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But First, Let Me Take a Selfie: A Content Analysis of Male and
Female Celebrity Selfies on Instagram

Maureen Grace Elinzano

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

But First, Let Me Take a Selfie: A Content Analysis of Male and Female Celebrity Selfies on Instagram

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The purpose of this research is to analyze the differences between women and men and their selfies on the popular social media application Instagram. Past research and notions in popular culture show that women take more selfies than men do, and that they place more time and effort into their selfies than men do. The goal is to show that women may not solely do the action of taking and posting selfies and that the stereotype of taking and posting selfies being a feminine action should not be prevalent. We conducted a thorough visual content analysis of selfies on Instagram taken and posted by twelve of the most notorious celebrities who take selfies, including Kim Kardashian-West, Justin Bieber, LeBron James, and Kylie Jenner. Through research that on self-portraits in art history and through detailed analysis of the selfies of both the female and male celebrities, the research demonstrates that the stereotype of only women taking and posting selfies on social media is transient.

Keywords: selfies, social media, Instagram, gender, stereotype

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But First, Let Me Take a Selfie: A Content Analysis of Male and Female Celebrity Selfies on Instagram

Introduction

On November 19, 2013, the Oxford English Dictionary announced that “selfie” was their international Word of the Year for 2013. A “selfie” is defined as a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and uploaded to a social media website (Oxford English Dictionary, 2013a). Besides its official introduction into the English language, the selfie became a prominent symbol of modern society through its diffusion into popular culture, with the many famous figures and celebrities who have posted selfies on their Twitter and Instagram accounts for the entire world to see. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a *selfie* is a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and uploaded to a social media website (Oxford English Dictionary, 2013a). Selfies are private portraits and avatars of ourselves that are made instantly public to the entire world through social media networks like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat.

The 2014 summer hit song, “#Selfie,” by New York City-based dance DJ duo The Chainsmokers, has become more than a track on a nightclub playlist—it has become a musical ode to a cultural phenomenon and an official anthem for the generation that invented the word (Lancaster, 2014). The song is sung by a party girl as she chronicles her escapades on her night out with her friends. From wondering why the DJ keeps playing “Summertime Sadness” by Lana Del Rey to analyzing the woman that she saw hanging around her boyfriend Jason, the party girl repeatedly references taking a selfie as her night progresses. Furthermore, the song also mentions the roller coaster of emotions and stress that are the phases before and after a selfie is posted, including the very crucial decision of which filter on Instagram to utilize in order to look a certain way (*I don't know if I should go with XX Pro or Valencia/I wanna look tanned*) to the

equally important caption for the selfie (*What should my caption be?/I want it to be clever*) to the instant self-esteem check (*I only got 10 likes in the last 5 minutes/Do you think I should take it down?*) (MetroLyrics.com, 2014).

The duo, composed of Andrew Taggart and Alex Pall, claimed that the summer jam, which climbed up the *Billboard*, iTunes, and Spotify charts upon its release and whose music video has raked in tens of millions of views on YouTube, did not have a hidden didactic message about the consequences that selfies have on society. Rather, “#Selfie” was a satire that was meant to be taken at face value and was meant to be both funny and entertaining (Lancaster, 2014). Taggart and Pall, in the midst of their popularity in creating the official anthem of the selfie generation, even made fun of the subject of their fame by categorizing the six types of selfies that every girl takes in an article, including the “No Makeup selfie” and the “I’m out YOLOing selfie” (Wenerd, 2014).

Celebrities such as reality television star Kim Kardashian West—the queen of selfies—and “the selfie king” James Franco have garnered attention in the media for both the frequency and the revealing nature of their selfies (Woodward, 2014a; Saltz, 2014). Last year, Kardashian took a selfie of her whole figure—including her famous backside while wearing a white leotard—reflected from a mirror that was posted on Instagram shortly after she gave birth to her daughter North (Carissimo, 2014). The photograph was typical of the reality television star’s revealing selfies, but to further the validity of the selfie, Kardashian posted it with the hashtag #NoFilter,¹ referring to Kardashian not utilizing an Instagram filter when posting the photo

¹ #NoFilter is a popular hashtag that is utilized in posts on Instagram and other social media apps and websites when a photo or video is posted without being edited with a photo-enhancing filter which comes from either the app itself (Instagram, for example, has various filters including Juno, Lo-Fi, and Nashville) or through a third-party app (VSCOcam, for example).

(Kardashian, 2014).

Along with the many actors, musicians, television stars, and athletes that have popularized selfies (*The Huffington Post*, 2013), the prominence of politicians taking and posting selfies has received its fair share of scrutiny. In December 2013, Agence France-Press (AFP) photographer Roberto Schmidt took a picture of a selfie that was never posted on social media, but garnered media attention and criticism because of the subjects involved. Schmidt, while covering the memorial service for former South African president Nelson Mandela in Johannesburg, photographed Danish prime minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt taking a selfie with President Barack Obama and British Prime Minister David Cameron (Sanchez, 2013). The picture permeated social media websites like Twitter and became headline news with the focus being on First Lady Michelle Obama, who is shown in the picture with a “stern look” on her face next to the selfie-taking world leaders (Schmidt, 2013). Critics worldwide decried Obama, Thorning-Schmidt, and Cameron for engaging in such frivolity during a historic event and the selfie became known as the “click heard around the world” (Larson, 2013).

In a blog post written about the controversy behind “that selfie,” Thorning-Schmidt defended the three world leaders, saying that the atmosphere during the memorial, which took place in FNB Stadium (Sanchez, 2013), was like a carnival. It was totally relaxed, and South Africans all around them were dancing, singing, and laughing in celebration of their departed leader. The world leaders were “acting like human beings,” that a world leader taking a selfie was “perfectly natural,” and that the picture of “that selfie” portrayed the true feelings that South Africans had towards a leader that was also a father-figure to them. Moreover, Schmidt stated that First Lady Obama's stern look was “captured by chance.” “That selfie” became headline news both on social media and in the news and it demonstrated the prevalence of the selfie—an

image of people taking a selfie at a historic event got more attention than the event itself (Schmidt, 2013).

In April 2014, the official White House Instagram account posted a selfie that featured President Obama and Vice President Joe Biden while traveling to Oakdale, Pennsylvania in a limo with the caption “Pals” (Zezima, 2014). Vice President Biden originally posted the selfie on his own Instagram account with the caption, “Found a friend to join my first selfie on Instagram. Thanks for following and stay tuned. - VP” (Biden, 2014). Like the selfie taken at Mandela’s memorial, President Obama took another controversial selfie earlier in April 2014 with Red Sox baseball star David Ortiz, which was an orchestrated public relations stunt for Samsung and was rumored to be the cause for a possible ban on selfies at the White House (Horowitz, 2014).

But with all the criticism that Obama received for his penchant for a good selfie and for being like every person in the world with a camera on their smartphones, the leader of the free world was voted social media's favorite politician in the United Kingdom in 2014, the only non-British politician to have appeared in the poll (Williams, 2014b).

Another prominent world leader, Narendra Modi, the prime minister of India, posted a selfie on Twitter of himself after voting in the nation's elections late April 2014. While holding the lotus flower symbol of his political party—the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—with his inked finger, Prime Minister Modi smiled with the accompanying caption saying “Voted! Here is my selfie” (Taylor, 2014). Although the 64-year-old politician was accused of flouting Indian election law and rules by posting the selfie, Modi was perceived as a game changer in terms of fixing the corruption and economic mismanagement that occurred in past governments (Agencies, 2014; Taylor, 2014). His initiatives included a developmental plan that includes reliable power and water, decent roads, flourishing industry, less political corruption, and a

government founded on continual optimism (Roberts, 2014).

Like Obama, Modi has embraced social media and the selfie itself outshone the criticism with the prime minister having boasted more than three million followers on Twitter. Also, like Obama's presidential victory in 2012, Modi's use of social media during the election was stated to be one of his keys to victory with 100 million of the 815 million voters in April's elections having been young, first-time voters who frequently use Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook—India's first social media election (Taylor, 2014; Khullar & Haridasani, 2014). Modi's social media presence preceded his election as prime minister of India in May 2014 with Modi having taken selfies with supporters for his Instagram account, and with his voting selfie having spurred the hashtag, “#SelfieWithModi,” resulting in hundreds of posts (Taylor, 2014).

Even the British royal family are “selfie-ing” with Prince William having taken a selfie with 12-year-old Madison Lambe in Sandringham, England on Christmas Day 2013 (Perry, 2014). The prince also took one using a “Twitter Mirror” (an iPad in a frame) at Buckingham Palace with brother Prince Harry and 23-year-old Internet entrepreneur Jamal Edwards while promoting the Queen's Young Leaders Program in July 2014 (Duboff, 2014a). William's wife, the Duchess Kate Middleton, photobombed a selfie that was taken by a teenager in New Zealand in April 2014 during the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge's Australia and New Zealand tour (Duboff, 2014b). Queen Elizabeth II photobombed a selfie taken by Australian hockey team members Jayde Taylor and Brooke Peris during the 2014 Commonwealth Games. The latter was subsequently posted on Taylor's Instagram account and Anna Flanagan's Twitter account with the appropriate hashtag, #queenselfie (Bryan, 2014).

Although the British Royal Family have proven that they are quality selfie-takers, it is celebrities like the multi-talented James Franco and Kardashian West who are the pro selfie-

takers. Franco, like Kardashian, posted a selfie on Instagram this year of himself posing in a mirror, but unlike the reality television star, Franco was nearly nude in the photograph which brought controversy. The actor defended the selfie (which he eventually deleted from his Instagram account) saying that his followers wanted to see the real him, even if he looked “really ugly” in it (Bender, 2014).

Franco's controversial and barely there selfie was posted on Instagram just months after he had written an article for *The New York Times* called “The Meaning of the Selfie.” In the article, Franco asserted that the celebrity selfie is a “pseudo-personal moment,” and that there is an opportunity in selfies to show that one is “not dressing.” Franco stated that the celebrity is demonstrating that, “there is something important about me that clothes hide, and I don’t want to hide,” thus directly corroborating his defense of his nearly nude selfie months after the article was published. Furthermore, the actor said that the celebrity selfie is not only a private portrait of a star, but one that is usually composed and taken by said star—the intimate shot of a famous person that the paparazzi, magazines, and blogs would do anything for. He equated selfies to avatars of ourselves, that is, “Mini-Mes that we send out to give others a sense of who we are” (Franco, 2013).

According to Fiona McPherson, the senior editor at the Oxford English Dictionary, a “selfie” is more than the mere act of taking a picture of oneself—the self-portrait—but it is the act of publishing it on social media that makes it a selfie (Wallop, 2013). When writing about The Chainsmokers' “#Selfie,” Melinda Newman stated that the song captures people's ongoing obsession of posting self-portraits of themselves onto social media while also celebrating and lampooning our narcissism (Newman, 2014). The selfie is a type of self-portrait that is defined by its composition and production by advanced technology and then its subsequent dissemination

through social media websites and apps.²

The history and cultural evolution of the “selfie” started with the prominence of self-portraiture in art history. From German painter and printmaker Albrecht Dürer to Vincent van Gogh to photographer Cindy Sherman, self-portraiture has established itself in the art world as more than a style. Like still-life, landscape, and history painting, portraiture is a genre (Saltz, 2014) that has been employed by many artists. With the emergence of the camera and then the smartphone, people became the artists themselves who disseminated portraits—their works of art—onto social media—the birth of the selfie.

Before the invention and prominence of smartphones, “selfies” without the foundation of social media websites were popular through the use of cameras and mirrors. The Italian Mannerist painter Parmigianino painted *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* in 1524—considered the world’s first selfie—that featured aspects that are characteristics of a typical selfie today, such as the utilization of a mirror, the subject’s face being shown from a bizarre angle, the subject’s elongated arm, foreshortening, compositional distortion, and the close-in intimacy (O’Connor, 2014; Saltz, 2014).

When the era of photography dawned, Robert Cornelius took the world’s first selfie using a camera when he took a self-portrait while standing behind his family’s lamp store in Philadelphia in October 1839. The portrait—which was taken on a silver-plated daguerreotype—showed Cornelius standing in a slightly off-center pose, with his hand over his chest, unkempt hair, and a scruffy beard (Grenoble, 2013; Wolff-Mann, 2013). His pose was a precursor to the candid and casual selfie trope that is popular today.

