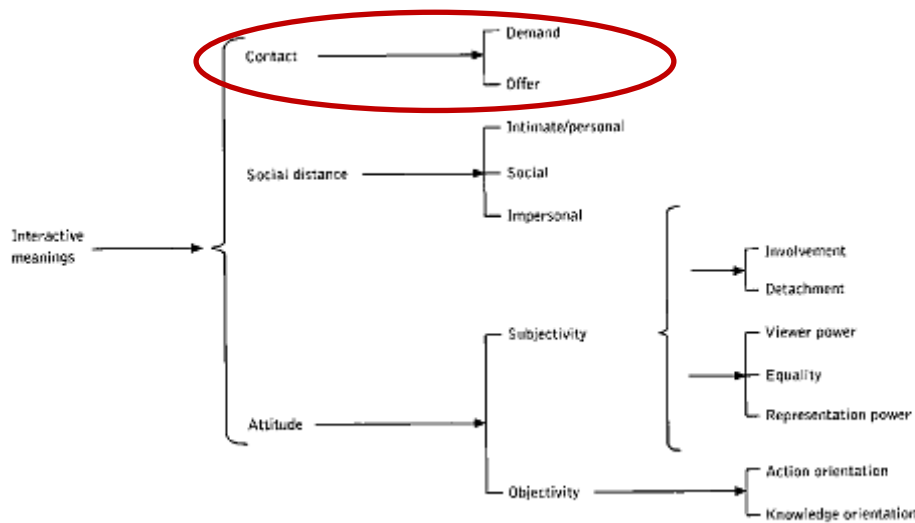


Figure 16. Interactive meanings in images: Contact. (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p.149)

To code for this sub-RQ, I created a column and drop-down menu in each spread sheet; I then coded all visual still images of Beyoncé (excluding memes, videos, GIFs, and fan art) as either offer, demand; I coded all other visuals with n/a, or not applicable, from the drop down menu. I later used the sort button to group all images by image act type.

RQ2: How do the meanings of Beyoncé differ across modes?

To analyze this RQ, I used the sort features from Excel to group the same types of modal data together. I then calculated the frequency of primary identity meaning categories by mode,

and compared and contrasted the distribution of primary meanings by mode. I concluded by making notes of general meaning trends that seem to correlate with modal distinctions.

RQ3: How do the meanings of Beyoncé differ across platforms?

For RQ 3, I calculated the frequency of primary identity meaning categories by platform. To do this, I first utilized the individual spread sheets for each sub-data set by SNS, and then later compared and contrasted the distribution of primary meanings by platform. I concluded by making notes of general meaning trends that seem to correlate with platform distinctions, and tried to link platform distinctions to any possible correlations with platform affordances and/or constraints.

RQ4: How do these meaning distinctions connect to macro-contextual issues of gender and power?

For this final RQ, I considered the meaning-based data gathered, and interpreted it in light of platform, modal, and sociocultural context. I examined meaning at multiple interacting levels: primary and secondary meaning categories, meaning arising from both the contextual and situated nature of Beyoncé within each instance of its use interpreted in relationship to its co-occurring semiotic forms, meaning situated within the affordances and modes of the platforms, and meaning connected to contextualization within the larger sociocultural context. For this RQ, then, I used the little-d information to analyze and discover the big-D Discourses.

To this end, I culled five sets of data: primary and secondary meanings (RQ1), image act data (RQ1a), modal distinctions in meaning (RQ2), platform distinctions in meaning (RQ3), extra meanings and tertiary meanings, such as those based on community-insider knowledge, or emic perspectives of Beyoncé (coded in Excel but not analyzed for other RQs), and my analytical memos and journal notes. I questioned the data with two analytical sources and

frameworks in mind: Gee's (2014a) tools applicable to Big-D analysis, and feminist sensitizing questions. I specifically focused on several of Gee's (2014a) tools: his methodological tools of (1) the "significance building tool," which questions how linguistic resources lessen or increase the significance of some meanings and not others, (2) the "activities building tool," which examines which groups norms are being built or interacted in discourse, (3) the "relationship building tool," which explores the relationships between communication and relationships among speakers, groups, and institutions, (4) the "politics building tool," which examines the distribution of social goods in discourse, (5) the "connections building tool," which emphasizes how grammatical devices connect or disconnect elements, and his theoretical tools of (6) the "Big-D discourse tool," which explores how semiotic resources are used to enact social recognizable identities, and (7) the "Big-C conversation tool," which asks about what types of knowledge, issues, claims, and other Discourses are assumed in given acts of communication. Additionally, I iteratively asked intersectional and black feminist sensitizing questions of the data, inspired by critical race and Black feminist theories of hooks (1992) and Hill Collins (2007). As a result, I questioned whose voices were represented or silenced in the data, whose perspectives were represented in the meanings, what types of agency and/or lack of agency did Beyoncé meanings illustrate in the data, what types of gender construction are present in the data, and how were meanings of gender overtly or covertly racialized, or meanings of racialization gendered.

To supplement my analysis, I also looked for negative power effects, such as hegemonic ideologies and master narratives (Flowerdew, 2008, p.203), along with covert and overt expressions of racism and sexism. I also considered strategies of resistance, including appropriation, euphemism, satire, and irony (Flowerdew, 2008, p.206). It is in this RQ that the

meaning data is interwoven with, connected to, and “read with” the context and critical and cultural theories. It is here, by this process, that I examine the power and ideology in light of the text, context, actions and interactions analyzed thus far.

Evaluation of Qualitative Data

Positionality. My entire research framework implies specific epistemological stances and brings with it both methodological and theoretical assumptions. First, as a qualitative work, I operate from interpretivist and constructionist epistemologies (Crotty, 1998), viewing knowledge as both socially constructed and subjective. Given my emphasis on text and communication, I centralize the role of language and other semiotic resources in the construction of both knowledge and power. Additionally, driven by my critical approach, I operate under a transformative paradigm. Page et al. (2014) summarize this in their discussion of critical DA studies, arguing that such research “is not ‘neutral’ or ‘objective,’ nor does it claim to be; rather, it is motivated by a desire for positive social change” (p.98).

Feminist, critical, and transformative researchers often overtly acknowledge their researcher positionality as a form of researcher transparency (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2012), a practice also encouraged in interpretive projects, like this one, in which the researcher is the primary instrument of research (Chilisa, 2012; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). That being said, I have extensive experience in DA, generally, and of language and gender in the media, specifically. For my M.A. thesis, I analyzed the construction of the ideal teen interlocutor in the language of the then three most popular teenage magazines; I examined the discursive structure of teen women and girls semantically, syntactically, pragmatically, metaphorically, and with respect to presupposition, combining theories from pragmatics, sociolinguistics, anthropological

linguistics, and feminist theory. I was driven, at that time, by my work with teen girls and by the ubiquity of magazines in their world.

Having continued working with teens, I see the ubiquity of media in their world is now digital and in the form of SNS. I am still compelled to understand the discourses and Discourses of the social world as expressed through popular media. I use SNS myself daily; I follow popular culture in digital media, and am familiar with the current events surrounding Beyoncé. For the past two years I have also immersed myself in media and resources about Beyoncé, from a variety of perspectives, including Beyoncé's own social media (to hear as much of her voice as I can), conservative media outlets, black media, black feminist media, and popular music media sources. My participation in these worlds adds to my personal subjective and interpretive insights.

Transparency, transferability, and dependability. Traditional notions of validity and reliability are primarily aligned with positivist epistemologies (Crotty, 1998). Because I am not operating from a positivist paradigm, I require alternative forms of quality evaluation for my project; these are transparency, transferability, and dependability. Transferability refers to the potential for the research to be “transferred” to other contexts, enhanced through dense descriptions of the sampling and setting of the study (Chilisa, 2012, p.169). I realize transferability by clearly defining my methodology, sampling strategies, analytical practices, theoretical framework, and operationalizations of all terms. I increase dependability, or the potential of replicating results (Chilisa, 2012), in the section of my project to which I think this best applies – my data coding. Therefore, to increase the dependability of my coding of my study I examined my own intrarater reliability. I, like Vásquez (2011) in her DA project, revisited and recoded my data after a week's time to verify my original analyses; the consistency

of my own coding over time was 94%. Finally, with respect to transparency of my data, I use several examples to illustrate my key points throughout this paper.

Discourse analytic traditions of quality. Gee (2014b) proposes alternative analytic concepts that strengthen the validity of research in interpretive, DA projects. Two of these include “convergence” and “linguistic details” (Gee, 2014b) utilized also by Fioramonte (2014).

Convergence refers to the ability to make compatible and convincing arguments (Gee, 2014b, p.142). I attend to convergence in both my sample sizes – by collecting adequate amounts of data with which to make interpretive claims – and through a finely articulated theoretical framework to guide my arguments. Gee (2014) also argues that DA interpretations are more valid when tightly tied to linguistic details such that communicative functions are linked to grammatical devices (p.143). The basis of my analysis, and the source from which my inductive analytical processes begin, is from linguistic and semiotic data; I read everything through the micro-linguistic structural details of the language and other semiotic forms.

Feminist reflexivity. Finally, feminist reflexivity (FR) has guided and will continue to guide this project. FR is critical self-reflection as a part of self-accountability, such that researchers reflect the scientific gaze back upon themselves (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2012, p.561). As such, I acknowledge my positionality and standpoint prior to the research, self-critique my conceptual framework, clarify and understand my role, hold myself to high standards of accountability and responsibility, and reflexively interrogate the data gathered (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2012).

As I have now described my theoretical framework, methodology, and interpretive considerations for my data collection, coding, and analysis, I now discuss the research results.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

In the data set of 300 posts found from searching with *#Beyoncé* in each search engine, several different types of meanings and meaning categories of Beyoncé emerged. Some meanings were realized both visually and linguistically, while others were relegated to only one modality. Additionally, meanings and meaning categories varied across SNS platforms.

In this section of analysis, I explore the meanings of Beyoncé and their variations across modes, platforms, and in connection with larger macro-cultural discourses. To organize this chapter I divided it into four sections, aligned with each of the four research questions. In each section I analyze, and answer, each of the research questions.

Research Question One

RQ 1 - What are the linguistic and visual meanings of Beyoncé in posts collected via *#Beyoncé* searches?

As mentioned in Chapter 3, I initially coded both primary and secondary meanings of Beyoncé for each SNS post. Because meaning, generally, and in digital contexts, specifically, is naturally multiple, or polysemous, I operationalized primary meaning as meanings of Beyoncé, expressed visually, linguistically, or through interaction of the two elements, that are the essential, explicit, repeated, primary, and/or required meaning elements, analogous to a linguistic argument in formal syntactic theory¹⁰. For images alone, without supporting linguistic text, I

¹⁰ Linguistic arguments are grammatical structures that are required in a given syntactic frame. For example, in most Standard American English sentences, an overt subject is required, as in *Mika runs* versus **runs*. Arguments contrast with syntactic adjuncts, which are optional syntactic structures in a given frame. For example, the adjunct prepositional phrase *to the field* is not required for *Mika runs to the field* to be grammatical. However, removing *Mika*, the argument, results in ungrammaticality, as in **runs to the field*.

utilized participant relations as the primary distinction (for example, whether Beyoncé was featured in the image, and if so, was she alone or with others); here, I followed Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) fundamental and primary categorization of visual meaning. I defined secondary meanings as those that are implicit, implied, of singular reference or occurrence, and/or optional, analogous to linguistic adjuncts in formal syntax. For images alone, without linguistic text, I utilized Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) consideration of either action processes or representation of Beyoncé in images, related to notions of what participants in images are doing or what attributes they are possessing. For primary meaning, I tried to code for only one element per post; in some instances, dual codes emerged. In all of these instances, posts were multimodal and the intersemiotic relationships between the codes represented multiple meanings rather than one singular cohesive and primary meaning of Beyoncé. Therefore, the only examples of more than one primary meaning code occur in Tumblr and Pinterest due to their visually-heavy data; in Twitter, only one primary meaning emerged for each code. 108 primary codes emerged in Tumblr, 107 in Tumblr, and 100 in Pinterest.

As part of my iterations of second cycle coding and code mapping (Saldaña, 2016), in conjunction with my analytical memos, I then organized meanings into overarching categories. For these categories, I considered various aspects of Beyoncé's identities as overarching themes for categorical construction. In total, 13 primary identity categories emerged from the data. Table 2 displays these categories.

Table 2.

Primary Meanings of Beyoncé across SNS

<u>Category</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Performance Identities	70	22%
Digital Identities	52	17%
Personality and Character Identities	37	12%
Appearance Identities	35	11%
Political Identities	32	10%
Creative Identities	24	8%
Relational Identities	22	7%
Remix Identities	12	4%
Evaluative Identities	11	3%
Economic Identities	5	2%
Athletic Identities	7	2%
Celebrity Identities	4	1%
Hegemonically-Framed Identities	4	1%
	315	100%

To answer RQ1, therefore, there are 13 primary meaning categories of Beyoncé in the data set. Each meaning categories relates to an instantiation of, or aspect of, an identity of Beyoncé circulating through SNS micro-discourses. I overview each of these categories below.

Performance identities. The most frequently occurring primary meaning of Beyoncé relates directly to her musical performances. In these posts, Bey was either visually and/or

linguistically discursively constructed as a singer, entertainer, and/or performer. Examples include tweet 528TW35, in which the Twitter user contextualizes their personal experience with Beyoncé concert attendance, posting *Beyonce [sic] in t minus 2 hours. Dying. #beyonce #Chicago*. In this example, both Beyoncé herself, as well as the location of the concert tour, Chicago, reference Beyoncé as a performer. Figure 17 illustrates Beyoncé’s primary identity as a performer represented entirely in a visual mode. 22% of all primary meanings across SNS construct Bey in a performance identity; this aligns with her primary and most pop-culturally salient occupational identity as a singer, songwriter, entertainer, dancer, and performer.



Figure 17. Beyoncé as a visually-realized performer (28TUM01).

Digital identities. Interestingly in this data set, 17% of the primary meanings, and therefore the second most frequent category of meanings across SNS, were digitally-related identities. In this category, Beyoncé is used as click bait, to draw attention to a post (and often its hyperlink) that is completely unrelated to Beyoncé in any way, Beyoncé is positioned as a digital commodity to be sold, and used to draw attention to a post (and its hyperlink) to direct a user to a Beyoncé-related project, or Beyoncé is only tenuously connected to the link and post in opaque ways created through digital hyperlinked semiotic associations.

This is the only category that focuses less on what Beyoncé *means*, and more on *how Beyoncé is used by SNS users*. That is, these identities do not carry semantic meaning per se, but instead mark distinct digital discourse practices. Within these posts, these meanings and uses of Beyoncé serve as a type of digital deictic marker, but instead of pointing to meanings, they point to digital content and digital SNS practices. Similar to Giaxoglou's (2017) discussion of hashtags as technomorphemes, or linguistic segments that also function as clickable hyperlinks, the semiotic load of these visual and linguistic segments and identities is to serve as some sort of attention-getting device within the SNS post. The semiotic segment, in other words, is not a technomorpheme, or clickable link in and of itself; it instead functions more as technodeictic that seeks to inspire users to click the attached or associated link embedded within or connected to the visual and/or linguistic segment. Beyoncé's identity, then, is to point to the hyperlink and the content therein in line with the heavy attention economy of SNS (Goldhaber, 1997).

With respect to these attention-getting, digital deictic identities, the differences among them have to do with the degree of connectedness between Beyoncé and the content of the post and hyperlink. In some cases, Beyoncé is part of the content of the attached link, but as a commodity only. That is, Beyoncé is a commodity, good, or product to be sold. Examples of Beyoncé as a commodity include tweets that link to online auction site Ebay to buy Beyoncé concert tickets (528TW07; 528TW23) or to purchase a Beyoncé shirt (528TW15). In other instances, Beyoncé is purely click bait; the attached link has nothing to do with Beyoncé and is completely unrelated to her. For click bait, there is no connection between the product being sold (or the post in general) and Beyoncé. An example from Tumblr exemplifies; the linguistic text reads *In honor of our founder and president birthday enjoy 40% off your next rental using promo code...* and contains *#beyonce* [sic] in the content (28TUM20). Upon clicking the

attached link, however, the site redirects to an online clothing rental store in no way associated with Beyoncé, her clothing choices, or her clothing line. Some of the examples of the click bait realization of digital identities redirect to potentially dangerous sites blocked by Twitter, so the actual link content is unknown. In addition, one interesting example of Beyoncé as a digital attention-getting, click bait, identity is her use in an artificial intelligence (AI) (non-human) bot account in Twitter; this account searches for content about bitcoin, a digital currency system. In these tweets, the bot replaces any mention of Blockchain, the financial institute, with *#Beyoncé*, and mentions of bitcoin, the currency, with *#feminism*; it also utilizes Beyoncé in its user handle, *Beyoncéchain* and an image of Beyoncé as its profile picture. In the entire data set for this study, 3 tweets from this account emerged with different variations of tweets including *#Beyoncé* as a digital deictic attention-getting device (528TW16; 528TW39; 528TW40); each tweet redirects to content about finance with nothing to do with Beyoncé. Figure 18 displays an example. In this instance, AI is forging semiotic associations through its use of ST.



Figure 18. Digital identity in Twitter (528TUM16).

Contextualization helps underscore the significance of this use of Beyoncé’s digital identity. First, as an alternative and entirely digital currency system, bitcoin maintains a significant presence on the web. In fact, as of December 2017, Felder (2017) argued that the term *bitcoin* was so popular in Google searches that it surpassed the Google search uses of *Beyoncé*, *Taylor Swift*, and *Kim Khardashian* combined. Given the heavy algorithmic nature of the internet, generally, and SNS, specifically, popularity often equals frequency, and frequency is an

important type of capital in digital domains. In a similar vein, more popular hashtags and ST are more likely to be viewed, and thus, are more likely to generate more clicks on them (especially in Twitter where they are always hyperlinked). Content that serves to catch attention and garner clicks is known as “click bait,” and relies heavily on this frequency capital. Wells (2016) explains this unique phenomenon of Beyoncé’s digital connection to bitcoin as a type of click bait; he says that a fake bitcoin-related institute was created, known as the blockchain institute, and that this blockchain institute is actually a computer program (called a “bot”) that tweets nonsense. He elaborates,

I did not write it or set it up but I can see what the program is doing. It replaces the word blockchain with Beyoncé and bitcoin with feminism. If it sees a tweet that says "blockchain is a star because of bitcoin" it changes it to "Beyoncé is a star because of feminism". There is no new content. The computer program does word substitution. Nothing more complex. Yet people are struggling to spot that it’s simply copying other people’s thoughts, words and ideas and - for some reason known only to its creator - adding in a bit of extra Beyoncé and feminism. People are trusting opinions without recognising that they are coming from a machine, or that they don’t actually make any sense. (para.15).

Beyoncé as click bait is not unique in the data, but the uniqueness of this particular use of Beyoncé as click bait has been that it has been entirely machine learned and automatically perpetuated by a machine.

In other instances, Beyoncé is either linguistically and/or visually incorporated into a post which does not actually *directly* relate to Beyoncé, but she becomes contextually linked and/or associated with the some of the post content in ways that are often opaque or indirect. For

example, Figure 19 illustrates with a visual and linguistic representation of white singer and entertainer Taylor Swift posted on Pinterest; the attached *Read It* link redirects to an article about Taylor Swift’s Grammy performance. Because Beyoncé was also presenting and performing at the Grammy award show during the time of this post’s circulation, Beyoncé was semantically linked to Taylor Swift and the Grammy awards, but not directly referenced; in other words, there is no direct visual or linguistic reference to Beyoncé in this post. This example illustrates a hidden hashtag, whereby a search for *#Beyoncé* yielded this post.

Another example from Tumblr also demonstrates a use of a hidden hashtag, but this time the example is a linguistic realization of Beyoncé’s digital identity. That is, this Tumblr post (528TUM06) quotes Somali-British poet Warsan Shire’s poem “For Women Who are Difficult

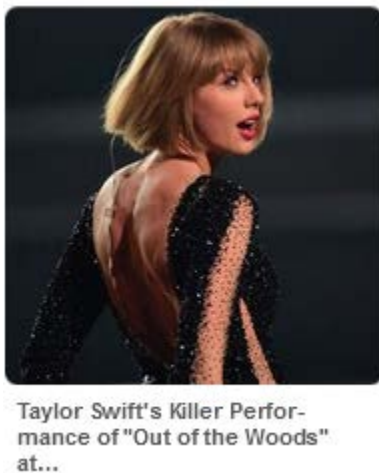


Figure 19. Digital identity from Pinterest (28PIN12).

to Love.” Here, Beyoncé is not overly or directly referenced in the content, topic, or body of the post. However, Beyoncé is again contextually and indirectly associated with Warsan Shire. Those familiar with Beyoncé and her work may know that Beyoncé cites Warsan Shire directly, and credits her with inspiration, for elements of her visual album, *Lemonade*. In this example, an emic, or cultural insider view of Beyoncé becomes semantically linked for etic, or outsider,

participants. Here is where ST, *as a hidden digital semiotic and semantic tool*, is most evident; it creates, reflects, and/or reifies, via ST searches and hidden tags, indirect associations between Beyoncé and others, and constitutes the second largest category of Beyoncé meanings in the process. Beyoncé becomes linked to posts that do not overtly or directly reference her in subtle ways, and this use of hidden tags potentially exposes SNS users to content they may not have expected otherwise.