As technological advancements were made with cameras and photography, famous

² Social media websites include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat—all of which are websites on which you can post photos and videos.

people started taking selfies and established the celebrity selfie. In 1914, Grand Duchess Anastasia Nikolaevna of Russia took a picture of herself in the mirror that she sent to her friend which utilized the now-popular “sparrow face” pose. It was taken when she was a teenager (Shontell, 2013), and she set the precedent of self-portraits being taken by teenagers, who are today’s most notorious selfie-takers (Wolff-Mann, 2013). In the 1960s, when American astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin were exploring space for NASA, Aldrin preferred taking selfies while far away from Earth, including taking selfies inside the space capsule (Wolff-Mann, 2013). Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr of The Beatles famously took selfies of themselves in front of a mirror (Mac, 2014; Locker, 2013) and in 1966, Harrison took a selfie at the Taj Mahal in India.

From royalty like Grand Duchess Anastasia to rock stars like The Beatles to presidential royalty such as former U.S. President John F. Kennedy and former First Lady Jackie Kennedy (Casti, 2014), famous people have been taking selfies for a very long time. The broad scope of celebrities that have taken self-portraits with cameras for the last hundred years continues today with important figures in various occupations and fields like President Obama, Pope Francis, pop star Katy Perry, and reality television star Kim Kardashian West frequently taking selfies and posting them on their social media networks (Casti, 2014; MoreFM, 2014). Moreover, Kardashian West published her first book in spring 2015 that featured a comprehensive collection of hundreds of her selfies titled *Selfish*. Rizzoli, the book's publisher, stated that the reality television star is a “trailblazer of the selfie movement” and has “mastered the art of taking flattering and highly personal photos of oneself” (Vingiano, 2014).

Like The Chainsmokers did in music, photographer Dan Rubin satirized selfies and the selfie generation—and in particular celebrity selfies—by making selfies into fine art. Using a

few HTC One Mini smartphones, Rubin went to Carnaby Street in London in May 2014 and put his “own spin on the selfie” by having normal people be celebrities for a day (Lasane, 2014; Rubin, 2014). The art project, called “Phonies,” had passersby place the phones (with close-ups of various celebrity selfies on the screens) over their faces so that all one can see is the close-up selfie and the person's hair. It was a hybrid human who is concurrently a celebrity and just another face in the crowd (Ruddick-Sunnstein, 2014). The project of fake selfies, which featured celebrities with a “penchant for selfies” including reality television star Kim Kardashian West, actor James Franco, actor Aaron Paul, model Cara Delevingne, and pop star Harry Styles, commented on the way that personal identity is informed by and shared to social media (The Telegraph, 2014; Lasane, 2014).

Moreover, like The Chainsmokers did with “#Selfie,” Rubin highlighted and made light of the narcissism of celebrity in the 21st century as photographs have the power to betray people's innermost selves and redefine our perceptions of that self. In the project, the celebrities' faces on the smartphone screens reflected the media that we consume and how the power and prominence of social media shapes our egos in relation to the rich and famous—and stifles our individuality as well (Ruddick-Sunnstein, 2014).

The purpose of this thesis was to thoroughly analyze the selfies that male and female celebrities post on their Instagram accounts through a visual content analysis of a significant number of selfies on the Instagram accounts of female and male celebrities. The celebrities analyzed were chosen based on the number of selfies posted on their Instagram accounts, which was based on statistics conducted by *The Huffington Post* and on an article published in *The New York Times* written by actor James Franco (*The Huffington Post*, 2014; Franco, 2013). These articles are authoritative sources because *The Huffington Post* created a comprehensive

infographic based on other authoritative sources that have conducted studies on selfies and social media, and Franco is a notorious selfie-taker on Instagram.

The significance and value of doing this research is that selfies are the most popular type of photo to post on Instagram and is done by both celebrities and non-celebrities alike (*The Huffington Post*, 2013). From James Franco to President Obama, famous and important people love taking selfies and it gives people a personal glimpse into their world. It gives celebrities the chance to act as both their publicist and their paparazzi—the ultimate paparazzi shot (Franco, 2013). Instagram, social media, celebrities, and selfies are prominent in popular culture today and Instagram is the most preferred social media network for posting selfies (Oxford English Dictionary, 2013b; *The Huffington Post*, 2013). Because of the social relevance and timeliness of the topic under investigation, this thesis will benefit future studies of social media, self-portraiture, celebrities, gender, and the prominence and popularity of selfies in society.

I conducted research for this thesis by doing a visual content analysis and by closely and thoroughly analyzing the “selfies” on the Instagram accounts of three female and three male celebrities of various occupations with the aid of independent coders. The researcher and coders analyzed the selfies using a coding sheet that will have five categories with subcategories in each category that represent aspects of a selfie. The results helped answer the research question and contributed to supporting or disproving the five hypotheses of the research question. After the coding finished, the results were placed in an Excel spreadsheet, then placed in an online statistics program, and analyzed using a chi-square statistical test. Finally, the researcher analyzed the results and drew conclusions regarding the research question and the five hypotheses.

The theory that will be discussed in the literature review is *visual framing theory*, which

is the framing of issues through images that stand alone or are accompanied by text (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). *Framing* refers to how the organization of a message influences the audience's perception of what is happening (Goffman, 1974). The four levels of analysis through visual framing are 1) visuals as denotative systems, 2) visuals as stylistic-semiotic systems, 3) visuals as connotative systems, and 4) visuals as ideological representations. Visuals are less intrusive than words and can therefore alter an audience's perception in powerful ways (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). Furthermore, visual framing provides a new direction for theory building and future research (Coleman, 2010), and is the appropriate theory to use as the foundation of this thesis about the analysis of selfies.

In conducting this research on the differences between the selfies of female and male celebrities on Instagram, it was assumed that women take and post more selfies than men. In the history of photography, women took self-portraits of themselves to control their own representation after years of having men produce self-portraits of them in other mediums (Loewenberg, 1999). Furthermore, studies have shown that women take more selfies and are more active on social media than men, although men over the age of 40 take more selfies than women over the age 40 (Matthews, 2014).

The significance of this study is both the cult of the celebrity and the cult of the selfie—and the cult of the celebrity selfie. In 2013, the list of the 50 most followed celebrities on Instagram, which includes the youngest Kardashian and style icon Kylie Jenner, singer and performer Justin Bieber, and NBA star LeBron James, had posted an accumulated total of 3,933 selfies on their accounts. Furthermore, as of April 2017, the number of Instagram posts that were tagged with the #selfie was over 296 million.

Literature Review

A self-portrait—whether it’s a painting, a sculpture, or a photograph—communicates your identity and who and what you represent to the world. A selfie, as the official definition from the Oxford English Dictionary has stated, is a photograph that is taken with a smartphone or webcam and then uploaded to a social media website, such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. Moreover, a selfie can nowadays also be uploaded to smartphone and tablet apps such as the popular app Snapchat.

Self-portraiture is one of the most beloved and treasured genres in art history, and as such, is highly-regarded and is perceived as a high-brow form of art with the various genres within it, such as Impressionist portraits, Expressionist portraits, and Cubist portraits (Saltz, 2014).

But a selfie is the new self-portrait—a low-brow photograph that is created with a smartphone, not with a canvas, paint, and paintbrushes. It transcends the self-portrait and virtually eliminates the long-standing line that has divided the high-culture of museum-worthy art with the everyday, low-culture of easily accessible street art. Not everyone sees a self-portrait painting, but selfies are disseminated to both non-strangers and strangers—especially celebrity selfies—and are made in immense numbers by many people, making it the most prevalent popular genre ever (Saltz, 2014). It’s instant visual communication and it is not only today’s version of the self-portrait—it is more than the self-portrait. As Kim Kardashian West says in her book composed of over nine years’ worth of her selfies, *Selfish*, selfies are “on-fleek” (Brown, 2015).

The cult of celebrity is connected to the cult of the selfie and both concepts are connected to narcissism. There is a strong connection between narcissistic individuals—which could

include both celebrities and non-celebrities—and social media usage. Narcissistic individuals are more likely to post their pictures on social media than others (Sorokowski, Sorokowska, Oleskiewicz, Frackowiak, Huk, & Pisanski, 2015), and narcissistic users are more likely to upload attractive photos—such as an attractive selfie—on social media than less narcissistic users (Wang, Jackson, Zhang, & Su, 2012). Whether you are a teenage boy in the Midwestern United States or reality television star Kylie Jenner, narcissism is intrinsic in taking and posting selfies. Furthermore, narcissism and selfies are a connection that can affect both males and females. Although selfies are traditionally seen as more prominent among women, Fox and Rooney conducted a study that showed that narcissism and psychopathy predicted the number of selfies posted by men (2015).

The History of Self-Portraiture in Art History

From the Italian Mannerist painter Parmigianino to the photographer Cindy Sherman, self-portraiture in art has spanned many periods and genres. Along with paintings, self-portraits have been manifested in busts, sculptures, coins, and photography. Technology has brought into the world another manifestation of the self-portrait—the selfie—but the concept of conveying one's image and making that image into art is not a novel one.

Portraiture is a genre, not a style. Like other genres, such as still-life, landscape, and history painting, portraiture possesses its own formal logic, with tropes and structural wisdom, and lasts a long time until all the problems it was invented to address have been fully addressed (Saltz, 2014).

Though self-portraits made by famous artists are the precursors to today's selfies produced by celebrities and non-celebrities alike, the processes behind them are quite different. The process of making a portrait or taking a non-digital photograph takes time to represent the

advance of sagging, wrinkling mortality, and the truth of various expressions. A digital camera or smartphone camera's gaze is only skin-deep, is instantaneous, and is ephemeral—it cannot compete with the surgical penetration of a painted self-portrait (Conrad, 2014).

As is the case today with celebrities, it was the important people in ancient Egypt—members of royalty—who had their idealized likenesses manifested in wall paintings, busts, sculptures, and on sarcophagi. A portrait head of the famous King Tut'ankhamūn that is housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and is composed of white limestone, portrayed the boy-king as youthful and with a round face and wearing a blue crown. This symbolized his early placement in his royal position and is an example of an ancient precursor to the selfie in the form of a sculpture (Lansing, 1951).

The famous “King Tut,” whose tomb in Egypt's Valley of the Kings captured the world's attention during the 1920s when it was discovered by British archaeologist Howard Carter, possessed many items that were likenesses of the boy-king, including a small wooden statue of the king standing and holding signs of the Egyptian god Osiris (Douglas, 1976).

The right hand of a larger figure rests on a support that is attached to the portrait head and is touching the blue crown, which indicates that the portrait head was once attached to a larger sculpture, most likely that of a god. The larger figure may have represented Amen-Ra, the sun god under which Tut'ankhamūn restored the kingdom of Egypt, or Tut'ankhamūn's father-in-law, the king Akhenaten. The right hand of Amen-Ra or Akhenaten holding the crown represents the coronation of King Tut as the pharaoh of Egypt, thus reasserting his power through self-portrait (Lansing, 1951). Moreover, King Tut's tomb included several items that referenced Amen-Ra, such as a bust of Tut'ankhamūn's head emerging from a lotus blossom that represented Amen-Ra emerging from a lotus as the first living being of creation, per ancient Egyptian tradition

(Douglas, 1976).

The cult of celebrity and power through self-portraits was also prevalent in ancient Greece and Rome. Like King Tut with the sun god Amen-Ra, many important figures in ancient Greek and Roman history portrayed themselves in accordance with a famous historical figure. Alexander the Great commissioned the Greek sculptor Lysippus to sculpt his portrait, which was then copied and disseminated throughout the empire. Furthermore, as the portrait was being made while the King of Macedonia was campaigning against Persia, Alexander had Lysippus depict him as the legendary Greek hero of the Trojan War, Achilles, thus asserting power for Alexander, but also projecting victory in his war campaign (Garland, 2005).

Augustus, the founder of the Roman Empire and its first emperor, (Garland, 2010) also exemplified his power through self-portraits, being both the emperor of Rome as well as the adopted son of the legendary Julius Caesar (Garland, 2005). Like Alexander the Great before him, Augustus commissioned a stereotypical self-portrait on coins that were distributed throughout the empire starting in 20 B.C. Millions of coins had an idealized depiction of Augustus on them and his face was known to every person who possessed these coins (such as a bronze denarius). Moreover, every town already had statues erected of him (Garland, 2010).

During the fifteenth century in Europe, the great painter and printmaker Albrecht Dürer was the first Northern European to produce an independent self-portrait. His entire collection of sixteen self-portraits included three paintings, a watercolor, six drawings, and four large compositions which included his likeness “in assistance” or as a bystander. He also had several “hidden” self-portraits in works such as *The Bath House* (woodcut, ca. 1496) and *Christ Bearing the Cross* (woodcut, 1498/99) (Ross, 1971).

For example, in *Christ Bearing the Cross*, Dürer's features were portrayed in the

halberdier ³ in the right foreground of the woodcut. The self-portrait showed Dürer looking out at the viewer, foreshadowing that self-portrait trope later seen in Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (1656). Furthermore, it demonstrated that Dürer studied his image in the mirror, foreshadowing Parmigianino's *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (1524) (O'Connor, 2014), considered the world's first selfie (Saltz, 2014).

Dürer's *Self-Portrait* (1493) which is made of vellum transferred on linen and is housed in the Louvre in Paris, is the artist's earliest self-portrait (Stumpel & Van Kregten, 2002). Unlike Dürer's later self-portraits in which he depicted himself in a Christlike manner with painstakingly-detailed permed hair, plucked eyebrows, a waxed handlebar mustache, and a trimmed beard (O'Connor, 2014), this 1493 painting showed him with wavy hair, thick eyebrows, and without facial hair. The painting also showed Dürer holding a thistle of the plant eryngium, which was called “man's fidelity” (*Mannstreue* in German), and thus represented his fidelity in love to his then fiancée Agnes (Stumpel & Van Kregten, 2002).

The self-portrait as glorification of the artist—as opposed to the subject of the work—began during the Middle Ages as did the artist's connection with God and Jesus Christ and the glorification of both in their works (O'Connor, 2014). Dürer demonstrated both types of glorification by portraying himself in his self-portraits in the physical similitude of Christ, but also in the 1493 self-portrait in which the eryngium thistle represented the Passion of Christ and Dürer's devotion to the *Imitatio Christi* (Stumpel & Kregten, 2002).

During the Renaissance and Baroque periods, famous painters embedded their likenesses into their works. The legendary Michelangelo painted his portrait into the flayed skin held by St. Bartholomew in his famous *Sistine Chapel* (1536-1541). Da Vinci's portrait is rumored to have

³ A halberdier is a man armed with a halberd, which is a combined spear and battle-ax.

been the real model for his famous *Mona Lisa* (ca. 1487-1500s), with Lillian F. Schwartz discovering (using computer-generated images) that Da Vinci may have used a female model at first before turning the painting into a disguised self-portrait (La Farge, 1996). Caravaggio's *Self-portrait with a cap* (1630) was a drawing that depicted the Italian painter making an expression that could be considered the first “duckface,” a now-popular expression that is made when taking a selfie (Forman-Greenwald, 2014).

The great Italian painter of the High Renaissance, Raphael, depicted many well-known people in his fresco *The School of Athens* (1509-1512) including the philosophers Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates, the mathematician Pythagoras (Garrigues, 1879), and Raphael's friend, the Italian architect Bramante (Bell, 1995). Raphael included his portrait on the extreme right of the fresco near the Renaissance painter and Raphael's teacher Perugino (Bell, 1995). Raphael depicted himself amongst the throng of the great philosophers, scientists, artists (many as portraits in other figures), mathematicians, theologians, scholars of law, and musicians shown in the work. This asserted his greatness in art among the greatness of other aspects of knowledge and continued the glorification of the artist trope that began in the Middle Ages.

During the Baroque period, a new trope in self-portraits developed, the mock-heroic portrait, which showed the artists in unbecoming situations or situations that mocked their occupation—the opposite of the glorification of the artist utilized by Dürer, Raphael, and later, Velázquez. The Italian painter Caravaggio made a dozen self-portraits with three being recognized as official self-portraits. The utilization of the mock-heroic portrait trope was used in his depictions as the Greek and Roman god of wine and merry-making Bacchus (Greek: Dionysus), such as in *Self-Portrait as Bacchus* (1593-1594) [Eager, 1986] and *Sick Bacchus* (1594) [O'Connor, 2014]. Along with mocking himself, Caravaggio depicted himself as a

significant role in a dramatic scene and employed the trope of theatricality.

Caravaggio's affinity for drama in his works—a reflection of violent events in his turbulent personal life—is seen in his self-portraits, such as in *The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew* (1599-1600), where he depicted himself as King Hirtacus, who ordered Matthew's execution. In *David with the Head of Goliath* (1609-1610), David is holding the severed head of Goliath with Caravaggio's portrait as Goliath. Furthermore, all his self-portraits have the common aspect of the painter being disguised as someone else (Eager, 1996), and usually as somebody important or well-known—the only aspect of Caravaggio's self-portraits that show a glimpse of the glorification of the artist.

As the nineteenth century commenced and post-Impressionism was becoming a popular movement in the art world, the famous and ever-troubled Vincent van Gogh made numerous self-portraits during his short yet significant artistic career. Van Gogh depicted the pain that stemmed from his bouts of depression and nervous crises (which culminated in his suicide at age 37) in his self-portraits (Grisham, 1993). His self-portraits showed intensity, immediacy, and the need to reveal something inside of himself to the outside world in the most vivid way possible (Saltz, 2014).

One example of Van Gogh's well-known self-portraits was *Self-portrait with pipe* (1889) which was painted the month after he had cut off his left ear lobe on December 23, 1888. In the painting, Van Gogh is wearing a fur hat, smoking a pipe, and looking sternly to the right. Van Gogh demonstrated the intensity that is prevalent in his self-portraits in this work by his bandaged left ear, his serious expression, and the fact that his gaze is away from the ear, not towards it (Geist, 1993).

When describing his painting *Night Cafe* to his brother, Van Gogh once said, “I have

tried to express the terrible passions of humanity by means of red and green... a place where one can ruin one's self, run mad or commit a crime.” In *Self-portrait with pipe*, Van Gogh imbued red and green in the lower part of the walls and in his coat, adjacent to each other and to his face and bandaged ear, further demonstrating the pain and intensity of his life and of ruining “one's self”(Geist, 1993).

Like Van Gogh, Mexican painter Frida Kahlo also depicted her physical and mental pain in her many famous self-portraits made in the twentieth century (O'Connor, 2014). Pain became a significant part of her life beginning with a streetcar accident when she was 18 which left her paralyzed. She underwent a series of operations for her injured pelvis which also caused many miscarriages and abortions. The physical pain that Kahlo dealt with throughout her life coincided with her well-known and tempestuous relationship with Mexican muralist Diego Rivera (Helland, 1990).

Kahlo's self-portraits told stories—intimate, engaging, terrifying, and tragic ones. Her resulting canvases documented her attempts to survive pain, to make sense of it, and to act out through images layered with fantasy, irony, and allegory with her body and biography as her subjects (Udall, 2003). Many of Kahlo's self-portraits include *Self-Portrait On the Border Between Mexico and the United States* (1932), *The Two Fridas* (1939), and *Self-Portrait With Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird* (1940) (Helland, 1990; Andersen, 2009).

Self-Portrait On the Border Between Mexico and the United States, which showed Kahlo standing on the border of the two neighboring countries, is an example of some of her politically and culturally charged self-portraits. The Mexico side represents pre-Columbian Mexico and is agricultural, whereas the United States side is highly-industrialized with items like robots and smokestacks that say “FORD” on them (Helland, 1990). She wears a Coatlicue-like beaded

necklace with bones, but also wears a colonial-style dress and coiffed hair (Block & Hoffmann-Jeep, 1998) In this self-portrait, Kahlo used her Mexican heritage and Western industrial civilization as a metaphor for life and death, thus embedding her prevalent trope of pain and death (Helland, 1990). By positioning herself on the border of two distinct worlds, Kahlo demonstrated her role as an intermediary who is knowledgeable of both cultures and wanted to represent each culture appropriately (Block & Hoffmann-Jeep, 1998)

In *Self-Portrait With Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird*, Kahlo once again showcased her pain, but also her release of pain, indicated by the dead hummingbird hanging from her thorn necklace in the painting. Winged creatures in Kahlo's self-portraits symbolized her release from pain and going along with her pre-Columbian roots and Mexican tradition, the hummingbird represented courage, oracle, and magic. In resembling her trademark thick and dark eyebrows, the hummingbird symbolized herself (Udall, 2003), and the courage that she needed to get through her painful times.

Another trope that was popular in self-portraits were artists depicting themselves working on a painting. This trope was used frequently by painters such as Gustave Courbet, Diego Velázquez (in his famous *Las Meninas*), the Fauve painter Henri Matisse, and the Dutch painter Rembrandt, among others. Rembrandt, being one of the most well-known self-portraitists of the seventeenth century, painted himself at work in *Self-portrait in a Studio* (ca. 1628-1629). In the painting, Rembrandt stands in the background of his studio with his huge and dark easel in the foreground. The Dutch painter's easel takes prominence in the work and Rembrandt is perceived as subservient to the easel as well as to the vast space and the *chiaroscuro* around him (Slive, 1964), perhaps representing his devotion to his painting and to his career.

Artemesia Gentileschi, the vanguard female painter of the Italian Baroque period, went

one step further than her artist colleagues who were portraying themselves in their studios by both portraying herself in her studio and as the allegory of Painting. In *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* (ca. 1630s), Gentileschi not only depicted herself in the act of painting, but she also placed symbols of the female personification of *la pittura* as established in Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* in the painting as well. The artist wore a golden chain around her neck (symbolizing imitation), unkempt locks of hair (symbolizing the artistic temperament), and garments with changing colors (symbolizing the painter's skills). Being a vanguard for women, Gentileschi managed to merge both the painter at work trope and the female personification of Painting—two subjects that male artists usually painted separately in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—into one cohesive self-portrait (Garrard, 1980).

The uses of mirrors and poses—the definitive precursor of the selfie—was a trope that was utilized by many artists in history. Parmigianino's *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (1524)—considered the world's first selfie—was painted appropriately when the artist was a young adult, at 20 years old (O'Connor, 2014; Land, 1997). During the time that this painting was made, Parmigianino became obsessed with alchemy and in making this self-portrait, equated that obsession with Narcissus's obsession with his own image (Land, 1997).

Furthermore, *Self-Portrait* had all the attributes of the selfie: the subject's face from a bizarre angle, the elongated arm, foreshortening, compositional distortion, and the close intimacy (Saltz, 2014), along with the distorted window, doorway, and ceiling in the background and his face and enlarged right hand in the foreground. Like his mythological counterpart Narcissus, who was enamored with his own image in a pool of water, Parmigianino is shown in the painting as pleased with his own reflection and the likeness of himself as reflected in a mirror (Land, 1997).

Velázquez's famous *Las Meninas* (1656) employed many tropes—it was a self-portrait of a painter at work, a royal portrait for the Spanish monarchy (Saltz, 2014), and it utilized mirrors and poses. The painting showed the artist at his easel while looking out at the viewer, and not at his subject which was the Infanta of Spain and the daughter of King Philip IV and Queen Mariana of Spain, Doña Margarita María de Austria. In the back of the room, a mirror showed the reflection of the king and queen, as if they are watching and supervising the portrait being done of the Infanta. Also, in the background of the open door was José Nieto, the *Aposentador* of the Queen, and in the foreground was their beautifully-dressed daughter surrounded by royal subjects including her ladies-in-waiting, a midget, a dog, and a dwarf named Mari Barbola (Kahr, 1975).

Velázquez holding the palette in his left hand and his brush in his right hand not only demonstrated his career, but also the approval of the king as the painter of their beloved daughter. He wore the key of the *Aposentador mayor* of the Imperial Palace at his belt and the red Cross of the Order of Santiago at his breast, which was apparently painted later by King Philip IV himself. Like Dürer in his self-portraits and Raphael in *The School of Athens*, Velázquez glorified himself as the Spanish royal family's court painter, but given his genius and his royal decorations, the Spanish painter was considered immortal in his own right and, as shown in *Las Meninas*, was the perfect courtier (Kahr, 1975; Bauer & Bauer, 2000).

Another trope that painters employed was the depiction of mortality in their self-portraits, with one of the most well-known instances being Michelangelo utilizing his own likeness into the flayed skin held by St. Bartholomew in his famous *Sistine Chapel* (1536-1541) [LaFarge, 1996]. The Italian painter Caravaggio, who thrived on painting his likeness in works that depicted tragedy and drama, also employed the motif of mortality. His own death is a subject of

study with tumultuous life events—including accusations of murder—leading up to his death in 1610, possibly of a fever in Port'Ercole in Tuscany after living life as a fugitive on the run (Sohm, 2002).