Personality and character identities. In this third most frequent category of primary meanings, Beyoncé is referenced through her personality, character, influence, and other mental and/or moral qualities. A Tumblr user elucidates this with their text quote, *beyonce [sic] could snot in my food and shave off my eyebrows and I would be like thank you I am bless tbh this is what I am really aiming for anyway* (28TUM18). Here, this user illustrates their emulation of Beyoncé by giving Bey permission to do two unpleasant and potentially objectionable acts to them – *shaving off eyebrows* and *putting snot* in their food. Instead of a negative response to such potentially repugnant acts, the user instead thanks Beyoncé. They then further sanction Bey's actions by first stating how *blessed* they are for Beyoncé's offenses; the user utilizes the digital discourse marker *tbh*, meaning *to be honest*, to then shift the framing of Bey's offenses as the user's actual original goals for their food and for their look. This relates to Bey's notorious fandom community, the Bey Hive, and their unwavering adoration of Beyoncé. Emic associations with the Bey Hive fans derive from Queen and worker bee metaphors applied to Beyoncé (the Queen) and her followers (the Bey Hive); the assumption is that members of the Hive will unquestioningly follow Beyoncé's examples and directives, as Bey is such a significant inspiration for them. In this instance this user's discursive expression of fandom and admiration of Beyoncé relate directly to, and exemplify, Bey's influence. In other examples, Beyoncé's

cultural impact is referenced, as in a tweet that read *#Beyoncé averaged 147K tweets per minute during #PepsiHalftimeShow. #Coldplay, 83K. Bruno Mars, 28K (28TW16)*. A *Read It* pin in Pinterest highlights Beyoncé’s mental strength and strength as a woman with the caption *33 of the Most Badass Beyoncé Quotes* and with the attached visual of a photo of Beyoncé on stage performing with the text *Make sure you have your own life before becoming someone else’s wife – Beyonce [sic]* superimposed over the picture (528PIN20). A final realization of this primary meaning category is Bey positioned as a muse for a work of art, most often fan art; these posts feature user-created visual representations inspired by, and representing, visual interpretations of Beyoncé. Figure 20 illustrates an example of Beyoncé fan art; here, the artist rendered a drawing of Bey based on a scene in her *Lemonade* visual album. The text, *Yes*, below the photo functions inter-semiotically to demonstrate the positive evaluation of the image (28TUM10). 12% of the data demonstrates Bey’s personality and character identities.



Figure 20. A post of Beyoncé fan art (28TUM10).

Appearance identities. In this category of primary meaning, which constitutes 11% of the data, the primary focus is on Beyoncé's physical appearance, through her beauty, fashion, clothes, makeup, hair, and other bodily characteristics. These identities predominate in Pinterest and in visual modes. For example, Figure 21 highlights Beyoncé's beauty, glamour, and fashion. A Tumblr user utilizes linguistic text to frame Beyoncé's identity with respect to her fashion. They comment, *c'est tres chic, no? MJ to Bey Slay. You saw it, that MJ throwback superbowl outfit Bey wore last night. So, what do you think? Did it slay?* and then link this to their blog where users may respond and comment on Beyoncé's fashion. Here, instead of topicalizing Beyoncé's Super Bowl performance, this user highlights Bey's outfit. Beginning with French translanguaging, the user starts by questioning for their audience's evaluation of Beyoncé's outfit, asking if it was fashionable, before then moving to *MJ*, or Michael Jackson and Beyoncé. With *MJ to Bey Slay*, the user is linking both Michael Jackson and Beyoncé's in their fashion dominance with the lexical item *slay*. Then using the personal pronoun *you* to the audience, the poster implies that the audience saw Beyoncé's performance and her outfit, which, as an *MJ throwback*, took inspiration from, and paid visual reference to, Michael Jackson's Super Bowl performance look (for example, they both work black jackets with criss-crossed bullet ammunition belts). The post then continues to evoke the audience's evaluation of Bey's outfit, ending with their ultimate evaluation, *Did it slay?*. Beyoncé's outfit becomes a synecdoche for her; her identity is appearance-based.



Beyoncé attends The 58th GRAMMY Awards at Staples Center on...

Figure 21. Appearance identity (28PIN05).

Political identities. In this section of primary meaning, Beyoncé is constructed in a political-based identity. These meanings reference Beyoncé as a feminist, as pro-Black or in connection with Blackness, Black issues, Black women, Black movements, and/or in reference to social justice issues. A Twitter user addresses several of these identities, saying *They're mad cuz #Beyonce is speaking out on real issues instead of being a "good girl" and just shaking her a\$\$?* (28TW20), while another tweet linguistically frames a link to an Instagram picture of Beyoncé's dancers and mother at the Super Bowl with raised fists with *Just because this is #blackgirlmagic #Formation #Beyonce #Superbowl yassssss* (28TW50). In the first tweet, Beyoncé is discursively framed as going against the traditional associations of women, generally, and black women, specifically, as not simply serving as a the "good" commodified or sexualized object of male gaze (hooks, 1992) by *being a "good girl" and just shaking her ass*. Instead, Beyoncé is making "them" *mad by speaking out on real issues* related to both race and gender justice. The user also challenges the sexist infantilizing appellation of women as *girls* (Hardman, 1993) in

that Beyoncé is not just *being a “good girl”*; the adverbial *instead* juxtaposes this appellation with an agentive Beyoncé *speaking on real issues*. For many reasons, in this user’s text Beyoncé is challenging gendered and racialized hegemonic expectations of Black women’s behavior; this presents Beyoncé’s political identity.

The second tweet includes a multimodal example of Beyoncé’s political identity. In this case, the user utilizes text to contextualize a link; the intersemiotic relationship requires the linguistic text of the tweet, the link itself, and the visual content of the attached Instagram photo, accessible via the link, for full understanding of Beyoncé’s political identity. The photo shows a picture of Beyoncé’s dancers and mother with fists raised in the air, a visual representation of Black power and pro-black solidarity. In addition, the dancers, dressed in all black, with natural hair and covered bodies, visually intertextual reference the women and men of the Black panthers; their natural hair, non-smiling faces, and non-sexualization underscores agentive blackness as opposed to colonized beauty, and Black female agency as opposed to the white supremacist and hypersexualized male objectification of Black women (hooks, 1992; Noble, 2013). One dancer was holding a sign, reading *Justice 4 Mario Woods*, a Black male victim shot by police. The text of the tweet elaborates the visual content with the hashtag *#blackgirlmagic*, a hashtag used to celebrate and positively affirm the experiences and contributes of Black women and girls. The user draws Beyoncé into the semantic association with *#Beyonce* [sic], *#Formation*, and *#Superbowl*, while simultaneously localizing and contextualizing the setting of the photo. The user ends with the positively evaluative stance marker *yassssss*, summarizing both the content of the Instagram image and the link to Beyoncé’s Super Bowl performance of Formation. In this instance, this political identity of Beyoncé is interdiscursively and intertextually linked, both visually, linguistically, and inter-semiotically, to several contemporary

social and political activist movements; Beyoncé's political identity here connects to the Black Lives Matter movement (in the sign for *Mario Woods*), to *#blackgirlmagic*, and to the Black Panthers movement while also involving other Black women directly associated with Beyoncé, as well, such as Beyoncé's mother and dancers.

The only reference to racial identity in Pinterest occurs in the intersemiotic relationship between the linguistic text and image in Figure 22. Here, a still from Beyoncé's visual album is captioned with linguistic text in a variety of African American English (AAE), as well as AAE ST, *Bey was black, Bey is black; Bey gon' stay black til she die...#BeyBeBlack*. This pin contains an image of Beyoncé from her *Lemonade* album with visuals that underscore natural black beauty, black women's agency, and decolonized black love (Eric-Udorie, 2016); it also shows Beyoncé as an agentive visual subject, gazing at, and thus positioning, the viewer as a visual object. The text in AAE simultaneously summarizes the content of the attached hyperlinked article, saying that Beyoncé is a black artist, has been a black artist, will be a black artist until she dies, and is/has been habitually a black artist with *#BeyBeBlack*, and also serves inter-semiotically to intensify the black agency and identity presented in the image. In response to cultural backlash of the Super Bowl, epitomized by Saturday Night Live clip "The Day Beyoncé Turned Black" that presented Beyoncé's attention to black issues as then new cultural phenomenon, this article counters with the assertion that Beyoncé as always been connected to, and conscious of, black issues and blackness. The article makes the argument that Beyoncé has *always* represented her black identity through her lyrics, song content, artistry, and the intertextual references to blackness throughout her career; the pin extends the more overt representation of Blackness in *Lemonade* to all of Beyoncé's work, and thus, her political

identity, as well. (I discuss and analyze this pin in further detail on pp.182-3). 10% of all the primary meanings fall into this political meaning category.



Figure 22. Political identity (28PIN33).

Creative identities. This category of meaning, which comprises 8% of the primary meanings in the data set, discursively constructs Beyoncé with respect to her creative and artistic processes. In other words, this category can be interpreted as Bey’s X, where X stands for lyrics, songs, music, and videos. A common post type in this category is written-text based visual posts displaying Bey’s lyrics, or quote posts in Tumblr, as seen in Figure 23. Here, the user quotes a Beyoncé song directly; her identity relates to this quote and to her infectious lyrical ability.

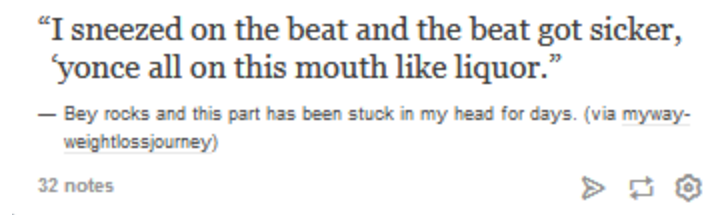


Figure 23. Creative identity (528TUM30).

Relational identities. This primary meaning category discursively constructs Beyoncé through her relationships with others. Most often, this is realized by linguistic and visual

representations of Beyoncé as a mother, wife, daughter, and/or sister; visually, these images always involve Beyoncé as one of the participants along with her related family member. This photo post from Tumblr shows Beyoncé as a mother, with her daughter Blue Ivy, seen in Figure 24. Other examples, in this category of 7% of Beyoncé’s primary meanings, include Beyoncé pictured with her husband, Jay Z, or with her father, mother, and/or sister.



Figure 24. Relational identity (528TUM07).

Remix identities. This primary meaning category, that comprises 4% of Beyoncé’s meanings, remixes images of Beyoncé to create new forms. That is, similar to digital identities, this identity category is evident of digital discourse practices in SNS. Examples of remix identities include memes and GIFs that incorporate Beyoncé as part of the visual and/or linguistic content. Figure 25 illustrates a remix identity in the form a meme where an image of Beyoncé is combined with an image of life coach Iyanla Vanzant with text as its header.

me when ppl tell me they're going through something vs when i tell people i'm going through something



20,807 notes



Figure 25. Remix identity (528TUM22).

Evaluative identities. As a primary meaning category, this set of meanings occurs exclusively in Twitter and accounts for 3% of the primary meaning in the dataset. In these instances, Beyoncé's meaning is framed through either a positive or negative evaluation of her; the posts focus more on expressing user opinions and ideas about Beyoncé as she becomes a recipient of praise and admiration or of derision or disapproval. Examples include *I don't want to hear anymore about that glorified Karaoke singer #Beyonce [sic]* (28TW34) and *So over you #Beyoncé. And you almost fell* (28TW41). This latter tweet references Beyoncé's Super Bowl performance of Formation, albeit indirectly. The user is expressing a negative stance toward Beyoncé with *So over you #Beyoncé*, in which the ST serves as the direct object of the stance expression and simultaneously marks Bey as the recipient of the negative evaluation, or the addressee. The user then adds *And you almost fell*, referring to Beyoncé's slip while dancing during the performance, using this imperfection while performing to emphasize and further justify their negative evaluation of Beyoncé. Both tweets occurred in the data set of tweets from the date after the Super Bowl.

Other examples contrast with positive evaluations. For example, one user tweets *I was in pure bliss yesterday #Beyoncé #FormationWorldTour* (528TW21). In this example, the Twitter

user presents their stance toward Beyoncé and her Formation World Tour performance with the positive assessment of *pure bliss*.

Economic identities. In a small amount of primary meaning data, 2%, Beyoncé's meaning is primarily economic. She is framed as either *rich, a millionaire/billionaire*, or as a *capitalist*. A post from Tumblr captions a photo of Beyoncé with *From eleven reported dates, the tour has grossed \$61,543,395 and has been attended by 479,984/479,984 (100%) people*¹¹ (528TUM49). A tweet links to a news article about rental property that Beyoncé allegedly rented with the text *Chilling at los altos mansion #Beyonce [sic] spent 10,000* (28TW07) serving to contextualize and summarize the content of the link. In this example, the user illustrates Beyoncé's wealth. The tweet argues that while in California for her Super Bowl 50 performance, Beyoncé rented a mansion for \$10,000 a night in Los Altos, California, a site of multimillion dollar homes for the economic elite. The Twitter user utilizes the verb *chilling* to underscore Beyoncé's lack of concern – and thus her financial ease – about spending thousands of dollars for a rental property stay.

A different tweet also exemplifies, saying *My "I can't argue about #Beyoncé and #capitalism anymore with people who refuse to do the work"...* (28TW03) to contextualize the user's attached link to Instagram and the Instagram photo that appears when following the link. The user eventually made their photo private; however, their text indicates a common practice of using language inter-semiotically to explain and clarify the context of the photo accessible via the attached hyperlink. In this instance, the user's expression is motivated by her frustration with a continued argument about Beyoncé, generally, and her capitalism, specifically; both are marked with *#Beyoncé* and *#capitalism*. Her frustration derives from the adjunct phrase, *with*

¹¹ This example represents one of the posts that I have dually coded and categorized for primary meaning; it illustrates both economic and performance primary meaning categories.

people who refuse to do the work, insinuating that her arguments have been ignored or have not been listened to; in other words, people are unwilling, unable, or have not put in the effort (*they have refused to do the work*) to understand and reconsider a position on Beyoncé and capitalism. This tweet positions Beyoncé within a discussion of capitalism; it illustrates Beyoncé's economic identity.

Athletic identities. For this primary meaning category, Beyoncé is referenced as a dancer, athlete, fighter, and participant in sports (as an athlete or fan). This meaning is exclusively in Pinterest and is visually expressed. Figure 26 illustrates an example of Beyoncé in dance attire in a dance studio; she is also wearing her clothing from her athletic clothing line, Ivy Park, and poses in visual intertextual reference to the dancer in the 1980s movie *Flashdance*. Other examples include Beyoncé visually represented as a boxer, basketball player, and dancer, again. Athletic identities account for 2% of primary meanings.



Figure 26. Athletic identity (528PIN41).

Celebrity identities. This category of primary meaning projects Beyoncé as a celebrity with a semiotic reference to her fame and stardom. 1% of the data falls into this meaning category. An example from Pinterest elucidates in Figure 27; here, the image of Beyoncé at the

Grammy awards interacts with the linguistic caption *Beyoncé presents the Record of the Year GRAMMY to Bruno Mars*. Grammy award presenters, particularly for Record of the Year, are often multiple Grammy award winners themselves and are publically well known for their musical fame and stardom.



Figure 27. Celebrity identity (2PIN38).

Hegemonically-framed identities. The final primary meaning category, representing 1% of the data, is hegemonically-framed identities. This category is exclusive of Twitter; these tweets all frame Beyoncé through hegemonic stances that run counter to either Beyoncé's assertions about her own identities (that Beyoncé is anti-police) or frame Beyoncé through discourses that are theoretically impossible according to feminist and critical race theories (that Beyoncé is racist against white people). This example includes both sentiments, saying *#BlueLivesMatter #Beyonce [sic] is a bigoted, hate-filled, #racist billionaire* (28TW05). The first sentiment, that Bey is anti-police, is framed with the ST *#BlueLivesMatter*, a hashtag created in juxtaposition to the hashtag (and accompanying d/Discourses of) *#BlackLivesMatter*, that argues for the importance of police lives and potential police victimization. Both Gee (2014) and Halliday (1994) would argue the importance of the position of the ST with respect to the rest of the tweet. For Gee (2014), *#BlueLivesMatter* is the theme, or given information, in

the tweet, which serves as the point of departure for the message, the frame of interpretation for the clause, and that which orients the listener about that which is to be communicated. Similarly, Halliday (1994) would argue that this position within the tweet illustrates textual meaning, and, like Gee (2014), would underscore the importance of the given, or taken-for-granted textual orientation provided by this type of meaning. This framing and orientation allows for the second sentiment, that Beyoncé is racist, to appear as topicalized, important, and new information (in other words, the rheme), while Bey being anti-cop is taken-for-granted and assumed by this clausal organization. The rheme, or new information, of Beyoncé's racism, marked by *#racist*, is then exacerbated by the lexical items *bigoted* and *hate-filled*.

The tweet *#Beyonce running around screeching about #BlackLivesMatter BS. "Hands Up." Waa Waa Waa. Disgusting bigot (28TW44)* also presents both of these counter hegemonically-framed identities of Beyoncé, albeit slightly differently. In this tweet, the given, taken-for-granted information, is Beyoncé's connection to *#BlackLivesMatter*, the social movement drawing attention to police violence towards Black Americans. The Twitter user first negatively frames Beyoncé with the negative association of *screeching*, suggesting that she is not talking or singing about issues, but that, like an animal, she is just *screeching*, or making noise. This noise is the *BS*, or the expletive *bullshit* of the *BlackLivesMatter* movement. The user continues with the quote "*Hands Up*", an expression used by police officers to mock Beyoncé's position. This derisive mocking then continues with a sarcastic infantilization, *waa, waa, waa*, projecting Beyoncé again as making noise, but this time crying like a child. These discursive and textual strategies all accentuate Beyoncé's alleged anti-cop position according to this user. The user then ends with the rheme, or new information, calling Beyoncé a *bigot*, intensified with the adjective, *disgusting*. Beyoncé's racism is thus textually connected to her underlying alleged

anti-cop sentiments. In both tweets, two trends emerge: they both contain strongly and highly explicitly negative lexical items, such as *bigoted*, *bigot*, *disgusting*, *screeching*, *BS*, *hate-filled*, and *racist*, and they both rely heavily on textual information and meanings expressed via clause structures, such as given vs. new or theme vs. rheme. This latter trend may relate to the fact that this category of tweets utilizes only the linguistic (textual) mode for its tweets, so the organization and structure of such tweets becomes critically important for expressing meanings that other posts may express through alternate modes.

Secondary meanings. While my foremost focus for RQ 1 is primary meanings of Beyoncé, to aid in my macro-analysis of gender and power (RQ4), I also examined secondary meanings of Bey. To reiterate my definition from above, I operationalized secondary meanings as those that are implicit, implied, of singular reference or occurrence, and/or optional, analogous to linguistic adjuncts in formal syntax. For images alone, without linguistic text, I utilized Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) consideration of either action processes or representation of Beyoncé in images, related to notions of what participants in images are doing or what attributes they are possessing. For secondary meanings, I coded for more than one secondary meaning per post when more than one secondary meaning was present in the post data; this trend occurred across all three SNS. In Twitter, however, in some instances no secondary meanings occurred in given posts and post meanings were subsumed entirely by primary meaning codes. As a result, with respect to secondary meaning, there are very unequal sizes of meaning categories: 163 in Tumblr, 121 in Pinterest, and 85 in Twitter.

The variation in secondary meaning frequencies seems to relate directly to the varying affordances and limitations of each site. In Tumblr, there are no character limits, as well as the potential of various multimodal options, allowing for multiple simultaneous meanings. In

Pinterest, like in Tumblr, because of the predominance of the visual modality in conjunction with linguistic text, multiple secondary meanings are also expressed. This is due to either the possibility of dual modes of expression and/or to the various potential intersemiotic relationships between modes. Intersemiotic relations refer to interactions between meanings and modes in a given multimodal ensemble (in this project, a given SNS post) that often result in polysemous interpretations. For example, the visual meanings of a multimodal ensemble may support, supplement, diverge, and/or contradict the meanings of the linguistic mode; both Martinec and Salway's (2005) argument that linguistic text can serve to elaborate, extend, or enhance the meaning of images, or Jewitt's (1997) finding that images and texts expressed completely different meanings to readers of pamphlets on sexual health, exemplify intersemiotic meaning potentials. Twitter, on the other hand, is primarily language based and limits posts to 140 characters (or did, at the time of collection). This condensed linguistic mode may account for the fewer realizations of polysemy, or multiple secondary codes for a given Twitter tweet.