In *The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew* (1599-1600), Caravaggio depicted himself as King Hirtacus, who ordered the execution of Saint Matthew, but the Italian artist also depicted himself as the victim. In *David With the Head of Goliath* (1609-1610), he placed his likeness in the frowning and angry Goliath, whose severed head was being held by David, placing himself as the principal character and the victim in the dramatic scene (Eager, 1986; Sohm, 2002). In *The Beheading of Saint John* (1608), Caravaggio did not place himself as the victim of the beheading in this work, but he painted his signature into the blood that flowed from Saint John's neck in the painting—his only signed work (Eager, 1986). Whether the victim of death, the person who declares death, or just a mere observer of death, Caravaggio's self-portraits placed himself somewhere in a dramatic scene. Connecting Caravaggio's own mysterious death with his dark self-portraits, it was once said that the Italian artist died as badly as he painted (Sohm, 2002).

The History of Self-Portraiture in Photography

American amateur chemist Robert Cornelius took the world's first camera selfie in history (Forman-Greenwald, 2014; Andreasson, 2014) in October 1839 when he took a self-portrait standing behind the yard of his family's lamp and chandelier store in Philadelphia. Standing slightly off-center and sporting a scruffy beard and unkempt hair, Cornelius took the selfie using a box fitted with a lens from an opera glass that resulted in the now-famous mid-19th century daguerreotype (Grenoble, 2014, Robert Cornelius). Unlike today's selfies which are instantly taken using a smartphone and then uploaded to social media through an application, early daguerreotypes had a long exposure time—ranging from three to fifteen minutes—which

were perceived as impractical for portraiture (Robert Cornelius).

Along with taking the world's first selfie in history, Cornelius took the first light photograph in history, as indicated by a caption on the back of the daguerreotype that says, “The first light picture ever taken” (Andreasson, 2014). His famous self-portrait was taken a few months after Louis Daguerre had announced the invention of the daguerreotype at the French Academy of Sciences in August 1839, making it one of the first daguerreotypes to be produced in the United States (Andreasson, 2014; Library of Congress).

Although the daguerreotype was developed by Louis Daguerre in France in 1839, its popularity in America that led to Cornelius' self-portrait was first known in America through inventor Samuel F.B. Morse who learned about it in Paris that same year. Morse wrote a letter to his brother, the editor of the *New York Observer*, about the photographic method which was subsequently published on April 20 and it was first-ever mention of the daguerreotype in American media. Morse and other practitioners, such as chemist John W. Draper and dentist Samuel Bemis, started making images, thus aggrandizing its popularity. By 1853, there were between 13,000 and 17,000 practicing daguerreotypists in the United States (Keyes, 1976; Williams, 1996).

The actual process of taking a portrait with a daguerreotype was time-consuming, awkward, and unpopular. Unlike selfies today, the process of which merely takes a click of a button on a smartphone to take a self-portrait, there was more effort that had to be done with producing daguerreotypes. The sitter sat for 10 to 15 minutes, dressed in formal clothes, and posed in a stiff position held steady by an uncompromising head rest—and even then, the picture was not guaranteed to be successful despite the work and effort that went into taking it. Eventually, improvements and developments were made to the daguerreotype, such as the

addition of gilding to enrich the surface of the image and to protect it from damage, as well as better lenses, light-sensitive chemicals, backgrounds, props, and more imaginative camera angles and lighting (Keyes, 1976).

The deep personal engagement that people had with daguerreotypes fostered increased introspection and it led to the consideration of the ethical and spiritual dimensions of the then-new medium. It was very much the precursor to the selfie as the personal engagement aspect led people to deeply and thoroughly consider its utilization in the construction of individual identity (Williams, 1996).

In Andy Warhol's self-portraits, the photographer and Pop Art vanguard depicted himself in the same way that he depicted celebrities and society by working from photographs to create larger-than-life images in the unnatural colors he would famously use to make mere commodities. Although Warhol lived a celebrity life, he certainly did not feel like one. Unlike Parmigianino, Warhol worked from photographs for his self-portraits instead of mirrors and he perceived himself as homely, ugly, unlovable, and not beautiful, and he did not possess the extreme narcissism of Parmigianino (Carrier, 1998).

Cindy Sherman focused on herself in her self-portraits, made herself into a work of art, and played both subject and object (Carrier, 1998). Like Frida Kahlo, Sherman herself was her only model and viewed herself as a blank canvas and mannequin upon which she wore varied and extreme disguises (Loewenberg, 1999). Some of Sherman's self-portraits featured her dressed-up, like as a movie star for example, and her self-portraits and the characters she portrayed showed the selves that exist in her unbridled pictorial imagination (Conrad, 2014; Saltz, 2014). For example, in *Untitled Film Still #17* (1978), one of Sherman's many self-portraits as film stills, the photographer is performing in the photo as an innocent young woman

on a city street (Dorfman, 1985).

The self-portrait has evolved in many directions all culminating in today's selfie. Selfies are the photography of modern life—not that academics or curators are paying much attention to them. But like the many famous self-portraits that preceded them, in a hundred years the mass of selfies will be an incredible record of the fine details of everyday life (Saltz, 2014) and will continue to add to the rich genre of self-portraiture in art history.

The Cultural Evolution of the “Selfie”

The photographer Nadar revolutionized the self-portrait in the early days of photography in 1865 by taking various selfies of himself in the manner of taking photos in a photo booth. Using a contact sheet with various images, this early precursor to the selfie utilized the popular selfie trope of snapping away until getting a shot that shows oneself in the best light (Wolff-Mann, 2013). Other precursors to the selfie include one taken by an early Edwardian woman in 1900 using a Kodak Brownie box camera with the assistance of a mirror and a photograph taken in a mirror by the famous Grand Duchess of Russia Anastasia Nikolaevna in 1914 utilizing the “sparrow face” pose that is popular in today's selfies (Shontell, 2013).

Although selfies are synonymous in the digital age with celebrities and famous figures like Kim Kardashian West, James Franco, President Obama, and Pope Francis, there are a plethora of examples of celebrities representing various occupations taking selfies with cameras a long time before the invention and prevalence of the smartphone. A photograph of renowned writer Émile Zola from the late-nineteenth century shows the Frenchman with a tough expression on his face and his arm crossed in a “b-boy” stance popularized by hip-hop groups in the twentieth century such as Run D.M.C., again a precursor to modern tropes. American photographer Carl Van Vechten—a man who was famous for his candid photographs of

celebrities—utilized the invention of the self-timer in cameras when taking his selfies.

Acclaimed film director Stanley Kubrick took selfies using a mirror in the 1940s for a photo spread in *LOOK* magazine (Wolff-Mann, 2013).

Other celebrity selfies taken before the smartphone era include ones taken by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis (featuring former U.S. President John F. Kennedy), Sammy Davis Jr., Kurt Cobain and Courtney Love (a bathroom selfie taken in 1992 during Nirvana's Japanese tour) and Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, and George Harrison of The Beatles. Breaking from previous examples of the use of mirrors when taking selfies, Harrison's Taj Mahal selfie used a circular fisheye lens on his camera to capture the perfect of shot of himself in the center of the photograph with the famous world landmark in the background (Wolff-Mann, 2013; Faulkner, 2014; Galindo, 2014).

The earliest usage of the word selfie was in 2002—and not as a hashtag—but in an Internet forum in Australia. Featured on ABC Online on September 13, 2002, the forum post read:

“Um, drunk at a mates 21st, I tripped ofer [sic] and landed lip first (with front teeth coming a very close second) on a set of steps. I had a hole about 1cm long right through my bottom lip. And sorry about the focus, it was a selfie.”

The word selfie is defined as a self-portrait that is posted on social media and the earliest usages of the word selfie were on the photo-sharing website Flickr and the social networking website MySpace. The commonplace use of the word was prominent in the second decade of the 21st century, coinciding with the popularity of social media networks like Facebook and Twitter, smartphones (and the front-facing camera), and smartphone applications like Instagram. According to Judy Pearsall, social media sites helped to popularize the term, with the “selfie”

appearing on the photo-sharing website Flickr as early as 2004, but its usage was not widespread until around 2012, when *selfie* was being used in mainstream media sources (Oxford English Dictionary, 2013b).

Since its earliest usage on the Internet took place in Australia, the word “selfie” has Australian English origins, as Australian English features many -ie words such as *barbie* for barbeque, *firie* for firefighter, and *tinnie* for a can of beer. Moreover, the use of -ie at the end of the word further cements its association with narcissism and endearment (Oxford English Dictionary, 2013a).

There are variations of the word *selfie*, such as *belfie* (a selfie of one's posterior), *drelfie* (drunken selfie), *melfie* (where the m could stand for any word starting with an m, such as mom, mustache, male), *welfie* (workout selfie), and *legsie* (a selfie of a person's outstretched legs, often with a glamorous background visible) (Oxford English Dictionary, 2013a). Furthermore, the term for group selfies is *usie* or *ussie*, which focuses less on yourself and more on the relationships with the people in the photo (Lewis, 2014; Harpaz, 2014). Moreover, according to Ben Zimmer, executive producer of Vocabulary.com and language columnist for *The Wall Street Journal*, there are countless variations on this theme, including *twofie*, *threefie*, et cetera to specify the number of people photographed (Harpaz, 2014).

Selfies developed and matured from cameras and merged with communication because of the prevalence and popularity of cameras on smartphones. Furthermore, the selfie as it is well-known in modern popular culture established itself through social media networks like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Unlike the first use of the word selfie, which took place in an Internet forum in Australia, the first use of the word selfie as a hashtag (#selfie) was on the popular photo- and video-sharing application Instagram—the undisputed official home of

selfies—where 55 million photos are shared each day. Although the hashtag #selfie has been used on Instagram over 324 million times as of November 2017, its first use was on January 16, 2011 by user Jennifer Lee. Hashtags were officially introduced on Instagram later in January 2011 and as of 2013, Lee's selfie post has been liked 67 times (Laird, 2013).

The selfie has truly permeated itself into mainstream popular culture, with its recognition by the Oxford English Dictionary as the “Word of the Year” in 2013 and its addition to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary in May 2014 (PR Newswire, 2014). Furthermore, products exist that improve one's selfie-taking and producing including the LuMee iPhone case, and selfie sticks, which are long and adjustable sticks that can be attached to your smartphone (Ziegler, 2014). Also, there is the selfie T-shirt, designed by Russian fashion designer Timur Kim, which is designed to make people look perfect in selfies through special graphics concentrated in the neck, shoulder, and upper-chest area that sells for \$166 (Bernstein, 2014).

The popularity and prominence of selfies even made it to the small screen with the ABC television show *Selfie*, a direct modern-day adaptation of *My Fair Lady*, the *Pygmalion*-based, classic musical about Cockney flower girl Eliza Doolittle and her transformation into an upper-class darling by Professor Henry Higgins (Lynch, 2014).

In the show, social media star Eliza Dooley (played by Karen Gillan) has a large online presence, but she realized that having digital friends does not equate to having real friends and enlisted the help of her marketing guru co-worker Henry (played by John Cho) to school her in social etiquette and graces and to “rebrand” her self-obsessed reputation (Lynch, 2014, Massabrook, 2014, ABC.go.com, 2014). Like many lovers of taking selfies and social media obsessed people, Eliza is vain, is a teen-at-heart who says words like “totes,” “coolio,” and “dunzo” (Massabrook, 2014), takes selfies on Instagram, has various Facebook profiles

(Goldman, 2014), and has 263,000 followers on Twitter (ABC.go.com, 2014). The comedy focused on the evolution of Eliza, who had her flaws in tact, as well as the evolution of Henry, as Henry helped Eliza on her long journey to feel liked—and not just on Facebook through a blue thumbs up—but in real life and with real people too (Massabrook, 2014). Although ABC ended up cancelling the show, Hulu revived it (Hare, 2014), further proving that selfie culture is here to stay.

Selfies are popular with celebrities and non-celebrities alike, with selfies by non-celebrities sometimes garnering more fame and media coverage than ones by celebrities. From people taking selfies with animals like dogs, cats, giraffes, kangaroos, panda bears, and monkeys to people taking selfies with soldiers in Crimea, non-celebrities get their fair share of the Instagram limelight for their creative and timely-taken selfies (Carissimo, 2014).