In total, the same meaning categories emerged for secondary meanings as did for primary meanings. The categories and frequencies of secondary meanings are displayed in Table 3. There is one major difference compared to primary meaning categories, however. That is, the orders of categories by frequency changed; the order of primary meanings, therefore, varies from that of secondary orders. In order from most expressed secondary identities to least, these are: personality and character identities, performance identities, political identities, appearance identities, economic identities, creative identities, relational identities, evaluative identities, celebrity identities, remix identities, athletic identities, hegemonically-framed identities, and digital identities. 4 of the 5 most frequent secondary meaning categories, (**personality and character, performance, political, appearance**, and economic identities), are shared with top 5

Table 3.

Secondary Meanings of Beyoncé across SNS

<u>Category</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Personality and Character Identities	70	19%
Performance Identities	63	17%
Political Identities	56	15%
Appearance Identities	40	11%
Economic Identities	34	9%
Creative Identities	24	6%
Relational Identities	22	6%
Evaluative Identities	17	5%
Celebrity Identities	15	4%
Remix Identities	13	3%
Athletic Identities	10	3%
Digital Identities	2	1%
Hegemonically-Framed Identities	3	1%
	369	100%

most frequent meaning categories for primary meanings, (**performance**, digital, **personality and character**, **appearance**, and **political** identities), albeit in different frequencies. The first difference is that digital meanings accounted for the second most frequent primary meaning category (17%), whereas this category ties with hegemonically-framed identities for least frequent secondary meanings (both at 1%). This most likely corresponds to the fact that the

digital deictic aspects of a post are established through primary meanings, and therefore the majority of secondary meanings relate to more semantically-based Beyoncé meaning connections. This would suggest that digital **functions** related to how Beyoncé is *used* are more common, fundamental, and primary in this dataset compared to what Beyoncé *means*. The second most frequent meaning for Beyoncé realizes her as a digital functional, rather than semantic, tool; entextualized meaning-based identities are second to Beyoncé's digital function, such that secondary meaning is attached to primary function, but secondary function is not attached to primary meaning. As a result, however, this allows for a different, and lesser primarily used, semantically-based identity of Beyoncé to emerge in the top 5 secondary meanings. Economic identities, at 9% of the secondary meaning data, comprises the 5th most frequent secondary meaning, while economic identities are 10th, comprising 1% of the primary meaning categories.

The other major difference is the change in order of frequency between performance and personality and character identities. Perhaps because performance identities are the most frequent primary meanings, personality and character arise as the most common secondary meanings. With political identities the third most common secondary meaning category, it seems that Beyoncé's personality and character, and political identities are interconnected to her performance identities. In other words, Beyoncé is a political performer with personality and character. Some other minor category trends are also noted; comparing secondary meanings to primary meaning frequencies, creative, remix, and relational identities decreased, while celebrity, economic, athletic, evaluative, and political identities increased. Table 4 shows the comparison of primary and secondary categories by frequency.

Table 4.

Comparison of Primary and Secondary Meanings of Beyoncé across SNS

<u>Category</u>	<u>Primary</u> <u>Meaning</u> <u>Count</u>	<u>Primary</u> <u>Meaning</u> <u>Percentage</u>	<u>Secondary</u> <u>Meaning</u> <u>Count</u>	<u>Secondary</u> <u>Meaning</u> <u>Percentage</u>
Performance Identities	70	22%	63	17%
Digital Identities	52	17%	2	1%
Personality and Character Identities	37	12%	70	19%
Appearance Identities	35	11%	40	11%
Political Identities	32	10%	56	15%
Creative Identities	24	8%	24	6%
Relational Identities	22	7%	22	6%
Remix Identities	12	4%	13	3%
Evaluative Identities	11	3%	17	5%
Athletic Identities	7	2%	10	3%
Economic Identities	5	2%	34	9%
Celebrity Identities	4	1%	15	4%
Hegemonically-Framed Identities	4	1%	3	1%
	100	100%	369	100%

So far I have examined the 13 identity-based meaning categories of Beyoncé realized as both primary and secondary meanings. I now move to the sub-question of RQ1 to explore one aspect of visual meaning making, visual positioning, or gaze, in Beyoncé images.

RQ1a - In images of Beyoncé, how is Beyoncé visually positioned in such posts? For this sub-RQ I examined all visual images of Beyoncé that were photos. I did not analyze fan art, memes, GIFS, or video. As mentioned in the previous chapter, for this analysis, I coded deductively based on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) classification of visual contact in a photo, which establishes the relationship between the represented participant(s) in a photo and the viewer as a site of viewer-represented participant interactivity in visual communication. In other words, visual contact or lack thereof positions both the viewer and the participant(s) in image acts. More specifically, I analyzed images of Beyoncé in Kress and van Leeuwen's image act structure, coding for whether Beyoncé communicates visually as a visual subject in a demand image act, or as a visual object in an offer image act. In demand image acts, some sort of contact is made by the represented participant and the viewer, usually through the participant's direct gaze (but also by certain gestures) whereby the participant enters into an imaginary relationship with the viewer; because the participant does something to the viewer, the viewer becomes the object of the demand image act and the participant is the visual subject. Given the analogy of speech acts to image acts, this type of contact functions as a type of visual direct address to the viewer (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006). In contrast, in offer image acts, there is no contact made between the viewer and the participant, either with gesture or gaze. In such instances, the participant is the object of the viewer's scrutiny, the object of the viewer's impersonal contemplation, and the visual object of the offer image act (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). The viewer, as invisible onlooker, indirectly addresses the participant as the visual subject of the image act. An example of Beyoncé as a visual subject in a demand image act is and of Beyoncé as a visual object in an offer image act is displayed in Figure 28.



Beyoncé behind-the-scenes photos from her Superbowl 50...



Beyoncé performs onstage during the Pepsi Super Bowl 50...

Figure 28. Beyoncé in an offer image act (2PIN13) and a demand image act (2PIN01).

Figure 28 demonstrates the two different types of visual contact made between Beyoncé, the represented participant in the image, and the viewer of the image that work to establish visual looking relationships through visual structural forms. Similarly to the way that the syntactic structure of word order in the English sentences *Mika loves Khani* versus *Khani loves Mika* determine who is the one doing the loving (the grammatical subject) and whom is the one being loved (the grammatical object), the visual element of represented participant gaze – in this case, Beyoncé’s gaze – determines visual subject and visual object roles. While analogous in that the subject/object relations both linguistically and visually determine the roles of participants in each given mode, the primary difference between the visual and linguistic modes is that in visual modalities the subject/object relations determine the viewing path that the viewer takes when interacting with the image. This viewing path encodes more than grammatical subject and object relationships, as it also indirectly construes relationships that fall under the domain of pragmatics in linguistic studies. That is, visual contact (or lack thereof) from the represented participant also

establishes image act relationships (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006); like speech acts, these image promises and vows), visual expressives (e.g., greeting and apologizing), and visual representatives (e.g., asserting and suggesting) and also simultaneously mark the directness or indirectness of the image act itself (compare directness, for example, these directive speech acts *Shut the door!* versus *Would you mind closing the door?*). Other visual elements of the image serve to enhance the nuances of such image acts.

In Figure 28, in 2PIN13, Beyoncé is positioned as the visual object of the image due to her lack of direct contact, via gaze or gesture, with the viewer. The interaction between Beyoncé and the viewer is one where Beyoncé is the visual object of the viewer's scrutiny; the viewing path is determined by the viewer, and not by Beyoncé herself. She clapping and smiling while her eyes are barely open; her face, hands, and microphone are centralizing elements of additional meaning in the image, showing a happy, performing, and appreciative (clapping) Beyoncé. The caption serves as an intersemiotic mirror to elaborate and extend this sentiment, *Beyoncé* [sic] *behind-the-scenes photos from her Superbowl 50...* does not even contain a verb, but positions Beyoncé as the linguistic subject of an existential phrase, highlighting not what Beyoncé **does** (an agentive role), but rather what Beyoncé **is** (an existential role). The adjunct *behind-the-scenes* emphasizes and further reinforces the viewer's visual agency and Beyoncé's visual object position, implying a furtive glimpse of Beyoncé in which she may be unaware that she is positioning herself as the object of the view or is doing so unintentionally.

In contrast, in 2PIN01, Beyoncé's direct gaze, peace sign gesture, and duck face (a simulated kissing-type face with lips pursed and cheeks sucked in, that originated in the genre of digital selfies) positions Beyoncé in the visual subject position. She issues the visual expressive speech act, visually greeting the viewer, and in doing so, she directs the viewer's interactive

path; the viewer is the visual object, and recipient, of the greeting. In this image act, the agentive visual subject Beyoncé constructs the reader in a visual object position, like an objective *you* in linguistic discourse. The peace sign gestures intensifies Beyoncé's visual illocutionary force, (i.e., it strengthens the intentions), of her expressive image act (Searle & Vanderveken, 2009). The use of duck face is a visual feature typical of the personal media genre of the selfie (Rudder, 2010; Veum & Undrum, 2018) that carries its own visual illocutionary force within the selfie genre. For example, Rudder (2010) analyzed over 7,000 user profile pictures of heterosexual users of the online dating platform and SNS OKCupid and correlated aspects of profile images with amounts of new monthly contacts as a way to operationalize the effects of profile images on account activity. Rudder (2010) argued that that women used duck face more than 50% more than men did, but that men responded more positively to duck face with direct eye contact than any other type of facial gesture by women, including smiling; women received the most responses and messages from men when their profile pictures showed them "flirting" directly into the camera with a duck face facial expression. Veum and Undrum (2018) assert that selfies are emerging as a type of global discourse genre; in this public image of Beyoncé, she visually interdiscursively draws from the semiotics of the selfies as both personal media and global discourse genres. As Veum and Undrum (2018) argue, the demand image acts of selfies are not only acts of self-presentation, but also invitations to interact (p.95). This implies that while positioning herself as a visual subject inviting interaction with the viewer, Beyoncé nonetheless does so in ways that are judged to be most responsive by men (at least in one type of SNS platform) (Rudder, 2010). I will elaborate about this phenomenon further in RQ 4; however, women's subjectivities and agency in SNS often co-exists with other discursive forces that condition, evaluate, and even deride such subjectivities and agency. Marwick's (2014) discussion

of how blogger Julia Allison’s strategically “feminine” persona in SNS garnered such negative attention illustrates the potential complexity of female agency in SNS; in presenting her own self-sexualization and “femininity” on her own terms, she failed to function within the discursive rules of the deeply gendered context of SNS that privileges “masculine” (agentive) behaviors and closely polices female self-presentation (p.60). Hence, negativity resulted. Here, for example, Bey is an agentive visual subject with duckface, but duckface may possibly be conditioned in photos for its positive evaluation by men, as a type of male-conditioned agency (Sayers, 2002). SNS generally, and images therein, specifically, can both reflect and produce normative gender (Marwick, 2014, p.60).

Across the data set of applicable Beyoncé images, Beyoncé appeared in offer image acts more than half of the time, for a total of 77, or 60% of the images; this outnumbered her appearance in demand image acts, which constituted 40% of the image act data at 51 occurrences. Table 5 summarizes these results. To answer this sub-RQ, therefore, Beyoncé is positioned 60% of the time as a visual object and of the viewer’s scrutiny, while 40% of the time Beyoncé is positioned as a visual subject while the viewer is realized as the visual object.

Table 5.

Types of Images Acts in Beyoncé Images across SNS

<u>Category</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Offer Image Acts	77	60%
Demand Image Acts	51	40%
	128	100%

In conjunction with these visual subject and object positions, general meaning trends also emerged from the data. Table 6 illustrates the co-occurring meaning trends by offer image acts.

Table 6.

Meaning Co-Occurrence Frequencies in Offer Image Acts in Beyoncé Images by SNS

<u>SNS</u>	<u>Offer Image Acts</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percentage by SNS</u>
Pinterest	Relationships (mother, wife)	9	22%
	Performance (Super Bowl, Formation World Tour)	9	22%
	Appearance (sexualization, beauty)	7	17%
	Video & Visual Albums (<i>Lemonade</i> , music videos)	6	15%
	Motivational (Bey quotes)	5	12%
	Athletics (dancing, Ivy Park)	3	7%
	Other (Grammies, Bey as art)	2	5%
		41	100%
Tumblr	Performance (Super Bowl, Formation World Tour)	16	59%
	Relationships (mother, wife, daughter)	6	22%
	Appearance (celebrity dress, outfit, sexualization)	5	19%
		27	100%
Twitter	Performance (Super Bowl, Formation World Tour)	6	67%
	Celebrity (Comparisons to MJ, BC)	2	22%
	Video & Visual Albums (<i>Lemonade</i> , music videos)	1	11%
		9	100%

For these trends I examined offer image acts and demand image acts in conjunction with both primary and secondary meanings expressed in each multimodal ensemble in order to explore what other meanings get communicated in the visual representations of Beyoncé as a visual subject versus an object. It is important to note the importance of subject versus object positions in feminine linguistic theory that I apply to aid this analysis; such theorists posit that subjects are active, while objects are passive, and discursive subjects are historically white men, while discursive objects are often women and men of color (Hardman, 1993).

The first trend is that overall there are more meanings expressed in offer image acts when Beyoncé is positioned in a visual object position as the subject of viewer scrutiny. That is, viewers are visual subjects over Beyoncé's visual objectification in the following situations: (1) Beyoncé's performances at Super Bowl 50 and on her Formation World Tour, (2) her relationships expressed with visuals of her with her daughter, Blue Ivy, husband, Jay-Z, father, mother, and sister, (3) her beauty, clothing, and sexualized body, (4) still images of her from her music videos and visual albums, (5) as part of a motivational image superimposed with written text quoting her, (6) as an athlete and dancer, most often wearing Ivy Park, her self-designed leisure wear, (7) in comparison with other celebrities, such as Michael Jackson and comic book character Black Canary, and (8) in other disparate situations. In Pinterest, the most visually-heavy SNS, 7 different meanings co-occur with offer image acts; in both Tumblr and Twitter 3 different meanings co-occur.

The most frequent co-occurring meaning (40% of all meanings) when Beyoncé appears as a visual object is related to her performances; in these visuals, the viewing relationship of an agentive viewer observing Beyoncé almost always invokes the *behind-the-scenes* framing discussed earlier and displayed in Figure 28 in 2PIN13. This illustrates an interconnection

between agency and objectification, as images related to Beyoncé's occupational agency (as a performer) actually position her as a visual object. This occurs with still images taken from her music videos and visual albums; these stills often invoke strong blackness, female, and Black female agency in their intertextual references (for example, natural hair, visual references to African female Gods, and decolonized, re-appropriated images of African slavery typical in the *Lemonade* visual album), but position Beyoncé in the still image as an object of viewer scrutiny. Her agency is visually intertextually and interdiscursively constructed, and not constructed by the interactive viewing relationship between her as a represented participant and the viewer.

Some trends of Beyoncé as a visual object in offer image acts seem to reproduce traditional, heteronormative, gendered roles expected of women (Marwick, 2014), but do so in complex and contradictory ways. That is, just as the images discussed above construct an intertextually and interdiscursively agentive Beyoncé in a visual object position, these trends also present roles that both express agency and objectification. Rahman (2008) discusses a linguistic "push and pull" that African Americans feel when making language choices between varieties of AAVE and Standard American English (SAE); this "push and pull" arises due to the hegemonic role of SAE perpetuated by standard and establishment language ideologies co-existing with the stigmatized, yet covertly prestigious and solidarity-marking importance of AAVE. There seems to be an analogous visual push-and-pull between agency and objectification in this data, in which white supremacist objective gendered roles co-exist with decolonized, agentive gendered roles reproduced in oppositional gaze (1992). For example, another *behind-the-scenes* framing occurs when Beyoncé occurs with members of her family, as if her visual objectification allows viewers scrutiny of, and access to, her "personal" life and her relationships. Beyoncé's agency is not foregrounded in such images, but her relationships are; relational and emotional work has often

been the stigmatized discursive domain of women (Tannen, 1991). However, relationships are also critical component to the interconnectedness of women of color in Black feminisms (Hill Collins, 2007), and relationships among black women, women of color, and marginalized members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Questioning/Queer (LGBTQ) communities is a central theme of Beyoncé's visual album, *Lemonade*.

Another push and pull situation emerges with the use of Beyoncé offer image acts as motivational tools in Pinterest. Here, images of Beyoncé as a visual object are superimposed with text quoting Beyoncé's words *Make sure you have your own life before becoming someone else's wife – Beyonce [sic]* (as shown in Figure 29); 12% of the offer image acts contain these



Figure 29. Pin displaying Beyoncé in a motivational offer image act (528PIN20).

multimodal visual ensembles of images overlaid with quotes. In each case, Beyoncé appears as an image of viewer scrutiny as a visual object in images that highlight her performance or appearance that seem to present her as visually passive; however, simultaneously, the intersemiotic relationship of the layered text contradicts this passivity with at least the use of Beyoncé's own words and voice as a thinking agent. In the example above, female agency is further underscored by Bey's suggestion for someone to *have your [their] own life* before committing to someone else.

Beyoncé positioned as a visual object in offer image acts also interacts with her presentation of athletic identities and meanings. In such examples, Bey appears as a dancer, boxer, athlete, and basketball player; all of these roles are semiotically agentic and emphasize what Beyoncé does, rather than who she is or how she appears, despite her visual positioning as an object. In these examples, however, Beyoncé is wearing Ivy Park athletic wear, her self-designed clothing line and company, so this appearance-based aspect of her identity may relate to this clothing and the desire to sell, and advertise, these products. Veum and Undrum (2018) discuss how advertising styles have been applied to Instagram users' own selfies such that the visual style of advertising has infiltrated from the advertising to the selfie genre (p.98). It seems that an analogous process is at work here in this category of image acts; Beyoncé is positioned as an visual object of viewer scrutiny, but that scrutiny involves examining Bey's clothing and seeing Ivy Park gear. Beyoncé is visually intertextually linked to athletic agency by wearing dance shoes, being positioned in a dance studio, wearing boxing gloves, and sitting on a basketball hoop; this agency is necessary to underscore the commercial importance of the Ivy Park line as suitable for such athletic and physically mobile activities. However, simultaneously, Beyoncé's status as an object here is required to invoke the element of visual viewer agency to examine the clothing as if it were part of a visual advertisement; Beyoncé's subtle entrepreneurial agency is highlighted by her appearing as a visual object. This again is reminiscent of Marwick's (2014) discussion of blogger Julia Allison who broke socionormative discursive rules; I argue, however, that because Beyoncé is still remaining visually constructed in a traditionally feminine realm (as an visual object and potential consumer (Van Zoonen, 2001) of the Ivy Park line, which she created) she receives less negative attention than Allison.

In 18% of the offer image acts, Beyoncé co-occurs with meanings and visual elements that emphasize her appearance, beauty, fashion, makeup, and sexualized body, or how her body and fashion compare with other celebrities, such as Michael Jackson (MJ) and comic book character Black Canary. All of these elements seem to have a representational element in common, whereby Beyoncé's lack of direct gaze presents her as a carrier of attributes, such as fashion, clothes, and beauty; some examples in Pinterest include linguistic text that discusses Bey's body as *curvy* or *skinny*, or focuses on her *casual fashion*, while in Tumblr the emphasis is often on her clothing or outfit, such as a specific dress, or on the perceived sexuality of Bey's body in an image that shows part of her cleavage and bare skin. These meanings coincide with the traditional media representations of women's and black women's bodies as sexualized through male gaze and as defined through how they look for men (hooks, 1992). It also appears in the data that any overt comparisons between Beyoncé and others, such as the references to MJ and Black Canary, position her as a visual object, as if the agency of the viewer is required for analyzing the potential similarities and differences between Beyoncé and the juxtaposed other celebrity.

Trends in what other meanings are communicated with demand image acts also emerged in the data. These meanings are displayed in Table 7. First, only 6 categories of other meanings appeared in the data, compared to 8 for offer image acts; these include (1) video and visual references of Bey from her albums, (2) appearance-based references, (3) connections to Beyoncé's relationships, (4) representations of her performances, (5) meanings connected to her athletics, and (6) those related to other references (to art museums, for example). The visually-based SNS Pinterest contained 5 of these meanings (only missing *other*), which again, is to be expected in the highly polysemous environment of visual modes. Interestingly, while Twitter

and Pinterest decreased in their variety of meanings when Bey was positioned as a visual subject versus an object, Tumblr variety increased. This is not to say that Beyoncé is positioned more as

Table 7.

Meaning Co-Occurrence Frequencies in Demand Image Acts in Beyoncé Images by SNS

<u>SNS</u>	<u>Demand Image Acts</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percentage by SNS</u>
Pinterest	Video & Visual Albums (<i>Lemonade</i> , music videos)	13	37%
	Appearance (Sexual agency, beauty, fashion)	10	29%
	Relationships (mother, wife, group member)	5	14%
	Performance (Super Bowl, Formation World Tour)	4	11%
	Athletics (dancing, Ivy Park)	3	9%
		35	100%
Tumblr	Video & Visual Albums (<i>Lemonade</i> , music videos)	6	44%
	Performance (Super Bowl, Formation World Tour)	2	14%
	Relationships (mother, wife, daughter)	2	14%
	Appearance (celebrity dress, outfit, sexualization)	2	14%
	Art (Bey in art museums)	2	14%
		14	100%
Twitter	Performance (Super Bowl)	1	50%
	Video & Visual Albums (<i>Formation</i>)	1	50%
		2	100%

a visual subject in Tumblr than as a visual object; it suggests, however, a greater range of subject positions are available in Tumblr, which connects directly to other researchers' assumptions of the female friendly nature of Tumblr (Marwick, 2014; Connelly, 2015; Kanai, 2015), as well as the potential for expression of agency for marginalized groups within Tumblr (Attu & Terras, 2017).

The first meaning trend that co-occurs when Beyoncé is positioned as a visual subject who directs the gaze, and the viewing path, of the viewer as object, is the overwhelming amount of accompanying visual and linguistic references to Beyoncé's videos and visual albums. That is, in 39% (20 of 51) of all demand image acts, Beyoncé is a visual subject in a still image because Beyoncé was a visual subject in her artistic project of the still image's origin. That means that Beyoncé designed her videos by positioning herself as a visual subject, and thus the users who recontextualize her image are taking examples of Bey agency that she constructed herself. This exemplifies hooks' (1992) oppositional gaze, whereby the marginalized black woman interrogates the gaze of the Other and creates her own agentive image free of white supremacy and colonization; it also reproduces Bey's goal of presenting decolonized Black love (Eric-Udorie, 2016). This suggests that so many of the subject position images of Bey exist in SNS because Beyoncé created them herself.

A similar pattern exists with Beyoncé's visual subject position in occurrence with visual representations of her Super Bowl 50 and Formation World Tour performances (14% of the data), as well as with the coinciding 14% of data that presents Beyoncé's relationships. That is, these two meaning trends emphasize different aspects of Bey's agency in conjunction with her agency as a visual subject of a demand image act. In these examples, Beyoncé directs viewers to interact with her in a realm emphasizing her career and actions – her performances.

Additionally, Bey's direct gaze when pictured with family members and other black women (including Nicki Minaj, a fellow musical collaborator, and Kelly Rowland and Michelle Williams, her former bandmates, for example) further accentuate her connection to other black women and to her family. As I previously mentioned, without an intersectional view of women's roles, women's relational work has been socially stigmatized (Tannen, 1991); in black feminism, however, black women's relational work is critical, empowering, and essential to black women's emancipation (Hill Collins, 2007).

Ironically, emphasis on Beyoncé's appearances occurs more frequently when Bey is positioned as a visual subject rather than a visual object; these meanings account for 20% of the accompanying meanings of Beyoncé's demand image acts compared to 16% of Beyoncé's offer image act positionings. In both types of image acts, meanings related to Bey's fashion, beauty, and outfits are expressed; one critical difference, however, is that in demand image acts, Bey presents herself as a sexual agent rather than a sexualized object. For example, Bey's direct gaze dictates the viewer's path to her examining her body. On the one hand, this represents a decolonizing stance for a black woman to sexualize herself on her own terms (hooks, 1992; Noble, 2013). However, there is also the possibility, expressed by Veum and Undrum (2018), that such images, sharing features common to selfies, reflect the influence of ideologies of commercialism and consumerism in personal media choices. That is, they argue that advertising discourses are subtly creeping into our personal media "choices," such as selfies; in doing so, such discourses perpetuate ideologies that illustrate adherence to standards set by corporate advertisers and that spread the values and interests of global corporations instead of individual users (Veum & Undrum, 2018). Such practices of self-presentation and self-sexualization seem agentive, but users must also contend with the fact that they substitute social capital with a type

of corporeal capital through the process of self-commodification (Veum & Undrum, 2018). As a result, SNS users get a narrow impression of how young women should behave and look (Veum & Undrum, 2018, p.100), while women are commodifying themselves in practices that perpetuate their stereotype as consumers and shoppers (Van Zoonen, 2001). In any respect, at the very least the discourses of consumerism, decolonization, and self-sexualization permeate Beyoncé's visual subject position in co-occurrence with her appearance-based meanings.

To answer this research question and sub-research question, I have illustrated how there are 13 meaning categories for Beyoncé in my snapshot of SNS data. These categories realize different aspects of Beyoncé's discursively-constructed meanings and identities. These categories of identities relate to *who Beyoncé is*, such as those of personality and character and athleticism; *how she looks*, or her appearance identities; *what Beyoncé does*, including her performance, political, creative, celebrity, and economic identities; *how she connects to others*, with relational identities; and *identities related more to user practices*, such as non-Beyoncé related identities, hegemonically-framed identities, evaluative identities, and digital identities. Additionally, in connection with such meaning categories, Beyoncé is also positioned to communicate two types of visual roles in image acts: more often she is a visual object to an invisible viewer onlooker and visual subject, while Beyoncé positioned as a visual subject, casting the viewer as the visual object, is less frequent. More frequently, then, Beyoncé is an object of scrutiny and gaze rather than visual subject acting through gaze on the viewer; 60% of the time viewers have agency over Beyoncé, while 40% Beyoncé has agency over viewers. Finally, I have illustrated the meaning trends that are also communicated in visual representations of Beyoncé as a visual object versus Beyoncé as a visual subject.

Research Question Two

RQ2 – How do the meanings of Beyoncé differ across modes?

For this research question, I examined the connection between Beyoncé’s primary meaning categories and modes across all three SNS and all 300 posts. From the data, 4 major modes emerged: text only, text + link, visual (+/- text, or those with visuals only or visuals and text, but not links), and visual + links; in addition, 3 minor modes emerged, chat, quote, and video modes. I distinguish between major and minor modes in both frequency and affordance potential. For example, all major modes appeared in 15% or more of the data and in at least 2 of the 3 SNS platforms. For example, text + link posts are possible only in Tumblr and Twitter, and not in Pinterest; however, of the total data set, text + link posts constitute 20% of the modes in the entire data set. Minor modes combined appear 5% of the total data, and are relegated to only one platform. In the case of all three minor modes, chat, quote, and video modes, these all occur in Tumblr and relate directly to Tumblr-only platform affordances. The overall modal distribution across the data set, therefore, is as follows: visual (+/-text) modes are most frequent at 33% of the data, followed by visual + links at 27%, text + link at 20%, text only modes at 15%, and minor modes at 5%. Visual modalities occurred in 60% of the posts (excluding video modes, which contain a visual element but are not included in the analysis of this project), while links occurred in 47% of the post data set. In total, 80% of the posts are multimodal. Table 5 displays the modal frequencies.

I will next overview each of the major mode characteristics before considering minor modes. Then, I will compare and contrast the findings to answer RQ2.

Table 8.

Mode Frequencies in the Data

<u>Modalities</u>	<u>Percentage Total</u>
Visual +/- Text	33%
Visual + Link	27%
Text Only	15%
Text + Link	20%
Minor Modes	5%
TOTAL	100%

Text only mode. The first mode, occurring only in data from Twitter and Tumblr, represents posts that contain only linguistic text. In total, 15% of the data, or 45 posts, are text only. Figure 30 displays an example text only post from Twitter. With respect to meanings, 8



Figure 30. A text-only post from Twitter.

identities are realized this textual modality: performance identities, evaluative identities, political identities, personality and character identities, creative identities, hegemonically-framed identities, economic identities, and digital identities. Within the data set, this means that 5 types of identity are NOT expressed via text alone, and must utilize another modality for such expression, such as a hyperlink or a visual; these include remix identities, appearance identities, relational identities, athletic identities, and celebrity identities. The meaning frequencies are displayed in Table 9.

Table 9.

Primary Meanings of Beyoncé by Text Only Mode across SNS

<u>Meanings</u>	<u>Twitter</u>	<u>Tumblr</u>	<u>Pinterest</u>	<u>Total</u>
Performance Identities	8	3	n/a	11
Evaluative Identities	6	2	n/a	8
Political Identities	5	2	n/a	7
Personality and Character Identities	3	4	n/a	7
Creative Identities	2	4	n/a	6
Hegemonically-Framed Identities	4	0	n/a	4
Economic Identities	1	0	n/a	1
Digital Identities	0	1	n/a	1
	29	16	0	45
TOTAL PERCENT OF THE DATA				15%

Text + link modes. For this mode, the posts are composed with both linguistic text and a hyperlink or a tiny URL (a shortened version of a hyperlink used to conform to character limitations, utilized heavily in Twitter). Sometimes these links are realized by hyperlinks alone, while at other times a preview of the link appears in the body of the post. These modes only occur in Twitter and in Tumblr; in Tumblr they are either realized as a text post with a link embedded therein or as a link post with text commentary attached. The hyperlinks across both SNS connect to various external websites, including other SNS such as photo-sharing SNS Instagram, blogs, commerce sites, such as Ebay and Amazon, and online news, magazine, music, and gossip sites. In total, 20% of the data were text + link modes. An example of a text + link mode from Twitter is shown in Figure 31.

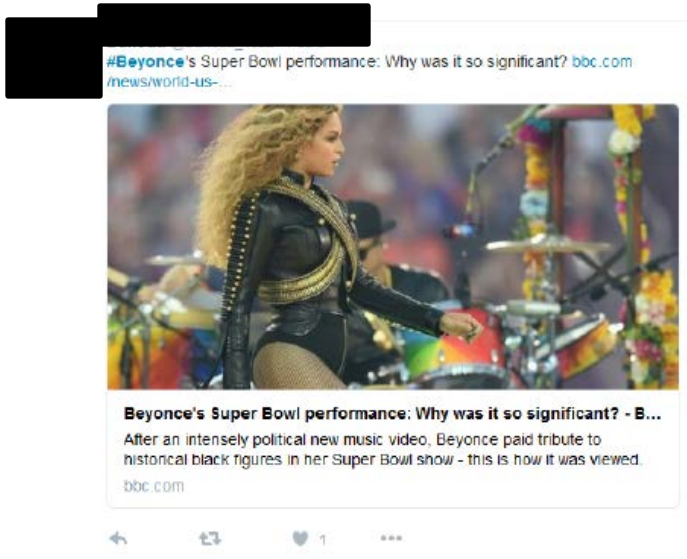


Figure 31. An example of a text + link mode from Twitter.

For the text + link mode, 9 of the 13 meaning categories emerged. These include digital identities, performance identities, political identities, personality and character identities, appearance identities, evaluative identities, creative identities, economic identities, and relational identities. Four meanings did NOT occur in the data: athletic, celebrity, remix, and hegemonically-framed identities. The fact that digital identities are most common in this modality connects directly to this categories' reliance on hyperlinking as digital discourse practice and the categorical emphasis on what users do with Beyoncé rather than on her meaning-based identity categories. The lack of athletic and remix identities, a feature shared with the text-only mode, suggests that athletic and remix identities require visual semiosis and a visual modality, while the absence of hegemonically-framed identities suggests that such meanings exist with text, and potentially text with images, but not in the text + hyperlink mode. Table 10 displays the distribution of text + link modes.

Table 10.

Primary Meanings of Beyoncé by Text + Link Mode across SNS

<u>Meanings</u>	<u>Twitter</u>	<u>Tumblr</u>	<u>Pinterest</u>	<u>Total</u>
Digital Identities	19	1	n/a	20
Performance Identities	10	4	n/a	14
Political Identities	7	3	n/a	10
Personality and Character Identities	4	2	n/a	6
Appearance Identities	2	1	n/a	3
Evaluative Identities	2	0	n/a	2
Creative Identities	2	0	n/a	2
Economic Identities	2	0	n/a	2
Relational Identities	0	2	n/a	2
	48	13	0	61
TOTAL PERCENT OF THE DATA				20%

Visual modes. The visual modes are posts that contain still images (and not moving images such as video or GIFs). Visual modes may occur with or without text (+/- text). Image only posts are found only in the SNS that allow such affordances, Tumblr and Pinterest. In Tumblr, these take the form of *Photo* posts, while in Pinterest they are the *Open* category; in both, the primary type of images are digital photographs, but other visuals, such as fan art, memes, and screenshots, are also present. Posts that combine both texts and visual elements can appear in all three SNS, and primarily also contain digital photos as their content, along with fan

art, memes, screenshots, and drawings. Visual (+/-) text modes account for the largest modal category in the data set at 33%. Figure 32 illustrates a visual (+/-) text mode from Pinterest.



Curvy vs Skinny

Figure 32. An example visual mode from Pinterest.

When examining the meanings of visual modes, 11 of the 13 possible meaning categories occurred in the data: performance, political, relational, appearance, remix, creative, personality and character, evaluative, economic, celebrity, and athletic identities. Table 11 illustrates these categories. The only two missing meanings are hegemonically-framed identities and digital identities. In both instances, these modal findings align with the meanings findings by mode thus far; hegemonically-framed identities seem reliant on textual and linguistic modes for their expression, while digital identities rely on hyperlinks for their realization. Other aspects of identity, such as remix identity, seem to necessitate visual and/or images, which is supported by the findings in this category.

Table 11.

Primary Meanings of Beyoncé by Visual Mode across SNS

<u>Meanings</u>	<u>Twitter</u>	<u>Tumblr</u>	<u>Pinterest</u>	<u>Total</u>
Performance Identities	7	15	9	31
Political Identities	7	8	0	15
Relational Identities	0	8	5	13
Appearance Identities	2	7	3	12
Remix Identities	2	7	0	9
Creative Identities	1	7	0	8
Personality and Character Identities	2	4	1	7
Evaluative Identities	2	0	0	2
Economic Identities	0	1	0	1
Celebrity Identities	0	1	0	1
Athletic Identities	0	0	1	1
	23	58	19	100
TOTAL PERCENT OF THE DATA				33%

Visual + link modes. Visual + link modes are found only in Tumblr and Pinterest, the two platforms that afford visually-based posts. This category, which constitutes 27% of the overall data set, actually represents 81% of all posts types in Pinterest, and is the most common multimodal ensemble type in that platform. Visual + link modes contain a visual element, most often a photo or digital image, and some hyperlink to an external site. An example of a visual + link mode from Tumblr is found in Figure 32; the link is embedded in the text *mtvnews*.



mtvnews

Beyoncé's Super Bowl Performance Was A Tribute To Michael Jackson

You probably didn't notice that Queen Bey's 'Formation' costume was inspired by the King Of Pop's 1993 Halftime show performance. MJ's performance started the trend of top music acts being booked for the infamous halftime spectacle.

211 notes



Figure 32. An example of a visual + link mode.

These mode-related findings reflect and mirror several of the modal-based meaning trends discussed thus far. First, of the 13 primary meanings in the data set, 10 are expressed in the visual + link modes. These meanings include digital, performance, appearance, relational, personality and character, remix, athletic, creative, political, and celebrity identities. This suggests that almost all meanings of Beyoncé can be expressed visually, or visually with a hyperlink attached. The only 3 that cannot be expressed, and are thus absent from the data, are those that only appear linguistically elsewhere in the data: these are hegemonically-framed identities, economic identities, and evaluative identities. That is, hegemonically-framed identities, economic identities, and evaluative identities are not expressed visually in this data set, and therefore, they are absent from this visual category. Finally, digital identities account for

the largest meaning identities in this category (21%). This aligns with the findings thus far, in that digital identities, as types of click bait and as attention-getting devices, require hyperlinks for their realization. In sum, all of the identities of Beyoncé, except for those found exclusively expressed linguistically (hegemonically-framed, economic, and evaluative identities) occur as primary meanings in the visual + link mode; digital identities, which require hyperlinks, are the most frequent of these meaning categories in the data. Table 12 indicates the primary meaning categories for visual + link modes.

Table 12.

Primary Meanings of Beyoncé by Visual + Link Modes across SNS

<u>Meanings</u>	<u>Twitter</u>	<u>Tumblr</u>	<u>Pinterest</u>	<u>Total</u>
Digital Identities	n/a	n/a	21	21
Performance Identities	n/a	n/a	16	16
Appearance Identities	n/a	n/a	12	12
Relational Identities	n/a	n/a	8	8
Personality and Character Identities	n/a	n/a	7	7
Remix Identities	n/a	n/a	5	5
Athletic Identities	n/a	n/a	5	5
Creative Identities	n/a	n/a	4	4
Political Identities	n/a	n/a	2	2
Celebrity Identities	n/a	n/a	1	1
			81	81
TOTAL PERCENT OF THE DATA				27%

Minor modes. The minor modes, chat, video, and quote modes, are all found in Tumblr. These modes combine to form 5%, and thus the smallest category of modal data in the data set. Overall, these modes express digital, performance, personality and character, remix, creative, and political identities. Because the types of posts indicative of these minor modes contain extra layers of semiotic resources that contribute to meaning – in other words, because they involve other modes such as movement, layout, and font that are outside of the scope of this current project, I do not analyze their meaning trends here. The distribution of minor modes is found in Table 13.

Table 13.

Primary Meanings of Beyoncé by Minor Modes in Tumblr

<u>Meanings</u>	<u>Chat</u>	<u>Quote</u>	<u>Video</u>	<u>Total</u>
Digital Identities	0	1	0	1
Performance Identities	0	1	1	2
Personality and Character Identities	0	0	1	1
Remix Identities	0	0	3	3
Creative Identities	0	1	4	5
Political Identities	1	1	0	2
	1	4	9	14
TOTAL PERCENT OF THE DATA				5%

Overall modal trends. The distribution of primary meaning and modalities indicates the correlation between modal choice and expression of identity; in some instances there are general

trends of expression of meanings by mode, while in others cases there are exclusive meaning and mode connections.

First, within this data set, two meanings are exclusively expressed via one modal possibility. The first, hegemonically-framed identities, requires linguistic text for its expression; Figure 34 elucidates. As I discussed previously, the clause structure orientations of given versus



Figure 34. A hegemonically-framed identity from Twitter.

new information, also known as theme and rheme, couple with the lexical items used (*#bigoted*, *#racist*, and *hate-filled*) to emphasize Beyoncé’s linguistically-realized racism; simultaneously, the textual organization of the tweet’s linguistic structure textually presents Bey’s association to anti-cop sentiment with the position and meaning of *#BlueLivesMatter*. These identities are only realized in the text only mode, and are absent from text + links or modes with visual elements.

In a similar vein, remix identities only occur in posts with a visual modal element, as illustrated in Figure 35; this aligns with the nature of remix posts (for example, memes and fan art) and their inherently visual qualities. This meme, for example, relies on the visual juxtaposition of



Figure 35. Remix identity involving visual mode (528TUM22).

Beyoncé and life coach Iyanla VanZandt, in conjunction with their associated visual references (Iyanla's hugging, caring embrace and serious look compared to Beyoncé's lighter reaction with a smile, hands to her chin, and visually represented distance, rather than closeness to the viewer). This meme would not make sense without the linguistic text to clarify and elaborate these two visual positionings, of reactions when *of me when ppl [people] tell me they're going through something* in contrast with when *i tell people I'm going through something*. Likewise, the text would be lacking and incomprehensible without the attached visuals; such memes, and remix identities, like this example, rely on visual expressions, indexicalities, and intertextual references for their full multimodal meaning potentials. Likewise, both athletic identities and celebrity identities appear to rely on the visual mode for their expression; they are absent from text and text + link modes. Digital identities require links for their expression, so they are only found in text + link and visual + link posts; given the nature of digital identities and their technodeictic relationship with hyperlinks, this is an obvious required connection. Evaluative identities, on the other hand, seem to be found where links are absent, suggesting at least a linguistic (and potentially linguistic and visual expression). Figure 36 illustrates the linguistic nature of evaluation. The negative evaluation of Bey as a *glorified Karaoke singer*, as well as the user's assertion that they *don't want to hear anymore about Beyoncé* utilizes only the linguistic mode for their expression; no hyperlink is present.

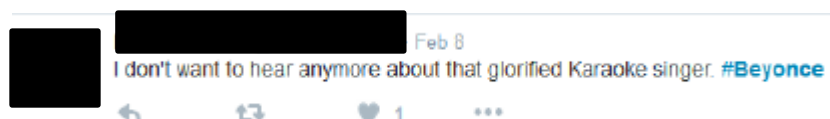


Figure 36. Beyoncé's evaluative identity in Twitter.