John Quirke became famous for a selfie he took while visiting a gas chamber in the former Nazi concentration and death camp Auschwitz in June 2013 on Twitter. With his mouth dropped and his eyes wide and while donning headphones, the twentysomething captioned the post, “Selfie from the gas chamber in Auschwitz” (Saltz, 2014).

In 2014, Breanna Mitchell took a smiling selfie at Auschwitz, which she subsequently posted on her Twitter account. The teenage girl's tweet went viral and she received negative feedback about the inappropriateness of the selfie and the happy emoji (which is like an emoticon) that she chose to accompany the tweet. Mitchell fired back at the harassment that she received on Twitter and defended her selfie by saying that she took the selfie at the site of the Nazi regime's biggest concentration and death camp because she had studied its significance in history with her father, who had passed away before the two could visit it together (Moss, 2014).

Chris Canning, an 18-year-old from Florida, defended his decision to take a selfie at the

September 11 Memorial at Ground Zero in New York City in July 2014, which he posted on Twitter out of respect and patriotism towards the tragic event. Canning said, “I remember 9/11, I remember exactly where I was. I was in kindergarten at the time. I just don't want a photo of the memorial, I want a picture of myself and the memorial. This was my first time in New York City, I wanted to capture a special moment” (Murray, 2014).

These are selfies with shock value and they are not the only ones—nowadays, selfies taken with places or people that symbolize or are associated with horrible situations or events are prominent and the reactions have varied from supportive to direct criticism. There are the selfies with soldiers in Crimea, selfies in Chernobyl, selfies in front of car accidents, and selfies with a suicide being taken in the background (Saltz, 2014).

In December 2013, Ferdinand Puentes took a selfie with his GoPro camera in the Pacific Ocean off the shore of Molokai in Hawaii—but he was not on vacation—the small passenger plane that Puentes was traveling on had just crashed and at that point was sinking. The expression on Puentes' face was terrified, lost, and imperiled—yet he still found the time and energy to take a selfie—even while he was in deep agony and bewilderment (Saltz, 2014).

Prior to the Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 crash on July 17, 2014, Dutch teenager Gary Slok and his mother, Petra Langeveld, took a selfie together moments before the plane took off (Durando, 2014; James, 2014). The plane crashed a few hours later in Ukraine, killing all 298 people on board including Slok and his mother. 15-year-old Slok, who was a goalkeeper for his local football club in Maassluis, Netherlands, and Langeveld were traveling to Kuala Lumpur on a trip for single parents and their children and were among the 193 Dutch passengers traveling on Flight 17 that day (James, 2014; Durando, 2014). In August 2014, a Polish couple fell to their deaths off the cliffs of Cabo da Roca in western Portugal while attempting to take a selfie with

their children (White, 2014).

According to Lizzie Post and Daniel Post Senning of the Emily Post Institute, an institution which has been setting the standards for etiquette in sticky situations for a long time, there are “do's” and “don'ts” of where and when it is appropriate to take a selfie. To begin with, photos are allowed at historical sites like the World Trade Center and Auschwitz if photos can be taken and only if the sole intention of the photos is to show that the person has been there—sticking one's tongue out, making a duck face, or any other silly selfie poses are taboo. Secondly, taking a selfie from a private place like a hospital bed is okay if the context is appropriate, such as celebrating the birth of a new baby. Thirdly, it is never appropriate to take selfies at funerals and churches—a rule broken by President Obama, British Prime Minister David Cameron, and Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt at Nelson Mandela's memorial service in 2013. Selfies at fun and celebratory events—like Ellen DeGeneres' star-studded selfie when she hosted the 2014 Oscars—are free game, whereas selfies in public restrooms are off-limits and mirror selfies should be done at home. Finally, selfies taken after traumatic events should be approached with caution, especially if other people, a wreckage, or a crime scene are involved in the photo (Murray, 2014).

But not all selfies are controversial and have the intention to shock viewers—there are selfies that want to change the general narcissistic perspective that is given towards selfies and are meant to inspire others. In 2014, a group of 13- and 14-year-old girls in Australia participated in a program with the intention of changing the meaning of the “selfie.” The program, “This is Me: Self Identity Project,” focused on building self-confidence, resilience, and healthy relationships and dismissing unrealistic standards of beauty. The girls were encouraged to “think outside of the selfie box” when taking their selfies and to portray their true selves. Some girls

used Photoshop, while others utilized costumes and makeup in their selfies, but whatever the girls chose to do creatively with their selfies, the lesson that was conveyed and taught from this program was that there is more than one way for girls to represent themselves and that they do not have to emulate conventional beauty or fit into a certain mold. Simone Darcy, the photo media artist who worked with the project along with program coordinator Fiona Whitton, said, “It’s about playing with different ways of looking at one’s self... and you don’t even have to look beautiful in front of the camera all the time” (Layton, 2014).

The group of girls took advantage of the opportunity that they had to take selfies that did not involve “duck face” or had them looking flawless with gorgeous makeup and hair. One girl wore a headdress of flowers with a huge fern covering her eyes, another wore heart-shaped sunglasses and a fake beard, and one girl even covered her face entirely with her hands. 14-year-old Tyra Watkins said of the photos, which were put on display for the public in Australia's Lake Macquarie City Gallery during the summer of 2014, “I now look at photos from a different perspective and they have so much more meaning. I see myself coming out of my comfort zone and doing things I didn’t think I could do” (Layton, 2014).

In Tel Aviv in the summer of 2014, Israeli residents documented their weeks taking cover in bomb shelters by taking “bomb shelter selfies” which were accompanied by the hashtag #BombShelterSelfie and which were posted on the “Bomb Shelter Selfie” group page on Facebook. From couples to families to groups of friends, the residents laughed, smiled, and made funny faces in their selfies, and vowed to “keep on smiling” despite the cacophony of air-raid sirens around them warning of Hamas airstrikes.

The hope and optimism of the selfies were powerful with Sara Eisen, creator of the Facebook group, explaining that the point of the selfies and the group was to show the world

“that we weren’t letting this get to us.” Stephen Epstein, one of the group members, said that the selfies were meant to express survival despite the heaviness that was in their hearts. Eisen, keeping up with the plethora of selfies trends, appropriately said of the creation of the group, “There’s a selfie for everything so why not bomb shelters?” (Warren, 2014)

Along with the controversial and jaw-dropping selfies of the non-celebrities, the cult of the celebrity selfie is both powerful and popular with reality television star and Kardashian family member Kylie Jenner, pop star Justin Bieber, and rapper Snoop Dogg leading the plethora of followers that these three and other famous people have on Instagram (*The Huffington Post*, 2013). The celebrity selfie is more than an ego trip, it shows the star at their most candid and is a personal glimpse into their lives (Stylist.co.uk, 2014). As actor James Franco said in his article about the selfie in *The New York Times*, selfies are tools of communication more than marks of vanity and is a new way to look someone right in the eye and say, “Hello, this is me” (Franco, 2013).

Whether it’s a sexy shot of the famous backside of Kylie’s sister Kim Kardashian West while wearing a tight white leotard or Beyoncé debuting her pixie cut in a vanity mirror (Carissimo, 2014), celebrities keep their followers coming back for more with their surprising and interesting selfies.

The funnier, less attractive, and more normal the selfie is, the better and the more endearing celebrities appear to non-celebrities. Examples of this concept include supermodel and 2014 *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue cover girl Chrissy Teigen sporting an “ugly face,” rapper Eminem taking a selfie with the Mona Lisa at the Louvre, and Oprah Winfrey with a bouquet of flowers (Yapalater, 2013). All these showcased celebrities at their most candid—and average—state and stripped away the fame and fortune that they possess and represent.

There is Ellen DeGeneres' selfie from the 2014 Oscars that featured not just one—but many—famous and celebrated actors including Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie, Jennifer Lawrence, Lupita Nyong'o, Julia Roberts, and Meryl Streep. The selfie, taken by actor Bradley Cooper, was posted on the Twitter account of DeGeneres' daytime talk show and established a new record for most retweets on Twitter—more than 2.5 million within a matter of hours. The famous selfie was perceived as a promotional stunt for Samsung, the manufacturer of the smartphone that was used and a sponsor of the Academy Awards (Wallop, 2014). This famous selfie and its massive impact on social media spoke volumes about the strong connection between people and celebrities, and the rampant opportunities that people have to be as close to them as possible via social media.

The types of selfies that celebrities frequently take and post—that can also be akin to non-celebrities—is delineated into 19 types. Several of these include the shirtless selfie (made famous recently by actor James Franco), the no-makeup selfie (such as one posted by Lupita Nyong'o at the spa), the mirror selfie (a classic, made even more commonplace by Kim Kardashian West and Lindsay Lohan), the baby bump selfie (such as one by singer and fashion designer Gwen Stefani), the pet selfie (such as ones of *The Vampire Diaries'* Ian Somerhalder with his beloved pets), and the all-important food selfie (such as one of pop star Miley Cyrus eating a pancake with her hands) (TheHollywoodGossip.com, 2014).

The power of the cult of the celebrity selfie is that they do not show any signs of abating. From seeing our favorite reality television stars doing a “duckface” to full-length mirror shots of the chic outfits of British It-girl Alexa Chung to pop star Rihanna on holiday—celebrity selfies are very addictive (Stylist.co.uk, 2014). The popularity of the celebrity selfie will be further explored in the analysis of the study.

The History of Instagram

The Instagram application was launched on October 6, 2010 in San Francisco, California by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. Within two days, it gained 40,000 users, which overwhelmed its servers. Instagram's popularity continued to soar after that—with three million users in three months, and then two billion users six weeks after that (Siegler, 2011). The popular photo application was gaining buzz along with users and was featured as one of the ten “Most Socially Discussed Companies” on Facebook and Twitter at South by Southwest (SXSW), the popular annual art and music festival in Austin, Texas—and it was in good company with Twitter, Microsoft, and CNN also being on that list (Hampp, 2011). As of August 2015, Instagram boasted more than 300 million active users (Statista.com, 2015) with third-party applications available which work with Instagram such as Webstagram (for online browsing), Postagram (to print Instagram posts as postcards), and Keepsy (to print posts as books) [McCune, 2011].

Instagram is a photo and video application that is available as a download through the Apple App Store (for Apple products) and Google Play (for Android products). An Instagram post is made by first taking a photo or video, either through the application camera or the phone's camera, then posting it on Instagram. The image or video is posted either with the various filters available (Mayfair, Willow, and Nashville, for example) or without one, and either with a frame or without one. In Instagram posts, one can tag another user, include any hashtag that one's mind can imagine, and tag the post at a specific location. After a post is made, it can be directly shared onto other social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, flickr, and other networks. Like any social networking website, users register for Instagram and create a profile that includes a profile picture and a biography, which is not mandatory.

Instagram has made the traditional activity of sitting through slide after slide of vacation photos more fun, quicker, and easier. To begin with, one can follow who they want to follow and therefore can choose whose photos or videos they want see. Secondly, because of its accessibility on a computer, tablet, or smartphone, people can look at photos and watch videos when it is convenient for them. Thirdly, it is a very interactive and very social application in that one can see how many other people liked an image, like and comment on an image themselves, and read comments (Holtz, 2012). The application also features a direct option in which one can directly send a post to a person, like the premise of the popular smartphone application Snapchat. Other recent app developments include Instagram Stories, and the options to post longer videos, Boomerang videos, and multiple photos in one post.

As of December 2017, Instagram has 800 million active users—monthly (Aslam, 2018). It was famously acquired by Facebook in 2012 for the initial price of \$1 billion and the final price of \$715 million, and Instagram is currently in the same spot revenue-wise as Facebook (Luckerson, 2013). As the popularity of celebrities and famous people being active on Instagram increases, the popularity of Instagram will continue to increase as well.

Instagram is the undisputed, official home of the selfie, with the application being immensely popular because of the ability it gives users to edit their photos and then subsequently share their mobile phone art on social media networking websites like Facebook and Twitter. As of June 2017, the hashtag #selfie was used in the caption of over 302 million posts. However, other variations of the hashtag #selfie have been featured on Instagram, such as #selfies, #selfiesunday, #selfienation, #selfiesfordays, and #selfieeee, among others (*The Huffington Post*, 2013).

The hashtag #selfie was not one of the top 100 hashtags on Instagram as of January

2013—it grew more than 200 percent in usage as the year progressed. Much of that rapid progression may have been the result of selfies posted by celebrities on Instagram, such as *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* reality television star Kylie Jenner, who has posted the most selfies at 451, and rapper Snoop Dogg, who has posted 271 photos of himself. On the other side of the selfie spectrum on Instagram, talk show hosts Oprah Winfrey and Ellen DeGeneres have posted the lowest number of selfies, with the former posting none and the latter posting only four, despite posting the most famous selfie of 2014 when she hosted the Academy Awards that year (*The Huffington Post*, 2013).

Statistics also establish Instagram as the official home of the selfie, with the social media network Twitter—although also popular with posting selfies—being a very close second in terms of selfie-posting prominence and preference. As of October 2013, 3,933 selfies have been posted on Instagram in comparison to 347 on Twitter and, in relation of the cult of celebrity selfies, 11 percent of celebrity posts on Instagram are selfies in comparison to a mere 2 percent of celebrity posts being selfies on Twitter (*The Huffington Post*, 2013).

The Connection between Gender and “Selfies”

In the discussion of “selfies,” women are perceived in general as being fonder of taking and posting selfies than men with women being more active on social media than men (Matthews, 2014). In The Chainsmokers' song “#Selfie,” the song is sung by a party girl (MetroLyrics.com, 2014) and the DJ duo behind that song even wrote an article about the six types of selfies that girls—not guys—take (Wenerd, 2014). Selfies are perceived as vain and self-involved in the context of the Internet and social media. The vanity and self-involvement that is associated with selfies are aspects that are strongly gendered female or perceived as feminine (Benson, 2014).

Whether it be vanity and self-involvement, the strong connection between women and selfies may stem from the ability to control how a selfie is represented to the world when shared with family, friends, co-workers, significant others, etc. In the history of self-portraiture, women were always the subjects—or objects—in works, and they did not have control over how they were portrayed until the era of photography (Loewenberg, 1999).

Self-portraiture—with the selfie being its modern descendant—is a way for women to keep control of their own representations. Furthermore, women have a special incentive to make self-portraits with controlling their own representations—whether it be on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Snapchat—being a primary incentive. Another incentive is that women taking selfies makes them both the artist and the subject, and thus, the artist is uniquely available and amenable as a subject.

The artist-as-subject allows the artist to show the subject as he or she wishes to be shown (Loewenberg, 1999), and women have the final and only word when it comes to the identity that they want to portray through their selfies on social media. When women are both the artist and the subject of a selfie, there are not any inhibitions between those two positions, and there is not a necessary inclination to defer to illusions or vanity (Loewenberg, 1999)—thus the popularity of the “no-makeup” selfie.

Selfies are perceived as a female-driven phenomenon (Kite & Kite, 2014) with a study conducted in 2014 in five major cities showing that women significantly took more selfies than men in each city. The study, called “Selfiecity,” started with 650,000 photos on Instagram from five major cities—Bangkok, Thailand; Berlin, Germany; Moscow, Russia; São Paulo, Brazil; and New York City—which was narrowed down to 20,000 to 30,000 photos per city. The top 1,000 selfies was then narrowed down to 650 selfies per city (Selfiecity.net, 2014)

Each photo was analyzed using face analysis software to generate face size measurement, orientation, emotion, presence of glasses and whether the taker was smiling. The result is an innovative, fluid method of browsing and spotting patterns in large sets of media. To support the prevalent perception that women like selfies more than men, Selfiecity showed that women take more selfies than men with 1.3 times as many in Bangkok, 1.9 times as many in Berlin, and 4.6 times as many in Moscow. Moreover, results from the project showed that women's selfies show more expressive poses than men—with the average amount of head tilt for women being higher than men (12.3 degrees vs. 8.2 degrees) (Williams, 2014a).

It is common to see remarks about how feminine it is for a man to post a selfie on social media. Moreover, there is something threatening and emasculating to men about being subject to the same type of gaze as women. The vulnerability that is associated with selfies—letting your guard down, being goofy, and sharing yourself—is something that men do not generally perceive as beautiful and rewarding (Benson, 2014).

Girls and women have been taught their entire lives to be images to be looked at—carefully posed, styled, and edited images of otherwise dynamic human beings for others to gaze upon and comment on. Selfies, which are made for a person and their audience, perpetuate this education with the term *selfie-objectification* being generally directed towards women. This term is defined as:

noun: to present oneself as an object, especially of sight or other physical sense, through a photograph that one takes of oneself, for posting online, which process manifests itself in three steps (Kite & Kite, 2014).

The three steps are (1) capturing photos of oneself to admire and scrutinize, (2) ranking and editing those photos to generate an acceptable final image, and (3) sharing those photos

online for others to validate. The steps are meant to be a clarion call to help women—not men—disconnect from and combat selfie-objectification, and to not subject oneself in the world that prizes beauty for females above all else. This includes thinking of your appearance and spending too much precious time, money, or energy on beauty-related matters (including taking selfies) [Kite & Kite, 2014].

A lot of men take selfies, including major celebrities like actor James Franco, rapper Snoop Dogg, and pop star Justin Bieber. Nevertheless, the stigma that is associated with men and selfies is a target for humor and satire as it is simply unacceptable in society for a man to upload selfies to his social media accounts. One main reason is because selfies are perceived as feminine or *sus*, with the latter term having a connotation of doing something lame, scandalous, or with suspected homosexual tendencies (Benson, 2014; UrbanDictionary.com, 2012).

According to a satirical article by a trio of male writers for EliteDaily.com, there are eight major reasons why it is never okay for a man to take a selfie. To further implement the idea of selfies being a feminine action, the very first reason is that “selfies are strictly for women” with women being known to show off new things, like their new hair color, how well they applied their makeup, how good their lips look in a new shade of lipstick, their fresh pedicures, hot outfits, and cute puppies.

The humorous list also mentions under this first (and main) reason that women take selfies to display aspects of themselves that men “actually” do care about, such as cleavage from multiple angles and what they look like in their “pajamas” while they are just lying around “sleepy” and “bored.” Other reasons include that selfies are not manly, selfies are for attention seekers, selfies do not help you pull girls, Chuck Norris does not take selfies, and Justin Bieber takes selfies. Though, the writers mention two circumstances in which a man can appropriately

take a selfie: 1) You have been kidnapped and you desperately need to take a selfie so that Liam Neeson can come save you and 2) You are Snapchatting (Elliot, Misha, and Matt, 2014).

In an experiment done in 2014 that started off as a joke, writer Lily Benson of “The Daily Dot” wanted to take the perception that selfies are perceived as “strictly for women,” and show that men actually love taking and posting selfies. Using the hashtag #dudetime on Twitter, which is based on the hashtag campaign #girltime on Twitter that was started by rapper Lil B in which girls were encouraged to send photos of themselves to him which he would subsequently retweet to his followers, Benson playfully flipped that idea with #dudetime. She took the creepiness of the male gaze out and provided a space for equal-opportunity objectification with selfies (Benson, 2014).

Benson received a lot of responses from men using selfies with the hashtag #dudetime on Twitter. She learned that the vulnerability that is akin to women's selfies is actually an aspect of men's selfies as well, and that placing the objectification spotlight on men can be both powerful and fun for them. Brendan, one of the participants, stated, “There is a kind of public vulnerability that men—and straight men especially—are dissuaded from participating in that dudetime encourages.” Chris, another participant, said, “What I appreciate about the objectification that happens during #dudetime is the implication that maleness doesn’t preclude being pretty,” and then added, “I also appreciate the thirsty ⁴favs, obvs” (Benson, 2014).

Through her hashtag project #dudetime, Benson learned that men—and not just women—enjoy the compliments and good vibes that women were accustomed to receiving after taking and posting a selfie on social media. Men loved sharing their photos, getting warm

⁴ The term “thirsty” in this instance does not refer to being dehydrated, but rather a more slang definition referring to wanting something badly, like a kiss from a man or woman, for example. “Favs” is short for favorites and “obvs” is short for obviously.

feedback, and appreciated the photos shared by other participants—it made them happy and it lifted their mood (Benson, 2014).

In the history of self-portraiture in photography, audiences appear to crave everything that is personal above the “merely” objective (Loewenberg, 1999). Benson’s #dudetime project demonstrated that within the vast, heartless expanse of the Internet, social media, and smartphone applications, men—not just women—can carve out new spaces for themselves through their selfies with meaning, contexts, and vibes of their choosing. Furthermore, women of color, transmen, and transwomen can also carve out new spaces for themselves through the power of selfies (Benson, 2014).

Women love to take selfies and post them on social media for all of the world to see, but men are not entirely opposed to them either. The study Selfiecity found that overall, women take much more selfies than men, but the study also found that men over the age of 40 take more selfies than women over the age of 40. Possible reasons are that women are more self-conscious as they age and that women take so many selfies before the age of 40 that they get to a point where they are “over it.” Middle-aged male celebrities, such as CNN news anchor Anderson Cooper, actor Vin Diesel, television producer and personality Andy Cohen, *Tonight Show* host Jimmy Fallon, and rapper P. Diddy, corroborate Selfiecity's findings with their selfies—which include smoldering, funny faces, and pets—on their personal Instagram accounts (Matthews, 2014). No matter how old you are, selfies are instant visual communication and the way that you frame them communicates your identity to the entire world.

Visual Framing Theory

Visual framing theory begins with *framing*, which refers to how the organization of a message influences the audience’s perception of what is happening (Goffman, 1974). Framing

also highlights certain facets of reality while concealing others, which is very applicable to the culture of and intentions behind taking selfies and posting them on social media networks (Entman, 1993).

The idea of framing began with Goffman and continued with framing pioneer Entman (1991), who focused on framing in the news and postulated that news frames exist at two levels: 1) as mentally stored principles for information processing (audience frames) and as 2) characteristics of the news itself (news frames).

As previously stated, frames call attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements, which might lead audiences to have different reactions (Entman, 1993). Whether a selfie is a “no-makeup” selfie or one showing a person with a serious expression on his or her face, people have the ability to frame a selfie to cause viewers of their selfies on social media networks to exhibit various reactions—negative or positive. In addition, the freedom and control that people have when taking and posting selfies demonstrates that people can call attention to certain real aspects of themselves, while also concealing who they truly are and their true identities.

Along with Entman's two levels of framing in the news, framing can be identified at three system levels. To begin with, framing can be identified at a horizontal level (Scheufele, 1999a; Entman, 1993; Tuchman, 1978; Scheufele & Brosius, 1999): 1) journalists or the media system, 2) recipients or society, and 3) political, economical, cultural, etc., actors, groups or organizations (Scheufele, 2004). Secondly, framing can be identified at a vertical level as patterns of public discourse (Kinder & Sanders, 1990; Gamson, 1992): 1) a cognitive complex of related schemata for references, such as events, causes, consequences (Scheufele, 2003, p. 65), 2) in public or inter-media discourse, and 3) as a textual structure of discourse products (e.g., press

releases, newspaper articles).

In regard to visual framing, Edelman stresses the way frames exert power through the selective description and omission of the features of a situation. Characters, causes, and consequences of any phenomenon—like selfies—become radically different as changes are made in what is predominantly displayed, what is repressed, and especially in how observations are classified. The social world—and the social media world—is a kaleidoscope of potential realities, any of which can be readily evoked by altering the ways in which observations are framed and categorized (Edelman, 1993, p. 232). Because selfies are visual forms of communication, framed to highlight very selective content by the individuals taking them, they can convince viewers that they are witnessing truth in the form of the photographers' mediated realities (Holiday, Lewis, Nielsen, Anderson, & Elinzano, 2014).

As Entman stated, frames allow people to emphasize certain realities, while concealing others, offering viewers to react in various ways. When a selfie is taken with a smartphone camera, people frame the identity that he or she wants to delineate to society and when that selfie is posted on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Snapchat, the audience reacts in certain ways—whether it is a like on Instagram, a comment on Facebook, a retweet on Twitter, or a reply on Snapchat, for example. Furthermore, in terms of selfies, the two levels that Entman describes can be applied to 1) the audience or the viewers of the selfie on social media networks and 2) the selfie itself.

The importance of visual framing are the layers of meaning and connotations that are the foundation of images and the certain reactions and feelings towards the images. According to Hertog and McLeod (2001), frames derive power from their symbolic significance in the narratives, and they carry “excess meaning” as they activate some related ideas or thoughts. They

have an accepted shared meaning within a culture as they resonate with its members. In selfie culture, a selfie of a girl smiling can mean more than just that—there could be a positive message within that selfie with the symbol of her smile, and the girl may utilize a hashtag that is accepted and frequently used within social media, like #blessed. Overall, the selfie promotes happiness and optimism, and is framed in a certain way to evoke those ideas.