The data also suggests overall trends of meaning and modal correspondence. First, in posts with links, the most common and frequent meaning categories are digital identities; for

those without links, performance identities are most common. Beyoncé is a performer, so this latter identity is her profession and is grounded in what Beyoncé does as her occupation; the former identity, however, indicates more *how* Beyoncé is used digitally rather than *what* she means or represents. In other words, digital identities may or may not be related to what Beyoncé does or says, but rather, how she gains attention and invokes user interaction within the multimodal ensemble, generally, and the link, crucially and specifically. Next, athletic and celebrity identities require a visual index for their realization; images of dance clothing, fighter gear, dance shoes, a basketball hoop, and the Grammy stage with a Grammy Award in her hand visually realize Beyoncé in these two identity realms, free from the need of language for expression. These identities seem more Beyoncé centered, in that she presents her own image or performs her own actions in an image for these identities to be realized; these are based on images of what Beyoncé wears and/or does. More user-personally framed identities, such as hegemonically-framed and evaluative identities, that are often realized as users' ideas, stances, and/or opinions, are exclusively referenced via linguistic text. This suggests that users construct aspects of stance linguistically, relying on language as the primary modal tool for this aspect of discursive expression.

Finally, when comparing diversity of meanings, modal differences also appear. That is, the fewest number of distinct identity categories were found in the text only mode; of 13 meaning categories, only 8 materialized in the data. In contrast, visual modes expressed the greatest diversity of identity expressions; only two identity meaning categories were missing from the visual +/- text modes. Finally, in both types of modes that integrated links into posts, the visual + link and the text + link, 10 out of 13 categories arose.

Some modal distinctions directly relate to platform distinctions. Since I have now answered RQ2 about differences in meaning by mode, I now discuss differences in meaning by platform.

RQ3 – How do the meanings of Beyoncé differ across platforms?

To answer this RQ, I examined the connections between primary meaning categories and each SNS platform. That is, I organized the primary meaning category data by platform, and then compared both the instantiation and the frequency of primary identity meanings across each site. In comparing primary meanings by platform, several meaning trends and meaning distinctions occur. That is, some primary meanings are exclusive to one SNS platform, while other meanings appear across 2 platforms but are absent in the other. Figure 14 displays the meaning distributions by platform. I explore these differences below.

First, there are three identity categories that appear exclusively in one platform in the data set: hegemonically-framed identities, evaluative identities, and athletic identities.

Hegemonically-framed and evaluative identities constitute 4% of the overall meaning categories, but both meanings are only found in Twitter, and do not appear as primary meanings in Tumblr or Pinterest. Both of these meanings also require textual modes for expression, and Twitter is the platform in the dataset that makes greatest use of the textual modality for meaning-making. As I discussed in RQ2, both of these types of meaning are heavily user-framed meanings; that is, these meanings of Beyoncé emerge in posts in which users involve Beyoncé in constructing their

Table 14.

Primary Meanings of Beyoncé by SNS

<u>Meanings</u>	<u>Twitter</u>	<u>Tumblr</u>	<u>Pinterest</u>	<u>Total</u>
Performance Identities	25	23	22	70
Digital Identities	21	8	23	52
Personality and Character Identities	8	18	11	37
Appearance Identities	4	7	24	35
Political Identities	16	14	2	32
Creative Identities	4	16	4	24
Relational Identities	0	10	12	22
Remix Identities	4	8	0	12
Evaluative Identities	11	0	0	11
Athletic Identities	0	0	7	7
Economic Identities	2	3	0	5
Celebrity Identities	1	0	3	4
Hegemonically-Framed Identities	4	0	0	4
TOTALS	100	107	108	315

own personal stances or in which they express their personal stances toward Beyoncé. In doing so, Beyoncé serves more as a structural contextualizing element of their personal identities, beliefs, and discursive orientations. This contrasts, for example, with images of Beyoncé where aspects of her meaning identities are constructed by what she does, wears, or how she appears. Instead, these meanings emerge through users' framing in posts that embed Beyoncé-related phenomena into users' discussion of their own personal experiences. For example, one Twitter user states *It's official! I've been blocked by #JayZ & #Beyonce [sic]! Add that to the resume*

[sic] (28TW18), while another says *i was in pure bliss yesterday #Beyonce #WorldFormationTour* (528TW21). In the first tweet, the user's reference to *being blocked* means that based on their interactions with Jay Z and with Beyoncé within Twitter, both Jay Z and Beyoncé have blocked that user from participating with them in Twitter. In Twitter, when one user blocks an account of a second user, it forbids that second user account to interact with blocking user; in this instance, Jay Z and Beyoncé have forbidden this Twitter user from interacting with their Twitter accounts. This insinuates that this user has negatively incited Jay Z and Beyoncé in some way; this user also seems proud of this action, adding, *add that to the resume* [sic]. In both tweets, the use of the first-person pronoun, *I*, serves to discursively construct individual user experiences of being blocked and of attending Beyoncé's concert; it also provides the perspective from which Beyoncé's evaluative identities are discursively constructed. Hegemonically-framed identities, in which Beyoncé is constructed as a *racist*, *bigot*, and/or *anti-cop*, function also similarly, but do not make use of first person pronouns. These still express user stances, but with less emphasize on the contextualization of Beyoncé within their personal experiences and more on overt expression of their stances toward, and ideas about, Beyoncé; the tweet *#BlueLivesMatter #Beyonce [sic] is a #bigoted, hate-filled, #racist billionaire* (28TW05) elucidates this discursive distinction.

These two exclusive identities seem to align with both the affordances and limitations of Twitter, as well as what previous research has suggested about the nature of Twitter digital practices. First, temporality and the potential ephemerality of tweets in the fast-moving turnover of tweets due to millions of Twitter users each day, combined with the limitations of characters and thus, the brevity of tweets, heightens the role of attention within Twitter in the attention economy of SNS (Goldhaber, 1997). Marwick (2010) highlights the importance of attention due

to the affordances and nature of Twitter, asserting that because Twitter is a linguistic marketplace (Bourdieu, 1977, as cited in Marwick, 2010) Twitter users make use of very specific discursive practices, such as of micro-celebrity and self-branding, to increase their social attention in the SNS. Page (2012) also argues that visibility in Twitter is a means of increasing social gain, focusing on the role that ST plays in the process. For Twitter users, therefore, attention and micro-celebrity are often framed through discursive practices that emphasize negativity and negative sentiment expressions; Twitter is often a site of public and discursive vitriol (Ott, 2017). Ott (2017) characterizes typical Twitter discourse as simple, impulsive, and uncivil; Thewall, Buckley, and Pattloglou (2011) likewise found that heavy Twitter users relied extensively on negativity and aggression in their discursive expressions. The construction of both evaluative and hegemonically-constructed identities for Beyoncé aligns directly with these findings. Evaluation is both attention-getting and typical of micro-celebrity practices (Marwick, 2010). Likewise, the scathing disapproval inherent in negatively framed evaluative identities of Beyoncé, along with the caustic antagonism of hegemonically-framed identities, fits with Ott's (2017) assertion that Twitter "breeds dark, degrading, and dehumanizing discourse" (p.62). The tweets *So over you #Beyoncé. And you almost fell* (28TW41), and *And finally...#Beyoncé and the #BlackPanthers, this*, with an attached sexist and homophobic meme that reads *You can go a eat a dick* (28TW25), exemplify the degradation of Twitter users' negative evaluation. In the first example, as I explained earlier, this user is not only negatively evaluating Beyoncé with the phrase *So over you #Beyoncé*, but they also use this public sphere of Twitter to seemingly mock, or at the very least, publically broadcast, that Beyoncé *almost fell* during her Super Bowl performance. I will further elaborate, discuss, and analyze this latter tweet in greater detail on page 188. However, the user posts an offensive meme, with the words *You can go eat a dick*

over white comedian Bill Murray's face, as a directive to Beyoncé and the Black Panthers. Their use of language, *And finally, #Beyoncé and the #BlackPanthers, this*, inter-semiotically functions to provide the recipient of the directive. In essence, this user is sexually objectifying Beyoncé and the Black Panthers in a violent way; the violent sexual directive is framed as funny or comical by drawing on the interdiscursivity of Bill Murray. In other tweets, Twitter users' appellations of Beyoncé as *disgusting bigot* (28TW44), a *#racist* (28TW04), and *anti-cop* (28TW42) highlight the debasing discourses of hegemonically-framed identities. Such identity categories were not found in the other two SNS.

The second exclusive meaning category is athletic identity, which exists only in Pinterest. This aligns with both the modal characteristics and the affordances of Pinterest, in that 100% of its posts utilize visual modalities as a requirement of the pin board SNS; as mentioned previously, in this data set, athletic identities were only expressed visually, indexed by Beyoncé's clothing, location, physical positioning, and appearance. Ottoni et al. (2013) argue that Pinterest privileges the visual over the textual; within their corpus of over 2 million pins, women's fashion ranked as the primary category, they rank women's fashion as the primary commercial category of pins. Beyoncé's dance and athletic clothing line, Ivy Park, may also contribute to the exclusivity of this meaning category in this particular SNS, as it attends to these Pinterest research findings: it is a commercial product in the domain of women's fashion and it is expressed only visually in the data set. This supports the research thus far that argues that Pinterest is more about commodification (Marwick, 2014), and particularly commodification of the body and of corporeal-based identities, than the other two SNS sites.

Therefore, while hegemonically-framed identities and evaluative identities are exclusive of Twitter, and athletic identities are exclusive of Pinterest, Tumblr is also unique. That is, there

are no identity meanings that are Tumblr exclusive. Four primary meaning categories are not found in this Tumblr data set; these are evaluative, hegemonically-framed, athletic, and celebrity identities. Despite not expressing these four identity categories, however, Tumblr data overlaps with the other SNS in that Beyoncé is realized in identities also realized in at least one other SNS. In other words, except for those four aforementioned categories, Tumblr allows all other Beyoncé identities to exist and shares these meanings with other platforms. There is no identity meaning unique to Tumblr.

Despite the fact that no meanings are unique to Tumblr, Tumblr nonetheless demonstrates general meaning-based trends that distinguish it from the other SNS in the data set. Of the three SNS, more agentic identities emerged as the most frequently occurring primary meaning categories for Beyoncé; that is, performance identities and personality and character identities were the two most frequently occurring meanings. This suggests that Tumblr users emphasize what Beyoncé *does* along with her personality, character, and influence. This contrasts with both Pinterest and Twitter; the top two most frequent meanings in Twitter are Bey's performance and digital identities, while in Pinterest, appearance is first, followed by digital identities. Again, this proposes that while Bey's agency as a performer is recognized in Twitter, her use as a digital tool is second. In Pinterest, the emphasis is on Bey's looks, or how Bey *appears*, as well as Bey as a digital tool. This aligns with the commodified nature of Pinterest (Marwick, 2014), while simultaneously reinforcing the stereotypical notions of women's objectification (emphasis on Bey's appearance) and commodification (emphasize on Bey as a click bait and attention-getting tool for commerce). In juxtaposition, digital identities are much more infrequent in Tumblr; commercialization is scarcer in Tumblr. Instead, a more typical Tumblr post either presents Beyoncé as a visual and/or linguistic performer, or highlights

her personality and influence. Tumblr, for example, was the only SNS to increase its meaning potentials in demand image acts (Bey as a visual subject) versus offer image acts (Bey as a visual object); Beyoncé, as a visual subject, was realized through five different categories of visual agency in Tumblr. Figure 37, exemplifies a “typical” Tumblr post. Here Beyoncé’s influence makes the user want to *dance on a police car* (potentially to protest police violence, like Beyoncé did in her video), with her *afro swaying in the breeze* (with natural, decolonized hair), as the user *jump[s] off and kick[s] Donald Trump in the face* (to potential protest racist policies, like Beyoncé). This user alludes to three specific Beyoncé-related phenomena in foregrounding Beyoncé’s influence

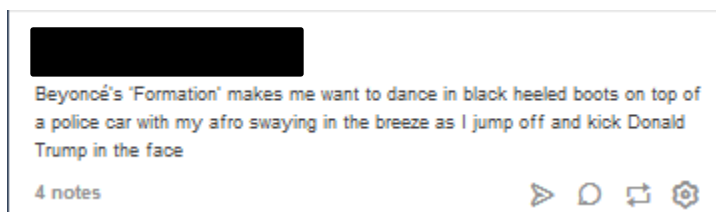


Figure 37. A Tumblr post expressing Beyoncé’s personality and character.

and significance.

Other minor differences also contribute to the platform distinctiveness of Tumblr. First, in stark contrast to both Twitter and Pinterest, the third most frequent category of meaning in Tumblr was Beyoncé’s creative identities; furthermore, in a similar vein, Tumblr is the only data set in which minor modes emerge, such as chat and quote posts. These affordances utilized by Tumblr users, along with this creative meaning distinction, supports Kanai’s (2015), Attu and Terras’ (2017), and Bourlai and Herring’s (2014) assertion that Tumblr is a site of creativity. As much as Tumblr is a site for creativity, it has also been argued to be more supportive of alternative viewpoints and traditionally marginalized communities (Connelly, 2015; Fink and Miller, 2014). When examining secondary meanings, another Tumblr distinction emerges;

Beyoncé's political identities are the most frequent secondary meaning category in the data, and all instances of these political identities express a counterhegemonic stance. In other words, in each post that contains a secondary political meaning, users construct Beyoncé in alignment ideologies and political sentiments that challenge the normative hegemonic status quo. These include associating Beyoncé with pro-Black, Black feminist, feminist, and/or anti-racist sentiments, as critiquing Beyoncé as economically privileged, capitalist, and not a Black radical feminist. This heavy and exclusive counterhegemony is unique to Tumblr.

In addition to identity category meaning distinctions, the data also indicate meaning category trends. First, in all 3 platforms, performance identities rank in the top 3 most frequent identities for Beyoncé; this is to be expected, as her primary profession is one as a singer and entertainer. For example, the top three primary meanings were: in Twitter, performance identities (25%), digital identities (21%), and political identities (16%); in Tumblr, performance identities (21%), personality and character identities (17%), and creative identities (15%); and in Pinterest, appearance identities (22%), digital identities (21%), and performance identities (20%). In both Twitter and Tumblr performance identities ranked first of all primary meanings, while they ranked third in Pinterest. In Pinterest, however, appearance ranked first and digital identities followed; despite Beyoncé's profession as a performer, two different identity categories were most prominent.

The top meaning categories correspond directly to both the characteristics of the platforms (and types of typical digital practices therein), as well to the affordances and limitations of each SNS. First, in Pinterest, the prevalence of appearance and digital identities – which rely on visual and hyperlinked modalities, respectively – aligns exactly with both the affordances and characteristics of Pinterest as a SNS; it is as a visually-based curation site that is

also a heavily commercial space reliant on links to external vending sources (Ottoni et al., 2013). This connection to commerciality is also echoed in the Twitter data, with digital identities second; Twitter, like Pinterest and unlike Tumblr, is also heavily commercialized and is utilized by businesses to manage corporate discourse concerns (Page, 2012). In addition, the condensed and limited character constraints of tweets coupled with the divisive discourse typical of some users in the Twittersphere (Ott, 2017) could explain the prominence of Beyoncé's political identity as one of the top meaning categories.

Tumblr, on the other hand, is the least commercial of the three SNS platforms. Additionally, Tumblr creator David Karp (2012, as cited in Walker, 2012) asserts that he purposely designed Tumblr to contrast with other SNS, as he felt that follower counts, numerical markers of personality, and the traditional public friend-and-follow reciprocity that is used to expand SNS "can really poison a whole community" (para. 2). Therefore, such features are absent from the Tumblr interface. In addition, Karp (2012) argues that he designed Tumblr with emotions in mind; for example, he felt that comments sections bring out the worst in people, so they are missing from Tumblr, as well. Walker (2012) explains Karp's design considerations and intentions for Tumblr more thoroughly, saying

How, then, to encourage feedback while discouraging drive-by hecklers who make you never want to post again? First, Karp notes, you *can* comment on someone else's post, by reblogging it¹² and adding your reaction. But that reaction appears on your Tumblr, not the one you're commenting on. "So if you're going to be a jerk, you're looking like a jerk in your own space, and my space is still pristine," Karp explains. This makes for a thoughtful network and encourages expression and, ultimately, creativity. "That's how

¹² David Karp has left Tumblr, and this affordance has now changed. However, at the time of this data collection, such reblogging was required as described here.

you can design to make a community more positive.” (para. 12).

Additionally, Tumblr does not limit post sizes, and allows for 7 different types of modalities for communicative expression. Therefore, Karp designed the affordances of Tumblr to support creativity and networked communities; its users and groups, however, have also seemed to utilize Tumblr for such types of creative and community-based expression, particularly the recognition of and perspectives of marginalized groups. For example, Connelly’s (2015) work illustrated Tumblr as a feminist world building space, while Kanai (2015) demonstrated female creativity in Tumblr communities. The realizations of Beyoncé’s identity as a performer (the most prominent meaning category), of her personality and character identities (these second most frequent category), and of her creative identities – of being envisioned as a writer, author, and/or artist – all emphasize and underscore Beyoncé’s agency. In fact, creative identities are most frequent in Tumblr compared to the other sites (15% of meanings versus 4% in Twitter and Pinterest), while personality and character identities only form 8% of all data in Twitter). Instead of what Beyoncé looks like or is wearing, or how she can be used as digital click bait or sold as a linked commodity, Tumblr identities highlight and construct Beyoncé by what she does, what she creates, her actions, and her personality. This focus on creativity, personality, and influence over other aspects of identity suggests perhaps that Tumblr users invoke her as part of their creative communities, as well.

Other meaning trends also correspond to platform affordances, limitations, and site characteristics. First, celebrity identities do not emerge in Tumblr, but are found in both Twitter and Pinterest. Research has already established Twitter as a digital site for expression of both celebrity and micro-celebrity identities (Marwick, 2010; Ott, 2017; Page, 2012), partially due to its short, fleeting, and highly public tweets. Celebrity identities are also expressed visually in the

data set, which directly parallels Pinterest's visual affordances. Additionally, celebrity images are also used in social media to illustrate and index appearance-based attributes, such as wardrobe, clothing, makeup, hair, fashion, and beauty; these categories represent several of the 33 in-built default curation category choices afforded to users upon first creating a Pinterest account (Ottoni et al., 2013).

Relational identities also appear in 9% of Tumblr data and 11% of Pinterest data, but are lacking from the primary meaning categories in Twitter. Relational identities seem to correspond to affordances, limitations, and platform characteristics, again, for slightly different reasons and in distinct ways. First, the lack of relational identities of Beyoncé (as a mother, wife, and sister, for example) may be consistent with the divisiveness of Twitter, where the tendency in highly public tweets is often to divide; it could also relate to the fact that in the data set, relational identities of Beyoncé were often expressed in a visual mode, and visual modes are not as prevalent in Twitter. Within Tumblr, relational identities may be more prevalent due to the aforementioned discussion of community design and users' community building within Tumblr; that is, they may potentially reflect the more community-based nature of Tumblr practices, particularly with respect to those marginalized by race, gender, sexuality, ability, and the intersection of such identities (Fink and Miller, 2014). As I argued above, Bey's relational identities may be prioritized because Beyoncé is positioned as a member of the community, so her relationships (like her personality, character, influence, and creativity) may be more important to Tumblr users. That is, the interest of the user may not be based on the fact that Beyoncé is a mother, but on the fact that Beyoncé is Beyoncé, and her motherhood builds an aspect of her character and identity; it forms who she is. Linking back to my earlier discussion of Bey fandom and the Bey Hive, members of the Bey Hive allegedly concern themselves with

anything Beyoncé related whether it relates directly to their lives or not. This aligns with the emphasis in Tumblr on Beyoncé's character and personality forming the second most frequent identity category in the data. For example, Figure 38 illustrates a relational Beyoncé.

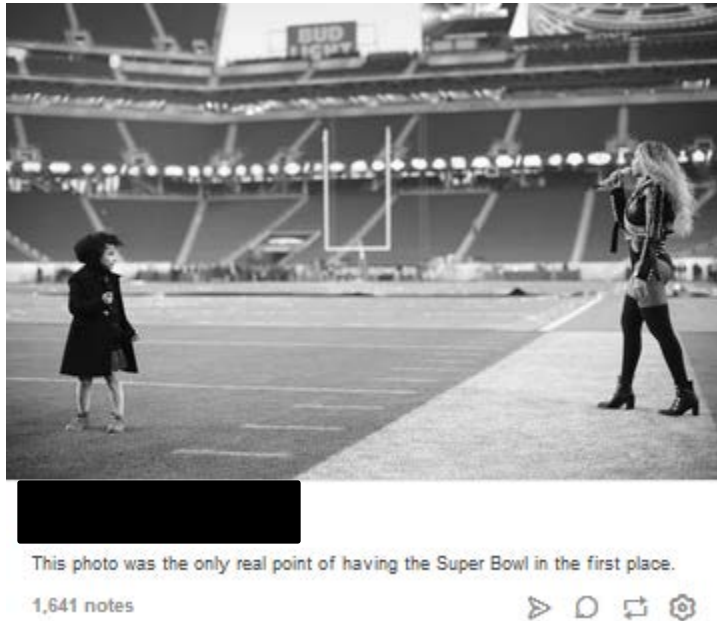


Figure 38. A relational identity of Beyoncé in Tumblr.

The visual shows Beyoncé in rehearsal gear preparing for her Super Bowl 50 performance, with her daughter, Blue Ivy, watching her on the empty football field. Both are positioned as visual objects, in contrast to the agentive viewer subject. The text elaborates on the visual imagery, stating *this photo was the only real point of having the Super Bowl in the first place*. This suggests that this moment of Bey alone with her daughter, watching her mother perform, is more important than the actual Super Bowl performance. Another reason for the heavy use of relational identities within Tumblr may be due to their heavily visual expression, as well.

In Pinterest, however, Beyoncé's identities as a wife and mother are primarily visually realized, and when co-occur with text they are framed differently than those of Tumblr (for example, Figure 38 above). For example, in a pin that shows Beyoncé and husband Jay-Z

together, the text reads *Jay Z scores Beyoncé's heart* (28PIN49), where Jay Z is the subject and actor, while Beyoncé is realized not as the subject and goal (her heart is), but as the possessor of the goal; Beyoncé is linguistically passive in this relationship while Jay Z is the actor and linguistic agent. Another pin follows a very similar pattern, captioning a Beyoncé and Jay Z photo with *Jay Z held onto Beyoncé's ankle as they checkout the Golden State Warriors...* (28PIN28). In these examples, the relationship agency is not equally expressed. Despite unequal agency in relationships, the responsibility for the maintenance and facilitation of relationships, particularly through discourse, is relegated as the women's discursive role (Tannen, 1991); the socially-sanctioned, heteronormative role for women in relationships is thus one of a passive object, rather than an active subject (Hardman, 1993). Pinterest is argued to be women's space (Marwick, 2014; Ottoni et al., 2013), and so this hegemonic realization of femininity is to be expected in this SNS. Furthermore, the pins of both of these relational examples link to celebrity websites. Noble (2013) and Baker and Potts (2013) have demonstrated that search engines present stereotypical and hegemonic return results which may connect to commercialization, while Marwick (2014) argues about the stereotypically socially assumed role of women, and particularly women, as consumers. Commodification reproduces these larger metanarratives and cultural discourses about normative gender roles in relationships, and particularly that women are discursively positioned as shoppers and consumers (Van Zoonen, 2001). It appears that the commercialization-heavy nature of Pinterest supports relational identities with more mitigated agency than those expressed in Tumblr.

One final trend is that remix identities of Beyoncé exist in both the Twitter data and the Tumblr data, but not in Pinterest. Fan art, GIFs, and memes typify such remixes. Interestingly, although remix identities rely on visual modes for their manifestation, although Pinterest is a

visual site, remix identities do not emerge. Fan art, memes, and GIFs are both permissible by Tumblr's built in video and visual affordances, and encouraged by the do it yourself (DIY), remix, creative, and fandom cultures that exemplify Tumblr user communities and discourse practices (Fink and Miller, 2014; Kanai, 2015); these platform tendencies may explain their appearance in this SNS. With respect to memes in Twitter (fan art as a remix identity is not realized in this domain), it appears that memes may serve as attention-getting devices due to their heavily viral nature, in compliance with the heavy attention economy (Goldhaber, 1997) of this particular digital space.

In this section I have illustrated how distinctive primary meanings emerged in the data exclusively of a given platform; evaluative and hegemonically-framed identities marked Beyoncé's Twitter-only identities, while athletic identities characterize a Pinterest-only meaning category. I also overviewed trends in meaning by platform, and linked meaning differences, distinctions, and trend to platform limitations, affordances, constraints, and platform characteristics. I now answer RQ4.

RQ4 - How do these meaning distinctions connect to macro-contextual issues of gender and power?

To answer this research question, I considered several interactive levels of digital communicative contextuality; these included integrating primary meanings, visual positioning, secondary meanings, analytical memos, data coding and categorizing commentaries, and intersemiotic relationships between multiple modes within posts. I examined and interpreted these meanings through multiple layers of contexts, considering all posts as multimodal ensembles that occur: (1) with their own associated links and embedded content, (2) as connected associatively to the content of their links, (3) within a specific socio-cultural

“snapshot” in time, with particular consideration of temporality, (4) within Beyoncé-specific pop cultural trends, and also (5) within greater, general trends in popular culture, generally, and social media, specifically. To this end, I questioned the relationship between micro-linguistic, micro-visual, and micro-semiotic structures and larger cultural discourses of gender and power.

For this analysis, I follow Hill Collins’ (2007) theoretically-intersectional approach to gender. Similarly to Crenshaw (1989), who introduced the concept of intersectionality, Hill Collins (2007) asserts that race and gender are not static and distinct aspects of identity, but rather, that race and gender intersect and are interconnected (along with other social variables, such as class and sexuality, as well). Racism and sexism, therefore, also intersect in the lived experiences of Black women (Crenshaw, 1989). As a result, Hill Collins (2007) argues for the need to reconceptualize and recategorize both identity and power. Like race and gender, power is also not static and is irreducible to static units; instead, power is relational and dynamic, dispersed within a matrix of domination (Hill Collins, 2007, as cited in Brown, 2018, para. 4). Applied to this discourse analytic project of meanings of a prominent Black woman, this means that I assume and expect a dynamic intersection of race and gender within the data.

The first connection, therefore, to the meanings of Beyoncé and issues of gender and power is that in the data, engenderment is racialized and racialization is gendered¹³; the discursive engenderment and racialization of Beyoncé is weaved through the various identities. Gender¹⁴ and race, therefore, are conflated in the data, albeit potentially differently due to contextual variation, and are linked to different types of gender Discourses. For example, one pin in Pinterest (see Figure 39) shows a still image of Beyoncé from her visual album *Lemonade*

¹³ There are also obvious intersections with class, sexuality, and locality (the Black South) in the data, as well, that are beyond the scope of this current project. My treatment of only race and gender, then, is an analytical reduction only.

¹⁴ Henceforth, when I use *gender*, I mean so as a fluid, discursively-constructed and linguistically-performed (Butler, 1990) intersectional category that cannot be divorced from race and racialization.

captioned with *Bey was black, Bey is black, Bey gon' stay black til she die...#BeyBeBlack*; this pin also hyperlinks via *Read It!* to a queer, intersectional blog designed and written by people of color (POC). In this instance, the visual, linguistic, and hyperlinked modes construct Beyoncé specifically as a Black woman, while her gaze and the focus on her face, and not body, project Beyoncé as a visual subject in a demand image act based on her own agency and not on stereotypical tropes of Black women, including those of welfare queens, mammies, or as hypersexualized through phallogentric gaze (hooks, 1992; Noble, 2013). Because this still image originates from the visual album *Lemonade*, it intertextually and interdiscursively links to the prominent visual and linguistic discourses and Discourses of the album, including the centralization of black women and their experiences; decolonized love; connections between and among black women, particularly family; natural, decolonized hair, beauty, fashion, and presentations of black women's body inspired by black and African artistic and cultural movements; and political and social activism connected to the rights and experiences of black people (Eric-Udorie, 2016; Harris-Perry, 2016). To that end, this visual subject position weaves visual aspects that echo such sentiments. That is, Beyoncé's face, rather than hypersexualized body, is centralized in the image, her hair is natural in braids, her makeup is minimal, her clothing covers her body, and what is visible is covered by jewelry, which, when coupled with the style of her braids in the shape of a crown, indexes the royalty of not only Queen Bey, but black and African women in general. Furthermore, Beyoncé's facial expression is serious and strong; in stark contrast to the hegemonically normative role of women as managers of relational work, Beyoncé is not presenting herself with the hegemonic "smile" for male gaze.

The linguistic resources interact with the visual to intersemiotically underscore the message of this multimodal ensemble. First, the use of African American English (AAE), for

both the caption and as ST, serves as an index of counterhegemonic stance in the primarily white space of Pinterest. It marks a verbal aspect feature missing in Standard American English (SAE) grammar that further underscores the **habitual and continuous** aspects of Bey's blackness (*#BeyBeBlack*), as well as the past, present, and future of Beyoncé's blackness, with *was, is, gon' stay til she die*. Furthermore, the word *black* is repeated four times, and Beyoncé is positioned four times as a verbal subject of different relational verb phrases (containing the various forms of the verb *be*) that construct her as a subject carrier of the attribute *black*. That is, the repetition of Bey's linguistic subject position and the repetition of *black* emphasize these two aspects of her identity; Bey is constructed as a agentive black woman **four times** in one caption. Additionally, the use of the ST *#BeyBeBlack*, in particular, is both linguistic and functional, linking this post to others through ambient affiliation (Zappavigna, 2012) around the hashtag and the implied community of users of hashtags in AAE. Moreover, for viewers of this image who may be familiar with the content of the video from which the image originates – in other words, those with an emic or insider perspective of Beyoncé's work – may also recognize the visual and linguistic intertextual references to the Black south and the imagery of self-reliance of Black woman that echoes through that work. In this multimodal ensemble, Beyoncé is raced and gendered in a way that recognizes images, meanings, and representations of Black women of and for Black woman (hooks, 1992).

Despite the Pinterest trend where Beyoncé's primary identity category relates to her appearance, the picture in context does not evoke the more traditionally commodified, appearance-based identity of Beyoncé as a commodified object. The typical Pinterest appearance-based posts often commodify Beyoncé's body, focusing on her clothing, makeup, sexuality, physical attributes, and colonized beauty, often with the goal of selling. Instead, this

Beyoncé is a visual agent, framed in a close head shot, which accentuates her natural hair, natural skin, and highlights her natural beauty as a black woman free from a white male colonizing gaze (hooks, 1992) with no accompanying products to be sold; furthermore, this still image derives from the visual album of *Lemonade*, in which these visual representations of non-commodified and decolonized black womanhood are repeatedly presented throughout the film. In other words, Beyoncé's commodified, commercialized, and whitewashed appearance that emerges elsewhere in Pinterest (for example, Figure 40) is absent in this image. Moreover, Beyoncé's image here is not the central focus of the post, but rather serves as part of an overall multimodal ensemble underscoring Beyoncé counterhegemonic, political identity. This contrasts with the typically non-overtly political and highly commercial nature of Pinterest posts, where the two most frequent meaning categories of Beyoncé are appearance and digital identities.



Bey was black; Bey is black; Bey gon' stay black til she die... #BeyBeBlack

Figure 39. Political identity in Pinterest (2PIN33).

In sum, this post frames a meta-agency of Beyoncé as both a visual and linguistic Black woman subject in a platform that seems to discourage black female agency in favor of Discourses of women as consumers and visual objects.

Moving to such identities, other posts about Beyoncé engender and racialize her differently and in connection with other types of Discourses. Continuing in Pinterest, images of Beyoncé are common in the data, especially those that construct her appearance-based and performance-based identities (22% and 20% of the data, or 42% of the posts); more often, however, these images are used in ways that reinforce, or do not overtly challenge, either the predominant white women’s perspective of Pinterest (Ottoni et al., 2013) or the associations between women’s looks, appearance, and commercialization. The heavy commodification here seems to reproduce and reinforce what Van Zoonen (2001) calls the normative model of women as shoppers (as cited in Marwick, 2014). Figure 39, for example, illustrates an appearance-based identity of Beyoncé, highlighting her beauty, sexuality, and fashion framed through both a consumerist and white male gaze (hooks, 1992). That is, this is the “Barbified” version of Beyoncé, where she is presented with skin showing, blonde hair, and a camera angle that centralized the middle of her body. Contrasting this image with Figure 38 above elucidates the contrast and different visual perspective created in this image. For example, in both images Beyoncé wears her hair in braids; in this latter image, however, Beyoncé’s hair is blond instead of dark, and the indexical effect of the royalty of the braided crown is diminished due to the non-braided hair framing her face. In both images she maintains a more serious facial expression, instead of the typical smile expected of women; however, her mouth is slightly more open in the form of a pout. This mouth shape resembles the type of facial expressions common in profile pictures and selfies, similar to duck face, that seem to index flirting, and have been judged by men as more attractive than smiles in online dating profile pictures (Rudder, 2010). This expression, therefore, may conform to male gaze. Beyoncé’s stance with her hand on her hip, and her jacket covering one shoulder positions her as if her body is on display, and her jacket no

longer obscures the bare skin of her shoulders, arms, midriff, and legs. In Figure 28, however, the focus is on Bey's face, and the visible skin on her neck is partially obscured by jewelry indexing royalty. Her face is the focus, and not her sexualized body. In Figure 40, however, the full image of Beyoncé's body is required in order to highlight her body as a commodity, particularly in the social media trend to commodify bodies as corporeal capital, where the beauty of one's body gives them more access to likes, more influence, and more social power in SNS (Veum & Undrum, 2018). This image and presentation of Beyoncé diverges heavily from the one above; this commodification presents a colonized, whitewashed beauty that aligns with, rather than challenges white supremacist male gaze (hooks, 1992) and the hypersexualization of black women's bodies in digital media (Noble, 2013).

Considering the multimodality of this image, and further exploring the modal meanings of this ensemble further elucidates the racialization and engenderment of this photo and in this pin. This image has no caption, but links to an article that discusses Beyoncé's makeup, hair, and fashion choices. Because the content of the link focuses on Beyoncé's physical appearance as a type of commodity, a commodified image of Beyoncé is necessary. Veum and Undrum (2018) argue that the visual discourses of advertising have entered the visual discourses of selfies, such that SNS users' self-presentations are types of self-commodification spread the interests and values of global corporations by adhering to corporate standards of beauty (p.100), I argue that a similar phenomenon is happening here in the multimodal re-entextualization of Beyoncé in this pin. This image originated from Beyoncé's Tumblr account, and was, in essence, a selfie that she posted on her Tumblr page. She may be purposely presenting her own sexual agency here (for example, as indexed in the pout discussed above) as part of her visual subject position in this demand image act; to some degree, she may be complicit (or at least not overtly challenging), the

white supremacist norms of beauty indexed in this image. However, Beyoncé's intent is made less relevant here by how she is used and re-entextualized in this pin. Beyoncé's image was removed from its origin in Tumblr; here, it was embedded in a visual pin in Pinterest with a new intersemiotic connection that altered its meaning – the inclusion of a hyperlink to a fashion and beauty article. It is in this newly reentextualized and resemiotized (Iedema, 2003; Silverstein, 1976) pin that Beyoncé is gendered and raced as sexualized and beautiful through commodification and perpetuation of white supremacist beauty standards. That is, while here direct gaze as a visual subject may be indicating her own sexual agency, this sexual agency is reduced by the emphasis on her outward appearance and fashion in the attached article. Instead, Beyoncé's appearance-based identity here aligns with two common gender discursive trends in Pinterest: women are discursively positioned in stereotypically consumer roles (Marwick, 2014),



Figure 40. An Appearance-based identity (528PIN40).

and women as objectified through white male gaze (hooks, 1992; Noble 2013). In contrast to the example in Figure 38 above, the Discourses of consumerism, rather than those of Black Empowerment, frame this pin. Here, Beyoncé's potential self-agency as a black female sexual

subject, through gaze, competes with Discourses of consumerism, the objectification of women's bodies, and of the emphasis on women *being* and *appearing*, and not *doing* (Russ, 2018).

Beyoncé is also racialized and gendered in linguistic modes. In Tumblr, for example, a user posts *Somewhere some white person is saying "Formation" is just a song and that black people make everything about race* (28TUM06). Like the Pinterest pin above (Figure 38) that emphasized Beyoncé's blackness, this post's author racializes Beyoncé in a way challenges traditional hegemonic discourses of both race and gender. As Hill (2008) argues, racism is not always explicit and resides in several discursive devices that obscure racial justice and maintain white superiority; one of these devices is the unmarkedness of whiteness. In this post, the user racializes both blackness and whiteness. That is, the user overtly mentions and names whiteness outright with *white person*, and later referentially with *make everything about race*. By actually linguistically marking both whiteness and blackness, this Tumblr user employ Beyoncé's song to disrupt whiteness as the unspoken, default cultural norm, and to reframe hegemonic discussions of race from a white supremacist perspective to a black one. In this realization of Beyoncé's creative identity, it is mention of her song that engenders her (and further racializes her) in an empowering way; *Formation* serves a synecdoche of Beyoncé as a self-reliant, self-actualized, and self-defining Black woman embedded in a post that deconstructs Whiteness as a Discourse and helps to demystify its hegemonic power. As Foucault (1972) and Flowerdew (2008) both argue, wherever there is hegemonic power there is resistance. In this particular instance, I assert that this gendered racialization resonates with other researchers who argue for Tumblr as a site of emancipation and resistance (Connelly 2015; Fink and Miller, 2014).

There is one other major ideological link between race and gender in the data. Discourses of racism in the data are calqued on discourses of sexism. The tweet below, in Figure 41

exemplifies. Here, a Twitter user addresses a sexist and homophobic meme that reads *You can go eat a dick* over an image of white actor Bill Murray in a demand image act pointing to, and commanding, the viewer to *#Beyoncé* and *the #Black Panthers* as a kind of “at”(@) mention. Here, the meme functions as a multimodal directive, commanding the recipients to action; the user utilizes the language of the tweet to target the audience of the directive, in other words, the ones who *can...*, *#Beyoncé* and the *#BlackPanthers*. This text racially targets Beyoncé and the Black Panthers, potentially because of the connection between Beyoncé and the Black Panthers’ movement echoed in Bey’s Super Bowl 50 performance. The content of the meme, however, is where the sexism, homophobia, and violence of the action itself arise. First, the meme itself is calqued on the interdiscursive and visually intertextual reference to comedian Bill Murray from the movie *Stripes*. This semiotic sign indexes a comedic, and non-serious military professional, who nonetheless commands his audience through the use of his pointed finger gesture. The movie image itself is a visual intertextual reference to the historical Uncle Sam American propaganda posters that read *I want you for the US Army* and showed a white male dressed in patriotic clothing pointing seriously to the audience. This meme draws from that war and military indexicality, but mocks it, as Bill Murray’s gesture and facial expression present a more comedic, and less serious, tone (especially when contextualized with the content of the movie). This image of Bill Murray has been used as a template for several different memes, all of which serve as speech acts directed to the viewing audience; the most common meme incorporates the text *You’re awesome*, as if Bill Murray is directing an expressive speech act to the viewer.

In this instance, however, the text projects both sexism and homophobia, particularly when connected to the recipients targeted in the linguistic text. That is, in the text *you can go eat a dick*, it implies that oral sexual acts involving penises, which are acts traditionally assumed to

be performed by women and gay men, are somehow negative; this resonates the larger metanarratives and macro Discourses of American English in which the primary and most damaging way to insult or discredit a man is to feminize him (as a woman or as a homosexual) (Hardman, 1993). The use of the term *eat* here rather than other typical verbs, such as *suck*, exacerbates the negativity, and echoes the sexual savagery and hypersexualization of black women and in colonizing white supremacist Discourses (hooks, 1992). Simultaneously, with this action, Beyoncé and the Black Panthers are objectified as *commanded* performers of sexual acts on men. The directive illocutionary force of the speech act is intensified when visually coupled with Bill Murray's hand gesture of command; homophobia and female objectifying violence are assumed by linguistically and visually mandating that Beyoncé and the Black Panthers perform this act against their will. This violence is racialized, as well, by the whiteness of Bill Murray in the image, and by the foregrounded linguistic text of the tweet that verbally targets a black audience with a meme involving a white man. Here, racialized and gendered white male dominance is perpetuated linguistically and visually.

In this case, the Twitter user's racism towards both Beyoncé and the Black Panthers makes use of a sexist discursive trope – feminization (and male homosexualization) as hegemonically negative; they do so with the discursive power to both linguistically, and through the image act of the meme, *command* Beyoncé and the Black Panthers to act. This power over people of color and women as White Supremacist Discourses intersect and overlap in the data.



Figure 41. A Hegemonically-Framed Identity (28TW25).

The second connection between the meanings of Beyoncé and issues of gender and power is that there is not one unitary discourse of gender with respect to Beyoncé in any of the platforms. Instead, like Vásquez and Sayers China (forthcoming) argue of Amazon review discourse, there are multiple competing discourses of gender both within and across platforms. I have already illustrated this with Pinterest examples above; within the same platform, Beyoncé may be gendered and racialized through a white supremacist male gaze (hooks, 1992), while she also serves as a representation of an oppositional gaze (hooks, 1992) as a Black woman.

This being said, there are definitely modal and platform based tendencies for gender and power that interconnect with larger, macro-considerations. In Twitter, there are 3 general trends with respect to gender. First, Beyoncé's identity as a performer with agency is the most common

identity in the Twitter data. This aligns with the heavy personalization of individual users using Beyoncé and Beyoncé's tours and shows to contextualize their own individual experiences, and broader trend across SNS to document and curate one's own personal experiences (Zappavigna, 2016). This performance identity, while representing agentive practice for a woman (Beyoncé is associated by what she *does*, and not how she looks, for example) is also politically-neutral; in other words, these tweets do not highlight her blackness or any other features of her identity other than performance. This is not to say that political stances are absent from Twitter, however. Not only are Beyoncé's political identities the third most frequent category of meaning, but when combined with hegemonically-framed and evaluative identities, Beyoncé's framing through sociopolitical stances, ideologies, and event increases to the second most common Beyoncé meanings.