Visual framing is powerful because images are powerful framing tools as they are less intrusive than words and require less cognitive load (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). Furthermore, when comparing textual framing and visual framing, visual frames are often preferred (Ferguson, 2001) because images seem closer to reality and because images have the power to create stronger emotional and immediate cues (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). Moreover, images have a high attraction value and when seen on a page, website, or screen, they often give the first impression of a story and are readily remembered (Rogers & Thorson, 2000).

There are four levels to visual framing which can be applied whether the unit of analysis is any media content (media frames) or audiences' individual perception of the overarching message of the visual (audience frames). The four levels of analysis through visual framing are 1) visuals as denotative systems, 2) visuals as stylistic-semiotic systems, 3) visuals as connotative systems, and 4) visuals as ideological representations (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011).

To begin with, *visuals as denotative systems* refers to examining images as “visual sensations or stimuli that activate the nerve cells in the eyes to convey information to the brain” (Lester, 2006, p. 50). Frames are identified by enumerating the objects and discrete elements shown in the image, and the frames result from recognizing elements, then subsequently organizing or combining visual sensations into “themes.” Frames deriving from the denotative

meanings of that which are depicted are established by the titles, captions, inscriptions, or other textual descriptions that accompany the visual. Furthermore, frames are readily recognized through visual intertextuality or their similarity to people, places, or things in other pictures (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). Moreover, the captions and hashtags (the textual descriptions) that accompany the selfie (the visual) help establish the frames.

Another approach to visuals as denotative systems is the application of gestalt principles of proximity (items are likely to be grouped together according to their nearness), similarity (those that look the same unite), closure (tendency to perceive multiple elements as a totality, to close gaps, and to form wholes), and equilibrium (every visual field tends toward order and precision) [Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011]. Thus, these gestalt principles can be applied to analyzing selfies in that they can be analyzed per location, the similarities between selfies in terms of poses, facial expressions, camera angles, the various types of selfies, and aspects that create an ideal and perfect selfie. The first level has been applied to analyses of images of the aftermath of natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the Indian Ocean tsunami and major events such as the September 11 attacks and the war in Afghanistan (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011).

Secondly, *visuals as stylistic-semiotic systems* focus on the stylistic conventions and technical transformations involved with representation (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). Examples of this level include how pictorial conventions and styles gain social meanings, like how a close-up shot signifies intimacy, a medium shot signifies personal relationship, a full shot signifies social relationship, and a long shot signifies context, scope, and public distance (Berger, 1991). The most common pictorial conventions analyzed as framing devices are social distance, visual modality, and subject behavior (Bell, 2001).

Social distance in images is analyzed using Hall's (1966) concept of proxemics or the psychology of people's use of space. The six stages in social distance when analyzing images are: 1) intimate (face and head only), 2) close personal distance (head and shoulders), 3) far personal distance (from the waist up), 4) close social distance (see the whole figure), 5) far social distance (whole figure with space around it), and 6) public distance (with at least two or more people). These six stages can be applied to analyzing selfies, such as intimate and close personal distance with singular selfies, close social distance taking a selfie of an outfit (typically with the assistance of a mirror), and public distance when the selfie involves the person taking the photo along with other people in the frame.

Visual modality refers to the degree to which certain means of pictorial expression (color, representational detail, depth, tonal shades, etc.) are used to enhance realism (Bell, 2001). Modality can be further analyzed as high, medium, or low based on how each element of modality resembles reality (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). Using a certain tone of lighting and choosing a particular filter on Instagram are aspects of visual modality that can be applied to selfies.

Subject behaviors—the actions and poses depicted in frames—create interaction between the viewer and the people shown in the images (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). “Image acts” refer to the ways in which visuals make “offers” or “demands” from viewers (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), such as when models make direct eye contact at viewers in an advertisement, and a direct connection is established between the images and the viewer. Poses, facial expressions, and gestures utilized in selfies are subject behaviors with examples being making a “duck face,” putting up a peace sign with one's fingers, or head canting (tilting the head down or sideways while looking up), with the latter of which symbolizes powerlessness and

subordination (Goffman, 1979).

The third level is *visuals as connotative systems* in which persons and objects shown in the visual not only denote an individual, thing, or place, but also the ideas or concepts attached to them (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). In this level, symbols are again a focus, as symbols can combine, compress, and communicate social meaning. Furthermore, the frames evolve by critically examining the perceived signs for their more complex, often culture-bound interpretations. According to van Leeuwen (2001), there are two types of symbols: 1) abstract symbols that are often shapes and objects that have symbolic value (such as the cross) and 2) figurative symbols or represented persons, places, and things with symbolic value (such as the Dalai Lama). These two types of symbols can be easily included in a selfie, thus adding a stronger connotation to the image.

The final level is *visuals as ideological representations* in which one ascertains those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion (Panofsky, 1970, p. 55). It brings together the second level of visual framing with symbols and stylistic features of an image and creates a coherent interpretation which provides the “why” behind the representations being analyzed. This level has been used to measure economic and political interests of visuals, but can also be applied to cultural, emotional, and psychological spheres (Pieterse, 1992, p. 10). In connection with agenda-setting theory, visuals as ideological representations have been used to analyze how news images are employed as instruments of power in the shaping of public consciousness and historical imagination (Anden-Papadopoulos, 2007). Moreover, this level can be applied to analyzing the power behind selfies taken and posted by celebrities and famous figures. My research question and sub-questions are:

RQ1: Are female celebrity selfies different than male celebrity selfies on Instagram?

RQ1a: Is there a significant difference in the clothing shown between female celebrity selfies and male celebrity selfies?

RQ1b: Is there a significant difference in social distance between female celebrity selfies and male celebrity selfies?

RQ1c: Is there a significant difference in visual modality between female celebrity selfies and male celebrity selfies?

RQ1d: Is there a significant difference in posing between female celebrity selfies and male celebrity selfies?

RQ1e: Is there a difference in between the manner of the mouth between female celebrity selfies and male celebrity selfies?

Method

For this study, 500 images total from the Instagram accounts of six female celebrities and six male celebrities (45 selfies per celebrity, except for two celebrities who will each have 25) went through a visual content analysis based on their popularity, the number of selfies that they post on their accounts, and the activeness of their accounts. A visual content analysis was the appropriate methodology because it is a systematic, observational method used for testing hypotheses about the ways in which the media represent people, events, situations, etc. (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt 2001). This study is an in-depth continuation of a study conducted in a paper called “Elitism and Identity in Fashion: A Content Analysis of Fashion Designers, Houses, and Stores on Instagram” that was accepted to the 2014 Southwest Education Council for Journalism and Mass Communication (SWECJMC) Symposium at the Metropolitan State University in Denver, Colorado.

For the six female celebrity accounts, the account of reality television star of the show *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* Kylie Jenner, her older sister Kim Kardashian West, also a

reality television star of the show *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, another reality television star of the show *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* Khloe Kardashian, and another reality television star of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* and model Kendall Jenner, music superstar Rihanna, and *Pretty Little Liars* actress Shay Mitchell were analyzed. For the six male celebrity accounts, the accounts of rapper Snoop Dogg, pop star Austin Mahone, pop star Justin Bieber, NBA player Kevin Durant, NBA player LeBron James, and actor James Franco were analyzed.

Three articles helped choose the Instagram accounts of both the male and female celebrities. The first article, “A Brief History of the Selfie,” was written by the staff of the news website *The Huffington Post* and was published on their website on October 15, 2013 (*The Huffington Post*, 2013). The second article, “The Meanings of the Selfie,” was written by actor James Franco and was published on the online edition of *The New York Times* on December 26, 2013 and in the print edition of *The New York Times* on December 29, 2013 (Franco, 2013). The third article, “The 60 Most Kardashian Instagram Posts of All Time” was written by Ellie Woodward for BuzzFeed and was published on its website on August 21, 2014 (Woodward, 2014b). The Instagram accounts of both the female and male celebrities that were chosen for this study are active with many of these accounts posting multiple photos or videos a day.

The celebrities were chosen by a systematic random sampling based on the first two females and first two males listed on a row-by-row list of the celebrities that post the most selfies on Instagram as compiled in *The Huffington Post* article. The celebrities had to have posted at least 150 selfies and those who posted less than 150 selfies were omitted from the study. The selfies were chosen by the main researcher and they were the first 150 selfies that were posted on Instagram from the day that they were selected in November 2015 to the date during which the 150th selfie was posted, after which the population selection process finished. If arms were

clearly visible in the post or if his or her face was not shown, then it did not count as a selfie (unless a smartphone and/or an extended arm(s) is clearly visible). However, it did count as a selfie if there was more than one person in a group selfie, someone else was holding the camera or smartphone, and that photo was posted on the celebrity's account.

The first exception to this sampling was the inclusion of Kim Kardashian West, who was chosen to be analyzed based on the publication of her book of selfies, *Selfish*, and who was included in the same row as her stepsister Kylie Jenner. The second exception to this sampling was the inclusion of actor James Franco, who was chosen to be analyzed based on the publication of his article, "The Meanings of the Selfie," as published in *The New York Times*. The third exception was the inclusion of Kevin Durant, who has posted less than 150 selfies on Instagram, but was added to the list for the diversity of including a professional athlete from The Huffington Post list.

The coding scheme was organized by each celebrity and each coding sheet had seven different categories: Clothing and Nudity, Social Distance, Visual Modality (Cropping), Visual Modality (Lighting and Filters), Posing (Standing), Posing (Sexually Suggestive), and Mouth that were each divided into subcategories. The independent variables were the female and male celebrities to be analyzed in the study and the dependent variables were the seven categories and their subcategories (See Appendix A for coding sheet).

To begin with, Clothing and Nudity referred to the sexual nature of the selfies in terms of amount of clothing—or lack thereof—in the selfie and was based on a study done by Hatton and Trautner (2011). It was divided into six subcategories: a) Highly-revealing or skin-tight clothing, b) Somewhat revealing (men and women with exposed midriffs), c) Slightly revealing clothing (women wearing modestly low necklines, exposed arms or shoulders), d) Wearing minimal

clothing (wearing one or two items of clothing and nothing else) [See Appendix B for examples from the study of these subcategories].

The second category, Social Distance, referred to the social distance of participants in an image and was based on Hall's (1966) discussion of proxemics, or the psychology of people's use of space (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001). It was divided into five subcategories: a) intimate (face and head only, close-up), b) close personal distance (head and shoulders), c) far personal distance (from the waist up), d) far social distance (whole figure with or without a mirror, shows space around it), and e) public distance (with at least two or more people in the image) [See Appendix B for examples from the study of these subcategories].

The third and fourth categories, Visual Modality (Cropping) and Visual Modality (Lightings and Filters), referred to the framing device convention that was outlined by Bell (2001) during the second level of visual framing of stylistic-semiotic systems (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). The two subcategories under these categories are a) not cropped photos (not fitting the photo into the grid window in the Instagram application)⁵ for cropping and a well-lit image (utilizing a filter or not utilizing a filter with #NoFilter)⁶ for lighting and filters (See Appendix B for examples from the study of these subcategories).

The fifth and sixth categories, Posing (Standing) and Posing (Sexually Suggestive), referred to the poses that were done in a selfie that may connote sexuality, and were based on an analysis on body posture and studies of sexualization by Goffman (1979). The subcategories for Posing were: a) Standing upright for Standing, and b) Sexually suggestive poses (lifting one's

⁵ Not cropped photos is an aesthetic preference and it refers to not fitting the photo into the grid in the Instagram application. This can be done through a native feature in Instagram, or through a third-party application, such as Whitagram.

⁶ Filters utilized to enhance a photo in this instance refers to either the native filters in the Instagram app (such as Gingham, Valencia, and Nashville to name just a few) or filters through third-party applications (such as VSCOcam).

arms overhead, any kind of leaning or sitting, head-tilt), and c) Overtly posed for sexual activity (lying down or a woman sitting with her legs spread wide open) for Sexually Suggestive (See Appendix B for examples from the study of these subcategories).

The seventh and final category, Mouth, referred to the utilization of the mouth in a selfie to connote sexuality and was again based on Goffman's idea of women demonstrating "licensed withdrawal," or the lack of presence and power, in advertisements (1979). The three subcategories were: a) Mouths that don't suggest sexual activity (closed lips, broad toothy smiles, or active singing, talking, or yelling), b) Mouths that are suggestive of sex (parted slightly, but not smiling; duckface, fishgape, kissy face), and c) Explicitly suggestive of sex (wide open mouths, tongue sticking out, or finger in his or her mouth) [See Appendix B for examples from the study of these subcategories].