Gender and race are realized both in ways that challenge sexist and racist discourses. One example includes the pro-black stance of a demand image of Beyoncé as visual agent performing at the Super Bowl with her quote about as a caption, *It makes me proud, and I wanted to make people feel proud, and have love for themselves* (28TW29); this quote originates from a post-Super Bowl 50 interview questioning Beyoncé about her goals of her performance, and thus references Beyoncé's desire for black folks *to be proud and have love for themselves*. Beyoncé semiotically links to, and becomes discursively representative of, issues related to blackness and social justice, as well. For example, in the tweet *Big up to #Beyoncé for using her very public voice to speak up against #policeviolence* (TW2840) the Twitter user praises Bey in AAE for discussing and standing against to issues of police violence and racial injustice saying, *big up to #Beyonce for using her very public voice*. This user references Beyoncé's inclusion of the mothers of slain sons most commonly identified with the Black Lives Matter movement in

her *Lemonade* visual album, in which these mothers hold up pictures of their deceased black children who died in altercations with police. In the same visual album, Beyoncé also incorporated images of a young black man with a hoodie, a visual intertextual reference to murdered black teenager Trayvon Martin, with his hands up in front of a firing squad of police officers. Her Super Bowl performance continued to highlight black activism, in artistic homage to Michael Jackson and the women and men of the Black Panthers movement.

One other realization of gendered and racialized challenges to hegemonic discourses includes Beyoncé's connections to black women and black feminism throughout the data. For example, the heavy inclusion of ST *#QueenBey*, *#BeyHive*, and *#BlackGirlMagic* exemplify this phenomenon. In Beyoncé fandom, she is referred to as the Queen, or *Queen Bey*, in analogy to a Queen Bee metaphor. Bey's fans are known as the *Bey Hive*, or the hive of loyal, adoring followers and supporters of their Queen. Black Girl Magic was created as ST (*#BlackGirlMagic*) in 2013 by black woman CaShawn Thompson in order to celebrate, affirm, and celebrate the resilience of black women and as a way for black women to affirm themselves and other black women and girls (Wilson, 2016). Wilson (2016) elaborates, "Black Girl Magic is a term used to illustrate the universal awesomeness of black women. It's about celebrating anything we deem particularly dope, inspiring, or mind-blowing about ourselves." (para. 4). The meaning of this phrase inherently creates a community of black women and connects black women to one another; in the frequent utilization of *#BlackGirlMagic* in conjunction with Beyoncé, this community connects to, and includes, Beyoncé as well.

Hegemonic discourses, and ones with very negative and violent realizations, also emerge, including Beyoncé being labeled *#bigoted*, *hate filled*, and *#racist* (28TW5), to arguing that *#Beyonce [sic] uses stereotypes and gets praise* (28TW15), to tweets claiming that *#Beyoncé*

and the #Black Panthers have one less way to pollute with a visual screenshot showing the user's reporting of the Black Panthers Facebook account as hateful and the account subsequently being banned. Twitter researchers have argued for the need to attention in this environment (Marwick, 2010; Ott, 2017), which may connect to the fast moving nature of the site and the condensed, brief structure of tweets. Politically framing gender and race is one way to garner attention, while the negativity of the sexist, racist, and hegemonically-framed identities of Beyoncé echo arguments of uncivil and divisive discourse in this platform (Ott, 2017).

Finally, gender and power interact within Twitter by user practices that assign a stereotypically sexist and heteronormative role to women in a novel, digital way. That is, women's bodies, generally, and black women's bodies, specifically, have been used as selling devices (hooks, 1992). This commodification of Beyoncé – through linguistic and visual references to her – is realized in Twitter through Beyoncé's digital identities, the second most frequent meaning category. In these instances, Beyoncé is either a commodity herself, representing a product to be sold (for example, as tickets to Beyoncé concerts or merchandise with her image), or she is click bait to gain attention to the content of an external link or to an external commercial site. These differ from Beyoncé selling her own items or presenting herself in potentially self-commodified ways, because in both instances, Beyoncé creates, shares, distributes, and/or sells those products and representations on her own – for and of herself. In this digital identity, others are either commodifying Beyoncé (creating a shirt with her image that is sold on a non-Beyoncé connected site) or are using her identity to sell and resell goods as services related to her (for example, reselling concert tickets). A critical difference, or feature, of these identities is that they are not created by Beyoncé; others are using her name, image, and indexical meanings, however. These meanings and practices weave together the common

affordances and modes of Twitter, text and hyperlinks, the importance of attention in the attention economy of SNS (Goldhaber, 1997), and connections between women, commodification, commerce, and consumerism (Marwick, 2014; Van Zoonen, 2001) to underscore, reify, and reproduce realizations of gender and power in Twitter.

Consumerism, commodification, and commerce also unite to characterize gender and power trends within Pinterest. First, as an image board SNS, appearance identities constitute most frequent meaning category for Beyoncé, while Beyoncé is modally more represented as a visual object rather than subject in such images. In this respect, traditionally phallogocentric views of women as objects through male gaze (hooks, 1992) are reproduced. Often in conjunction with attached links for users to buy or read about how to replicate elements of Beyoncé's makeup, hair, fashion, style, and or bodily characteristics, the gendered notion of women as consumers (Marwick, 2014; Van Zoonen) also entwines with such discourses. This particular notion is also particularly racialized (and also classed) in that this framing of women as consumers intersects and interacts with the underlying whiteness argued to be present in this space (Ottoni et al., 2013). Furthermore, as I have discussed previously, heavily commodified views of Beyoncé also whitewash her and often present her through a white phallogocentric gaze (hooks, 1992).

The second gender and power trend is that this commercialization in Pinterest is reflected in the second most frequent category of meaning in the site, Beyoncé as a digital identity. Just like discussed previously in Twitter, in Pinterest Beyoncé also becomes an attention-getting device to further function as hyperlinked or as a tool for click-baiting users. In connection with this particular framing of gender, overtly political stances and identities within Pinterest were missing from the data set; only 2 of 108 primary meanings involved Beyoncé's political identities. Heavily visual identities, such as athletic, celebrity, and performance identities may

position Beyoncé as a semiotic agent in that they relate to Beyoncé's actions rather than her appearance, yet they do so with visual representations of Beyoncé more often as the visual object than as a visual subject. Likewise, several of these identities on Pinterest link to the commodification or objectification of Beyoncé, such that her celebrity or performance identities emphasize her appearance, body, or fashion more than her agentive achievements. These identity categories are also missing awareness of Beyoncé's critical stances, connections to Black feminism and pro-blackness, and attention to issues of social justice. As such, the trend in Pinterest is to ignore key elements of Beyoncé's artistic work; in doing so, the meanings of Beyoncé in this data set deny several of her self-defining, self-actualizing and counterhegemonic facets, and in doing so, mitigate her blackness and her black womanhood by framing it through a white supremacist gaze (hooks, 1992).

In contradistinction, the trends for gender and power within Tumblr differ from those of Pinterest and Twitter. Like Twitter, the most frequent identities for Beyoncé are performance identities, which highlight, as I have mentioned repeatedly, Beyoncé's occupational agency. Tumblr, however, the second most frequent identity for Beyoncé relates to her character, personality, and influence, such as a post that references *Hamilton* composer Lin-Manuel Miranda's following only one person's music on a music SNS, and that was Beyoncé (528TUM26). Lin-Manuel Miranda is a Puerto Rican composer, performer, and writer who has also won an Emmy award, a Tony award, a Grammy award, and is a Pulitzer Prize winner; he is commonly known for creating and starring in the acclaimed Broadway musical *Hamilton*, which replaces the founding fathers with actors of color and includes hip hop, jazz, rap, and blues in its musical score. Furthermore, *Time Magazine* named him "One of the 100 most influential people in the world" in 2016 (Abrams, 2016). This Tumblr user's utilization of Lin-Manuel Miranda as

a follower of one, and only one musician, particularly given his popularity and fame contemporary musical icon, highlights and emphasizes Beyoncé's influence; this multiple award winner is a fan of Beyoncé. A second Tumblr post that reads *There are two kinds of people in this world: those who can be trusted and those who don't like Beyoncé* (28TUM05) frames Beyoncé's impact slightly differently. This user linguistically divides humans into two classes, those who *can be trusted*, meaning those who like Beyoncé, and those who cannot be trusted, meaning those *who don't like Beyoncé*. In essence, this user postulates that ability to be trusted correlates positively with the admiration of Beyoncé. A final example presents a different linguistic and visual representation of Beyoncé's personality and influence, this time focusing more on her character. In this post, a visual of Beyoncé links to an Instagram clip of a Beyoncé interview after her Super Bowl performance, where she Beyoncé says *It makes me proud, I wanted people to have love for themselves*. This image is captioned in in Tumblr with *Have love for yourself and enjoy the process of becoming a better you*, along with ST *#Beyoncé #Formation #Selflove*, and *#selfconfidence* (28TUM32). Here, the ST highlights Beyoncé and her performance, but also her characteristics of *self love* and *self confidence*. In the intersemiotic link to the video, this concept also extends to Bey's promotion of *self love* and *self confidence* in others. The linguistic text of the caption draws from Bey's words with the intertextual reference to them reframed in their own linguistic discourse, where the message changes to two Bey-inspired directives, *have love for yourself*, and *enjoy the process of becoming a better you*. In these examples, Beyoncé is defined by her character and who she is as an agentive woman, running counter to hegemonic discourses of black female objectification and subordination (hooks, 1992). Unlike Twitter and Pinterest, again, creative identities are third most frequent, and serve to underscore an agentive Beyoncé as a creative, active *doer*, consistent with the idea

that Tumblr is a platform associated with artistry and creativity (Bourlai and Herring, 2014; Walker, 2012)

In Tumblr, political identities interact with gender and power in a manner distinct from Twitter and Pinterest, as well. Like Twitter, Tumblr is highly political. Political identities of Beyoncé form the fourth largest category of primary meaning data; the only chat post, and two of the quote posts represent Beyoncé's political identities. What is missing in Tumblr, however, is the hostile, hegemonically-framed, and heavily racist and sexist Discourses found in some of the Twitter data. Twitter posts and comments may at times be dark and contentious (Ott, 2017), but these stances do not appear in Tumblr. In fact, when examining secondary meanings of Beyoncé, **all** secondary political meanings of Beyoncé on Tumblr were counterhegemonic, expressing Beyoncé as pro-black, a proud black woman, attentive to black rights and justice, and in conjunction with interrogations of whiteness and white privilege. In contrast to one tweet in Twitter that linked Beyoncé to *#capitalism* (28TW03), Tumblr also included several intersectional feminist and radical black feminist critiques of Beyoncé; examples include *Beyoncé is so privileged* (28TW41) and *I am also exhausted and disappointed with people acting like Beyoncé is a radical intersectional Black feminist. Why can she be a phenomenal and brilliant artist who is also a take no-prisoners capitalist?...* (28TUM08). In other words, within these counterhegemonic stances there are a range of perspectives and representations of Beyoncé. For example, some are more critical and question Beyoncé's capitalism, economic privilege, and celebrity, but do so in non-racist ways, unlike in Twitter. (In fact, most of these critiques are from radical black feminist viewpoints). Others praise Beyoncé's feminism, black feminism, and pro-black stances, but do so in ways that ignore or do not recognize her as privileged.

In addition to these praises and critiques as part of counterhegemonic stances, other intersectional identities emerge and interact with Beyoncé's political Black woman identities; one Tumblr user posts ...*Beyoncé brought the Black south into the conversation with "Formation"* with an offer image of Beyoncé and her all Black women dancers performing at the Super Bowl (28TUM36). Here, the user is making direct reference to Beyoncé's use of the word *bama*, along with mentions of *Louisiana, Creole, and Texas* in the song "*Formation.*" These localities reference Beyoncé identity as a Black Southerner, specifically, denoting the origins of her heritage; she also reappropriates *bama*, a derogatory term for poor country and rural black folk, in the song, claiming herself with the identity of a *bama*, as well. This illustrates the intersectional link between race, gender, locality, and class, where Beyoncé speaks to and challenges such the negative ideas of Black southern women by taking ownership of them as part of her identity. In another post, a visual image of rainbow-colored stadium performance with the ST #*Believe in Love* linked Beyoncé to issues of sexuality and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ) rights. As part of her Super Bowl performance with Coldplay, Beyoncé sang the song *Believe in Love* while the stadium was lit with rainbow colors, signifying alliance with, and support of, the LGBTQ movement. In invoking Beyoncé in this post, this Tumblr user highlights Bey's connection to LGBTQ movements, presenting a black woman who is also interested in sexuality rights, as well.

These integrations of issues of locality, sexuality, and class integrate through Tumblr in ways that challenge and oppose, or serve as resistance to (Flowerdew, 2008; Foucault, 1972) white supremacist and phallogentric perceptions of black women. Although they are unique in the data to Tumblr, these counterhegemonic meta-identities of Beyoncé and counterhegemonic Discourses of race and gender reflect the trends of marginalized community building and

alternative perspectives in Tumblr. That is, like Connelly (2015) and Fink and Miller (2014) discuss in their analysis of feminist communities and LGBTQ communities, Tumblr provides a space for agency, voice, and visibility of marginalized groups and perspectives. Beyoncé, a figure with a dominant public voice and hypervisibility, serves as a linguistic and visual tool to unite, voice, and make visible the perspectives of alternative groups. The creatively allowed by integrating multiple modes may facilitate such practices; and this counterhegemony may potentially be due to the affordance of users only being able to comment on posts which they reblog, and thus take ownership of.

I will end this RQ with an example that illustrates the interaction of gender, power, and macro contextual factors. I show how one semiotic resource, an image of Beyoncé, can be used for different meanings of Beyoncé, as well as how competing Discourses circulate through the users practices in the data set.

Beyoncé as a subject and object in Pinterest and Tumblr. In this analysis, I analyze and compare two pins from Pinterest to illustrate the connections between the micro structures of the pins and macro-level discourses and subject positions. The pins are displayed in Figure 42. In the first pin, 528PIN47 Beyoncé is the grammatical subject of the heading *Beyonce [sic] delivers* and of the summary statement *Beyonce [sic] gets*; in each case this subject also functions as the grammatical agent, or the performance of an action/agentive verb. In each case, these are constative speech acts that describe, but also construct, social reality. In this pin, these speech acts serve primarily to provide information to the reader; they give the title and a description of a hyperlinked article while also framing and constructing Beyoncé's performance linguistically. These summaries of attached links that try to catch the reader's attention to click and read the attached article; this is heightened by the use of keywords *political* used twice, once even

intensified as *highly political*, as well as the controversial *Black lives*, referring to *Black Lives Matter*. With respect to visual positioning, here Beyoncé is the visual subject of the image; more

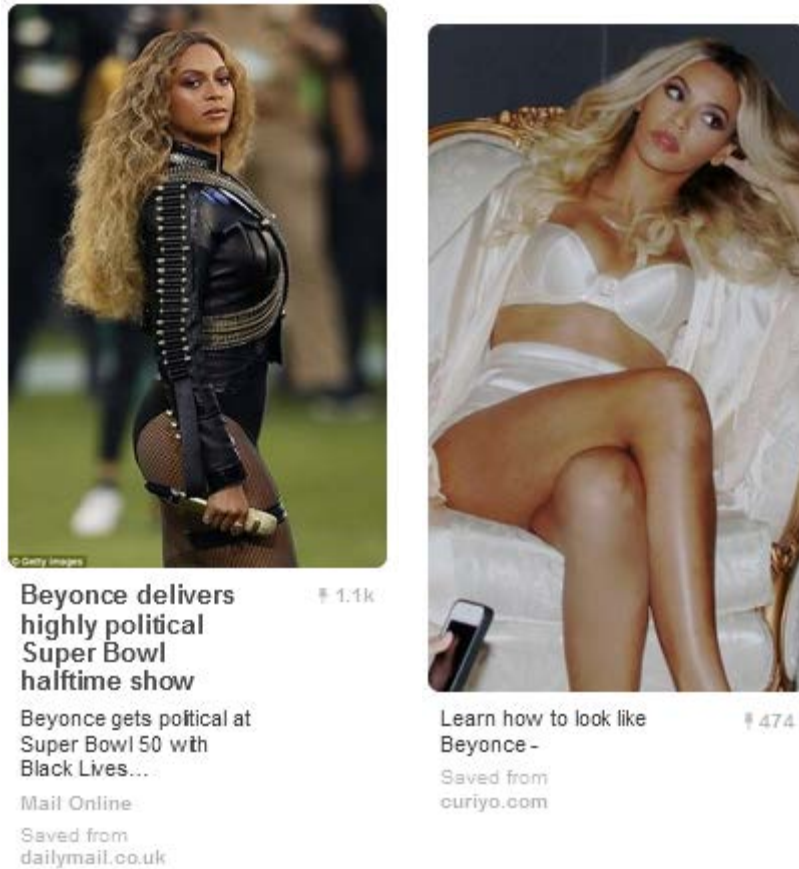


Figure 42. Subject (528PIN47) and object (528PIN42) pins from Pinterest.

specifically, she is the subject of demand image act in which she, by her direct gaze, she pragmatically and visually confronts or challenges to the viewer. When interpreting her other features, such as her lowered arms, her direct gaze without a smile, and the angle of her body compared to her face, she is demanding the viewer's attention – a visual representation of pragmatic distancing. This distancing is embedded in a visual image which contains symbolic meanings and visual intertextuality, or intertextual references to the Black Panthers movement and to Michael Jackson via Beyoncé's clothes and the gold microphone; these references

heightened the political element and the visual and textual expressions of blackness of the photo and pin.

This representation of Beyoncé contrasts with pin 528PIN42. In this example, Beyoncé is not the grammatical subject like in pin 528PIN47. Instead, she is the syntactic complement and the semantic goal in the commissive speech act *Learn to look like Beyonce [sic]*. Commissive speech acts are types of promise or offers to the reader; following the attached link leads the reader to the route of fulfilment for this speech act and the realization of looking like the semantic goal, *Beyonce [sic]*. The discursive function of the written text is to foreground the interpretation of the visual picture with the key words *learn* and *look like*. Within the image Beyoncé functions as a visual object. That is, when considering the functional role of the greater image in which she is embedded, the subject of the view is invisible in this offer image act; Beyoncé, by her indirect gaze away from the camera is the object of the invisible viewer's scrutiny. The viewer is the visual subject here. With respect to intersemiotic relationships, the image serves as a visual representation of the linguistic goal of the speech act; the hyperlink to the external site that provides the information for how to *learn* this *look*. Finally, this picture also represents an analytical structure in which Beyoncé is the Carrier of attributes including her hair and clothing (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006).

In moving into macro-level analysis, I argue that these two pins as multimodal ensembles present two distinct meanings for, and realizations of Beyoncé: Beyoncé as a (meta) subject and Beyoncé as a (meta) object. These realizations are supported by both the visual and linguistic resources used; the linguistic and visual intersemiotically support one another. In the first image Beyoncé appears as a subject in her gaze, as she demands the viewer to stay away; her physical stance, the angle of her eyes, her lack of smile, and her body positioned to the left reinforce this

warning to the viewer. In addition, her agency is underscored by the primacy of covering over her body; the only bare skin visible is her face and hand. (This compares, for example, to my previous discussion of Figures 38 and 39, respectively). Her body also faces away from the viewer, obscuring the viewer's site of it; the viewer engages with her gaze and her face, and not directly with her body. She is holding a microphone, implying action, again, and she is foregrounded in contrast to a blurred background at the center of the frame, intensifying this action and her perceived strength. Linguistically she *delivers*, insinuating that she not only performs, but achieves in her performance; furthermore, she *gets* political. The references to *delivering a highly political performance* and to *gets political* also underscore her agency again as a thinking agent capable of political action.

While the linguistic text does not directly label how Beyoncé *gets political* and only implies this with the phrase *Black Lives...*, the image does; it provides the evidence of this act. In this way, the image communicates what the language does not. In other words, the linguistic message of the post sets up a specific frame, but does not complete that frame; the image, however, does. That is, while the both the visual and linguistic resources highlight Beyoncé as an agentive woman, the visual resources present Beyoncé as an agentive Black woman underscoring Beyoncé's blackness (and particularly when compared to 528PIN42). She intertextually references visual images of Blackness though not only the color of her outfit and her natural curly hair, but also through her clothing reminiscent of both Michael Jackson and the Black Panthers. This presents an agentive stance for a Black woman, particularly as Black women's bodies have often been portrayed not through their own interpretations, but filtered through white men's gaze (Noble, 2013); it is also highly political to present oneself as a self-actualized and self-defined Black woman (hooks, 1992).

Such agency becomes even more apparent when comparing the pins. In this latter multimodal ensemble (528PIN42) Beyoncé is realized as an object both linguistically and visually. Here, she is the functions as the goal, the promise of a linguistic commissive speech act; if the reader follows the advice, she can *look like Beyoncé*. The image provides the visual realization of this goal; note, however, that the Beyoncé of this image is not the agentive Beyoncé of Pin 528PIN47. The Beyoncé of 528PIN42 is positioned as a visual object in an offer image act and as a carrier of attributes of beauty and sexuality. Her gaze to the right, with raised eyebrows and pouty lips creates an off-image fantasy for the viewer; her bare legs are foregrounded and contrast with the stark white of her lingerie. The horizontal angle and size of frame position Beyoncé closer to the viewer, and in a more intimate social distance, in contrast with the other pin, yet do so with her body more exposed. Her frontal body position reads as inviting to the viewer. Interestingly, however, the slight vertical angle, in which the camera shoots Beyoncé slightly from below, presents Beyoncé as having more power than the viewer, as such angles serve as a sign of respect and adoration; the rest of the linguistic resources, however, illustrate this relative “power” as one of sexual agency in objecthood (Sayers China, 2002), where any agency is filtered through others’ gaze.

The visual imagery present in this multimodal ensemble, unlike Pin 528PIN47, does not index Blackness and Black womanhood. In this photo, Beyoncé’s hair is straightened, she is presented in all-white clothing on an all-white chair, and her nose appears to have been subjected to image manipulation to make it smaller, which is ironic because in “Formation,” her song about pride in her own identity, Beyoncé sings, *I like my Negro nose with my Jackson 5 nostrils* (Knowles, Brown, Frost, Hogan, & Williams II, 2016). Despite these white-washed features, however, this image does share something in common with traditional media depictions of Black

women; that is, Black women and Black women's bodies have often been portrayed as hypersexualized (Noble, 2013).

Considering another aspect of analysis, the hypertextual links, further illustrates macro-contextual meaning making in these differing multimodal ensembles. 528PIN47 originates from *Mail Online*, an online British tabloid newspaper, while 528PIN42 comes from *Curiyo*, a software delivery product, operating as an app within Pinterest. More specifically, *Curiyo* is “a consumer retention and engagement product that identifies key terms on your site/app and improves readers' experience by allowing them to interact to discover relevant content without leaving your site/app” (Rosenschein, 2016, n.p.). In the case of this search, *Curiyo* identified this content (either Beyoncé or #Beyoncé) from a now defunct fashion and beauty website, *Drop Dead Gorgeous.com*.

These macro-textual origins, however, affect the content of both the images and language presented in each pin. It seems that *Mail Online*, allegedly a conservative website, seeks to attract readers by highlighting Beyoncé's politics and political stance; because this stance may disalign with and anger their readers, they may highlight this political stance in order to get a reaction from viewers. Hence, an agentic Beyoncé is relevant here for enticing readers to click and read their online content. If Beyoncé were presented as more whitewashed, and as less of a strong Black woman, (as in the other pin), she would not be interpreted as being so political. In this image in particular, Beyoncé displays, as bell hooks (1992) argues, an “oppositional gaze” – an act of resistance to white supremacy and domination. The author elaborates,

Spaces of agency exist for black people, wherein we can both interrogate the gaze of the Other but also look back, and at one another, naming what we see. The ‘gaze’ has been and is a site of resistance for colonized black people.” (hooks, 1992, p.116)

This act of gaze, therefore would serve as precisely the type of provocation to allure conservative readers into investigating this content.

However, in contrast, the goal for a beauty and fashion site would be to highlight traditional and conventional physical attributes and to downplay the political in favor of the physical; in this case, the attributes more associated with whiteness would predominate, as a colonizing whiteness serves as the standard of beauty (hooks, 1992). That is, such sites would emphasize the stereotypical and heteronormative images of what is desirable. Therefore, there can be no “oppositional gaze” in this picture; instead, Beyoncé is both hypersexualized as a Black woman (Noble, 2013) and whitewashed, with her features made to appear more congruent with white standards of beauty.

Interesting, the same visual image as in 528PIN47 also occurs in SNS Tumblr. Unlike in Pinterest, however, it does not link to a conservative site; this conservative perspective was not found in the Tumblr data set. Instead, this image, seen in Figure 43 stands alone as a visual post with a caption only, *Beyoncé performing at the Pepsi Super Bowl 50 Halftime Show*. In this post, the visual imaging and meanings discussed above are still applicable here; the text also positions Beyoncé as a linguistic subject and agent of an active verb, *Beyoncé*. The primary differences, however, are platform and macro-contextually based. In the entire Pinterest data set, only 2 of 108 meanings referenced a political (and in both cases, pro-Black) Beyoncé; one is the post above that links to an article that critique her political activism. Otherwise, Beyoncé’s identities emphasize her appearance and her use a digital attention-getting device. I argue that this political, pro-Black, self-defined Black woman and subject Beyoncé exists in Pinterest because of its link to the conservative site, its intention to incite a reaction, and its inherent commercial interests. In contrast, counterhegemony is the norm in Tumblr, so a political, pro-Black, self-

defined Black woman and subject Beyoncé is able to serve as a stand-alone post (and perhaps was curated by a user *because* of its meanings) in this less commercialized space. Thus, the same semiotic resource – that is, this particular image of Beyoncé – may carry similar meanings on the microlevel, but may reflect different relationships with, and frameworks of, gender and power, depending on the platforms and its affordances, and also what links and other textual information combine with it in a multimodal ensemble.



Figure 43. Beyoncé as a visual subject (28TUM31).

In sum, I have illustrated that gendered meanings are complex and realized in competing ways, but that race and gender are intersectionally realized in the data. Contrasting discourses of gender and race may appear both within platforms and across platforms, despite affordance-based gender tendencies. Finally, with a focused and comparative analysis of two pins and a

Tumblr post, I argue that the same linguistic resource – in this case, an image of Beyoncé – may interact differently with meaning, gender, and power depending on its contextualized deployment within a SNS platform.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I summarize and discuss the findings of this research study. Then, I overview the implications of the research for digital communication. Finally, I present study limitations and directions for further research.

Discussion and Conclusion

In chapter 4, I illustrated how 13 primary and secondary meaning categories emerged in the data: Beyoncé was realized by performance, digital, personality and character, appearance, political, creative, relational, remix, evaluative, athletic, economic, celebrity, and hegemonically-framed identities. In addition, she was positioned more as a visual object, than a subject in images of her. I argued that hegemonically-framed identities and evaluative identities required linguistic text for their expression, while athletic identities and celebrity identities were only expressed visually. Digital identities, an identity that is only digitally-based and expressed, necessitate links in their multimodal ensembles.

I then discussed the overall tendencies of each platform with respect to meaning, gender, and power. Tumblr, as argued by Ott (2017) and Connelly (2015) served as the site for expressions and circulations of identities of Beyoncé based on her creativity, performance agency, and personality and characteristics. Gender and power, in Tumblr, was counterhegemonic and resistant to racist, sexist, and white supremacist discourses. In Tumblr, Beyoncé meanings represented oppositional gaze (hooks, 1992). In contrast, the heavy commercialization and visual focus in Pinterest, combined with its demographic base of white, middle class, women (Ottoni et al., 2013), presented appearance and performance identities of

Beyoncé, as well as digital identities where she was used for attention getting purposes. Here the overwhelming realizations of gender and power were based on phallogocentric gaze (1992), with Beyoncé visually and linguistically objectified, along with trope of women as consumers (Marwick, 2014; van Zoonen, 2001). Political identities were rare (2 of 108 primary meanings) and were the only overt racialized primary meanings. Twitter practices presented competing discourses of gender and of Beyoncé's agency. Due to the heavy political nature of Twitter, Beyoncé's performance based identities and the pro-black, pro-woman, and pro-racial justice meanings emerged, alongside evaluative and hegemonically-framed identities labeling Beyoncé as racist and anti-cop; Beyoncé as an agent in performance identities was also most frequent in the data. However, digital identities, where Beyoncé was commodified or used as click bait, was the second most frequent realization of primary meaning. These meanings connect to and help underscore competing discourses of gender and power in Twitter. On the one hand, a resistant, pro-black, feminist agentive Beyoncé emerges, while on the other hand, white supremacist gaze and racism calqued on sexism, and gendered commodification presents an objectified Beyoncé. This division, however, echoes sentiments found in other research projects; attention, derision, and polarization characteristic Twitter discourse practices (Ott, 2017).

In conclusion, I argue two final points. First, I suggest that this project shows how there is no one static meaning of Beyoncé. The mobilization of Beyoncé, through ST and other resources, allows for entextualization, or extracting text from one context and then integrating it into a new context (Androutsopoulos, 2014; Blommaert, 2005; Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Leppänen, Kytölä, Samu, Peuronen, & Westinen, 2014). Beyoncé becomes a cultural object subject to interpretation; as such, hidden ST, as a search engine tool, also becomes a tool of entextualization. Entextualized meanings, however, are subject to both platform and modal

affordances and constraints, as well as dominant community values and norms. In essence, there are structural factors within platforms and modes that may shape representations, but it is users who interact in those platforms and modes, and ultimately choose to engage in SNS practices.

I next argue that these reinterpretations of Beyoncé through entextualization and user practices have two results. First, these practices embedded within layers of context in SNS illustrate *how* indexicality and indexical meanings are created and maintained (Silverstein, 1976). Indexicality refers to indirect references based on shared cultural assumptions; with respect to language, gender, and power, indexicality is often the site of covert racism and sexism in discourses (Hill, 1998). For example, prior to the Super Bowl performance, I would assert that Beyoncé being framed in a counterhegemonic anti-cop identity would not have existed; now, that idea was replicated across several SNS posts. This concept of Beyoncé's anti-cop sentiment initiated from a Fox News segment with Rudy Giuliani, former mayor of New York city, when he called Beyoncé's performance and song "Formation" anti-cop. This idea was then disseminated through social media discourses, even by those unfamiliar with the song¹⁵.

Finally, I suggest that these processes of entextualization highlighted in this project, particularly with respect to the findings of visual positioning, prioritize experience as an epistemological framework for meaning creation. Ott (2017) argues that discursive practices in SNS have shifted epistemologies such that more Americans receive news from SNS rather than traditional media sources. The trend toward visual resources, and offer images, specifically, the use of Beyoncé to contextualize user experience, and the frequency of evaluative identities grounded in user experiences and perspectives seems to privilege a different domain of experience; instead of the abstract, linear, and discontinuous elements of language, this data

¹⁵ For example, in one Twitter post in the data set the user admits that they did not hear the lyrics to Beyoncé's song very well, yet they added, *...but apparently it's anti-cop?*

privileges the sensorial, spatial, and continuous (Iedema, 2003, p.47). Drawing from Zappavigna (2016), users seem to construe different types of of visual and linguistic co-presence in their curation of dimensions of experience (p.13) and in the interactions with, comments about, and curation of experiences around Beyoncé.

Implications for Digital Communication Studies

These preliminary findings illustrate the importance of considering multimodality in digital practices. Throughout the data set, images contained elements of meaning missing from an analysis of language alone, while the language served to anchor, ground, and contextualize the images. I argue that meaning relates to mode, such that certain meanings, like Beyoncé's athletic identities, only occurred in images, while Beyoncé's digital identities only appeared in posts with embedded or attached hyperlinks. Focusing on one mode only may obscure potential meanings and meaning making potentials.

Similarly, this project also highlights the need for deep, contextual analysis of SNS posts. Historically SNS research, generally, and on Twitter, specifically, has focused on big data, or large corpora analyzed statistically for trends (boyd, 2010). I assert that the ethnographic focus of posts within platforms helps to elucidate distinctions that may be missing from the decontextualization that big data, while helpful, can provide.

Limitations of the Study

This project has some limitations. First, I must acknowledge that this study presents an in-depth, detailed analysis, of a snapshot in time (Blommaert, 2013), of fundamentally fluid, complex, and dynamic online phenomena. Because of the ever-changing nature of the internet, generally, and of SNS content, specifically, temporality is a key contextual factor in interpretation. Shifts in time, however, co-occur with shifts in both online and offline contexts;

meanings situated in such contexts also may vary. In that vein, this study can be replicated using the data presented or by gathering this data exact again, but it cannot be duplicated across time without potentially vastly different results. #Beyoncé, Beyoncé, and the d/Discourses and in which they are embedded, only convey the meanings described in this project in the contextualizations and time frames given here; attempting to extract these meanings from their vast web of context and time, to generalize extensively about these meanings across other platforms, or to present anything other than the realizations of these meanings as spatio-temporality situated and embedded within complex, contextualized systems of meanings would not meet the aims of this project. I am arguing that Beyoncé functions and means what it does only in these specific times, spaces, and relationships with other semiotic signs. Generalizability is not my goal; deep understanding and thick description (Geertz, 1973) of a highly situated phenomenon is.

That being said, I must also acknowledge that these discourses and Discourses, as digital practices, cannot be generalizable to offline spaces or “communities.” Underscoring my feminist reflexivity, I would be remiss not to recognize that the internet still operates in a “digital divide” (Morrow, Hawkins, & Kern, 2015; Tagg, 2015), where its access along with use of SNS is not equal, and is denied based on class, race, country of origin, gender, ability, language, and other social, political, economic, and cultural factors. As I have previously mentioned, other researchers have argued that there are more female than male users of Pinterest and Tumblr (Bourlai and Herring, 2014; Marwick, 2014), and that users of Pinterest are primarily white, middle class women (Ottoni et al., 2014). Statistica (2018) also reports that most SNS users now access social networks on mobile devices, which may directly connect to external accessibility issues of class, ability, and other cultural factors. While I recognize that the access to and use of

SNS is not equal or homogenous across given populations of users, I do not aim, in this project, to delimit essential community boundaries or characteristics, online or offline, of SNS users, other than recognizing them as Tumblr, Pinterest, or Twitter users.

In addition, there is limited linguistic research on Tumblr and Pinterest, so my methods of gathering Tumblr and Pinterest data have little verification or support from other research projects. I am moving into methodologically “uncharted waters” by exploring ST in Tumblr and in Pinterest. Likewise, research discussing audience in SNS (Tagg, 2015) has illustrated that one post may be dually-addressed to a general audience and a specific audience simultaneously. In a similar vein, without triangulation from the SNS users’ themselves, I may be missing elements of meaning in both considerations. However, although I am not a direct outsider as a user and consumer of this content, I, like Gee (2014) mentions, acknowledge the plurality of possible interpretations. Finally, although it is hard to call my data representative due to the massive amount of tweets generated compared to my sample size; however, I did reach data saturation. Nevertheless, I am trusting Twitter, Tumblr, and Pinterest’s internal search engines for results to replicate what a “typical” user might find; however, in reality, algorithms and interconnected web data means that different users will inevitably be presented with varied search engine results.

Directions for Future Research

Building on this very preliminary analysis, I suggest three primary areas for future research. First, it would be interesting to explore visual analysis more deeply across SNS. In this project I focused on visual positioning, but looking more closely at complimentary aspects of frame, camera angle, and narrative versus analytical structures in photos (Kress and van

Leeuwen, 2006) may elucidate additional interesting meaning trends and contribute more to the knowledge of how visual structures are used as communicative tools in SNS.

Second, due to the limited research that compares meaning across SNS, adding other SNS, such as Instagram and Snap Chat, may help expand the understanding of meaning making, generally, and visually-based meaning making, specifically. Given that both of these SNS are image-based, they would provide a distinctive point of analysis from which to compare and contrast the findings of meaning in Pinterest.

Finally, in this study I limited the intersectional framework to only two of the matrices of domination (Hill Collins, 2007) – race and gender. Future projects could explore more meaning making with respect to other identities, including ability, class, and sexuality, for example. The present data suggests connections to class and locality, as well as to LGBTQ rights and issues of sexuality and heteronormativity.

Contributions of the Study

In spite of the limitations and directions for future, I contribute to several areas of knowledge and understanding about SNS, multimodality, and digital discourses practices. My first contribution is theoretical. I combined social semiotics, visual and multimodal analysis, feminist and critical race theories, and a digital ethnographic approach in ways that had not been previously combined in exploring SNS.

Methodologically, I am the one of the first studies to compare the same types of discourse practices and meanings across SNS platforms, and the first (to my knowledge) to specifically compare Twitter, Tumblr, and Pinterest. My study can be used to inform future methodologies of cross-platform research, as well as data collection methods within Tumblr and Pinterest, two highly under-researched SNS. My approach was both novel and groundbreaking.

With respect to the disciplines of sociolinguistics and digital discourse analysis, I have contributed a greater understanding of the connections between modes, platform affordances, and trends, and was able to highlight some platform specific trends in the data.

Practically, I have illustrated some of the racist, sexist, homophobic, and hegemonic meanings spread through SNS, as well as some of the processes by which these meanings are constructed and represented. This can help those of us who work for social justice and emancipatory practices to better understand, explain, and work against such meanings.

Additionally, and most importantly, I have also elucidated that SNS do have the possibility to realize at least some of the emancipatory and positive ideals expected and extolled in the early advent of the internet. That is, SNS users utilize Beyoncé in ways of which she would most likely be proud, in meanings that centralize the concerns, issues, and voices of Black folks and POC, women, the LGBTQ community, and other marginalized groups. Ultimately, I am proud to highlight Beyoncé as an emancipatory and decolonizing semiotic resource in SNS where Bey allows marginalized groups the ability *to be proud of themselves*.

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APPENDIX

INSTRUCTIONS

Check all boxes that apply, and keep a copy of this form for your records. If you have questions, please contact the USF General Counsel or your USF Tampa Library Copyright Librarian.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Class or Project: _____

Title of Copyrighted Work: _____

PURPOSE AND CHARACTER OF THE USE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use) <input type="checkbox"/> Research or Scholarship <input type="checkbox"/> Criticism, Parody, News Reporting or Comment <input type="checkbox"/> Transformative Use (your new work relies on and adds new expression, meaning, or message to the original work) <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted Access (to students or other appropriate group) <input type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> Bad-faith behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Denying credit to original author <input type="checkbox"/> Non-transformative or exact copy <input type="checkbox"/> Made accessible on Web or to public <input type="checkbox"/> Profit-generating use

Overall, the purpose and character of your use supports fair use or does not support fair use.

NATURE OF THE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input type="checkbox"/> Factual or nonfiction <input type="checkbox"/> Important to favored educational objectives <input type="checkbox"/> Published work	<input type="checkbox"/> Creative or fiction <input type="checkbox"/> Consumable (workbooks, tests) <input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished

Overall, the nature of the copyrighted material supports fair use or does not support fair use.

AMOUNT AND SUBSTANTIALITY OF MATERIAL USED IN RELATION TO WHOLE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input type="checkbox"/> Small amount (using only the amount necessary to accomplish the purpose) <input type="checkbox"/> Amount is important to favored socially beneficial objective (i.e. educational objectives) <input type="checkbox"/> Lower quality from original (ex. Lower resolution or bitrate photos, video, and audio)	<input type="checkbox"/> Large portion or whole work <input type="checkbox"/> Portion used is qualitatively substantial (i.e. it is the 'heart of the work') <input type="checkbox"/> Similar or exact quality of original work

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Overall, the amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole supports fair use or does not support fair use.

EFFECT ON THE MARKET FOR ORIGINAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input type="checkbox"/> No significant effect on the market or potential market for the original <input type="checkbox"/> No similar product marketed by the copyright holder <input type="checkbox"/> You own a lawfully acquired copy of the material <input type="checkbox"/> The copyright holder is unidentifiable <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of licensing mechanism for the material	<input type="checkbox"/> Replaces sale of copyrighted work <input type="checkbox"/> Significantly impairs market or potential market for the work <input type="checkbox"/> Numerous copies or repeated, long-term use <input type="checkbox"/> Made accessible on Web or to public <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable and reasonably available permissions or licensing

Overall, the effect on the market for the original supports fair use or does not support fair use.

CONCLUSION

The combined purpose and character of the use, nature of the copyrighted material, amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole and the effect on the market for the original likely supports fair use or likely does not support fair use.

Note: Should your use of copyrighted material not support fair use, you may still be able to locate and request permissions from the copyright holder. For help on this, please feel free to [contact your Copyright Librarian](#).

This worksheet has been adapted from:

Cornell University's Checklist for Conducting A Fair use Analysis Before Using Copyrighted Materials:

https://copyright.cornell.edu/policies/docs/Fair_Use_Checklist.pdf

Crews, Kenneth D. (2008) Fair use Checklist. Columbia University Libraries Copyright Advisory Office.

<http://copyright.columbia.edu/copyright/files/2009/10/fairusechecklist.pdf>

Smith, Kevin; Macklin, Lisa A.; Gilliland, Anne. A Framework for Analyzing any Copyright Problem. Retrieved from:

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