Before the coding commenced, intercoder reliability was tested and established between two independent coders who analyzed the same 50 posts from the Instagram accounts of celebrities included in the study. The intercoder reliability coding utilized the same coding sheets that were used in the main study. 25 images were from the Instagram account of Kendall Jenner and 25 images were from the account of LeBron James. Jenner and James were chosen based on the large number of selfies that they have posted on their personal Instagram accounts (*The Huffington Post*, 2013).

After the coding of the 50 images finished, the results were gathered by the researcher and inserted into an Excel spreadsheet, and the Excel spreadsheet was subsequently screened through an online program called "ReCal2: Reliability for 2 Coders." The results were analyzed to see if there was an agreement between the two coders and to analyze the Krippendorff's Alpha of the pre-coding. Any coder whose results were inadequate for the study or any disagreements

between the ten coders were dealt with and resolved in a prompt manner. There were not any discrepancies and another coder was not necessary.

The research participants of the main study of this thesis were the researcher and another coder and the communication artifacts to be analyzed were the “selfies” on the personal Instagram accounts of six female celebrities and six male celebrities.

The procedure for the study for this thesis involved the two coders utilizing smartphones to comprehensively and thoroughly analyze the “selfies” of each celebrity. The setting was a classroom in the George H. Brimhall Building on the campus of Brigham Young University (BYU) in Provo, Utah and the time frame were various months during the fall of 2016.

One coder analyzed five of the celebrities and another coder analyzed the other five celebrities, with a mix of female and male celebrities to avoid having one researcher analyze only one gender. The researchers each had 500 coding sheets and each sheet was numbered and represented one selfie of the celebrity to be analyzed. The coding sheet had the name of the celebrity, the post number, a list of the five variable categories with their respective subcategories, and lines with present or absent next to the five variable categories. The researchers checked either present or absent below the categories when one or more of the subcategories was shown in the selfie.

The directions of the study for the coders was clear and complete as directed by the researcher and the Coding Handbook. To begin with, the researcher explained in detail the instructions for the study to the other coder using the Coding Handbook so that the other coder was well-trained and well-prepared for the study. The researcher showed the images (which were screenshots from the celebrities’ Instagram accounts) to be analyzed by the coder with a thorough explanation of the coding sheet and which aspects to focus on when analyzing the

images in regard to the study and the coding sheet. The researcher and the second coder viewed their assigned images (50 selfies per celebrity, 250 selfies per coder).

After the 500 images were analyzed, the two coders met and discussed their results with each other. The coding sheets were analyzed by the researcher and any inadequate or unnecessary variables were dropped. The information from the coding sheets were inserted into an Excel spreadsheet and were run through an online statistics program. Finally, the researcher analyzed the results in regard to the research question and the five hypotheses and will draw conclusions from the results.

The statistical test to be utilized was the chi-square test. A chi-square test was adequate for this study because it compared tallies of categorical responses between two or more independent groups, which was perfect for a visual content analysis involving categories.

Results

Before the study commenced, intercoder reliability was established. After the coding of 50 images finished, the results were screened for intercoder reliability using an online utility program called “ReCal2: Reliability for 2 Coders” by dfreelon.org that computes intercoder reliability coefficients for nominal data coded by two coders through an Excel spreadsheet. The results showed between 68 percent and 100 percent agreement between the two independent coders, with most percentages in the 90s percent-wise (8) and two agreements at 100 percent. The Krippendorff’s Alpha was 0.037 at its lowest and 1.00 at its highest, meaning that the two independent coders and their categories were predictable from each other at one point and were in enough of acquiescence to continue with the coding for the study. For each of the variables, there were more N Agreements than N Disagreements.

RQ1a: Clothing and Nudity

Clothing and nudity refers to the sexual nature of the selfies in terms of the amount of clothing—or lack thereof—in the selfie. After an analysis of 500 celebrity selfies on Instagram (both female and male), 78% of the females showed a more sexual nature in terms of the amount of clothing in their selfies than males. Males did not delineate as much of a sexual nature in terms of clothing and nudity in their selfies with 22% (see Table 1). Along with the differences between the observed frequencies of the females and males, the chi-square test also showed statistically significant results regarding the frequencies ($x^2 = 102.4$, $df = 2$).

Table 1

	Females	Males	Total
Observed	255	72	327
Expected	163.5	163.5	
Chi-Square (x^2)	51.2	51.2	
Percent (%)	78	22	

Male (Clothing and Nudity)	Present	%
a) Highly-revealing or skin-tight clothing	0	0
b) Somewhat revealing	10	14
c) Slightly revealing clothing	58	81
d) Wearing minimal clothing	4	5
Total	72	100
Female (Clothing and Nudity)	Present	%
a) Highly-revealing or skin-tight clothing	5	2
b) Somewhat revealing	120	47
c) Slightly revealing clothing	125	49
d) Wearing minimal clothing	10	2
Total	255	100

RQ1b: Social Distance

Social distance refers to the psychology of people's use of space in selfies. After an analysis of 500 celebrity selfies on Instagram (both female and male), the difference between females and males in terms of social distance was not that substantial, with 50.3% of females and 49.7% utilizing social distance in their selfies (see Table 2). Along with the differences between the observed frequencies of the females and males, the chi-square test also showed not statistically significant results regarding the frequencies ($\chi^2 = 0.02$, $df = 2$).

Table 2

	Females	Males	Total
Observed	399	395	794
Expected	397	397	
Chi-Square (χ^2)	0.01	0.01	
Percent (%)	50.3	49.7	

Female (Social Distance)	Present	%
a) intimate	125	31
b) close personal distance	135	34
c) far personal distance	70	18
d) far social distance	50	13
e) public distance	19	4
Total	399	100

Male (Social Distance)	Present	%
a) intimate	123	31
b) close personal distance	133	34
c) far personal distance	60	15
d) far social distance	55	14
e) public distance	24	6
Total	395	100

RQ1c: Visual Modality (Cropped, Lighting and Filters)

Visual modality refers to the degree to which certain means of pictorial expression (color, representational detail, depth, tonal shades, etc.) are used to enhance realism (Bell, 2001). Taking and posting a selfie on Instagram using a certain tone of lighting and a filter or cropping a selfie on Instagram are aspects of visual modality. After an analysis of 500 celebrity selfies on Instagram (both female and male), there was not a significant difference between females and males in terms of placing attention on visual modality in their selfies, with females at 56% and males at 44% (see Table 3). Along with the differences between the observed frequencies of the females and males, the chi-square test also did not show statistically significant results regarding the frequencies ($\chi^2 = 6.92$, $df = 2$).

Table 3

	Females	Males	Total
Observed	272	214	486
Expected	243	243	
Chi-Square (χ^2)	3.46	3.46	
Percent (%)	56	44	

Female (Visual Modality)	Present	%
a) not cropped photos	120	44
b) well-lit image	152	56
Total	272	100
Male (Visual Modality)	Present	%
a) not cropped photos	112	52
b) well-lit image	102	48
Total	214	100

RQ1d: Posing (Standing, Sexually Suggestive)

Posing refers to the poses that are done in a selfie that may connote sexuality and is based on an analysis on body posture and studies of sexualization by Goffman (1979). After an analysis of 500 celebrity selfies on Instagram (both female and male), the difference between females and males in terms of posing was not that substantial, with 56% of females and 44% of males caring about how they pose in their selfies (see Table 4). Along with the differences between the observed frequencies of the females and males, the chi-square test also showed not statistically significant results regarding the frequencies ($\chi^2 = 6.40$, $df = 2$).

Table 4

	Females	Males	Total
Observed	166	123	289
Expected	144.5	144.5	
Chi-Square (χ^2)	3.2	3.2	
Percent (%)	57.4	42.6	

Female (Posing)	Present	%
a) Standing upright	95	57
b) Sexually suggestive poses	66	40
c) Overtly posed for sexual activity	5	3
Total	166	100

Male (Posing)	Present	%
a) Standing upright	115	93
b) Sexually suggestive poses	6	5
c) Overtly posed for sexual activity	2	2
Total	123	100

RQ1e: Mouth

Mouth refers to the utilization of the mouth in a selfie to connote sexuality and is again based on Goffman's idea of women demonstrating "licensed withdrawal," or the lack of presence and power, in advertisements (1979). After an analysis of 500 celebrity selfies on Instagram (both female and male), the difference between females and males in terms of posing was not that substantial, with 53.1% of females and 46.4% of males placing attention on their mouth in their selfies (see Table 5). Along with the differences between the observed frequencies of the females and males, the chi-square test also showed not statistically significant results regarding the frequencies ($\chi^2 = 2.26$, $df = 2$).

Table 5

	Females	Males	Total
Observed	305	269	574
Expected	287	287	
Chi-Square (χ^2)	1.13	1.13	
Percent (%)	53.1	46.9	

Female (Mouth)	Present	%
a) Don't suggest sexual activity	142	47
b) Suggestive of sex	130	43
c) Explicitly suggestive of sex	33	10
Total	305	100

Male (Mouth)	Present	%
a) Don't suggest sexual activity	223	83
b) Suggestive of sex	44	16
c) Explicitly suggestive of sex	2	1
Total	269	100

Discussion

To understand and analyze the culture of selfies and the differences between selfies taken and posted by women and selfies taken and posted by men, this study closely examined the different aspects between the selfies of female and male celebrities. The aspects that were examined were clothing and nudity, social distance, visual modality, posing, and mouth. The female celebrities whose selfies were analyzed were reality television star and model Kendall Jenner, reality television stars Kim Kardashian West, Khloe Kardashian, and Kylie Jenner, singer Rihanna, and actress Shay Mitchell. The male celebrities whose selfies were analyzed were NBA player LeBron James, singers Justin Bieber and Austin Mahone, rapper Snoop Dogg, actor James Franco, and NBA player Kevin Durant.

This thesis is an important topic for many reasons. To begin with, it is important to break down gender stereotypes in regard to how women portray their identities in the aspects of selfies that were explored in this thesis—clothing and nudity, visual modality, posing, and mouth—by changing the cultural norms in the future that were corroborated in this study. According to Goffman, framing can be identified at a vertical level as patterns of public discourse (Kinder & Sanders, 1990; Gamson, 1992) in regard to the public and inter-media discourse. Moreover, framing can reference events, causes, consequences (Scheufele, 2003, p. 65).

Given the current discussion in our culture about women's rights and the #MeToo movement, there is so much power in social media, including selfies, to transform the narrative of why and how women post selfies. In fact, many women and men, including many celebrities, have posted selfies in support of the #MeToo movement. At the 2018 Golden Globes, many actors—both women and men—wore black to support the launch of the TIME'S UP Legal Defense Fund and the #MeToo movement, including sporting TIME'S UP pins (Mackelden,

2018). Led by a group of actresses, including Reese Witherspoon, Rashida Jones, Kerry Washington, and Tracie Ellis Ross, women and men from all over the world posted pics and videos (including selfies) on Instagram with the hashtags #TimesUp and #WhyWeWearBlack. In a selfie video posted by Ross and featuring the actresses mentioned, Ross encouraged her followers to post a photo wearing black (Ross, 2018).

The TIME'S UP launch that took over both social media and the red carpet at the Golden Globes is significant for many reasons. Firstly, women were always the subjects in paintings and sculptures, and they did not have control over how they were portrayed until the era of photography (Loewenberg, 1999). The selfie is the ideal format in which women can combat its history by being both the artist and the subject, while also standing up for themselves in a social context, which in the case of the Golden Globes, is against sexual assault and harassment. Secondly, their message of ending the rampant culture of sexual assault and harassment in Hollywood and other industries influenced the audience's perception of what is happening (Goffman, 1974). Finally, TIME'S UP at the Golden Globes is a *visual stylistic-semiotic system* that uses the pictorial style of wearing black at a major awards show to gain social meanings (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). In the semiotic context, black has always been a powerful color worn in history by actors who served in World War II out of respect for the troops and by the Black Panthers, among other organizations. During the Middle Ages, black was associated with glamour worn by kings and queens (Laneri, 2018). Therefore, by actors choosing to wear black at a glamorous awards show like the Golden Globes, they promoted the social meaning of the TIME'S UP and #MeToo movements by choosing a color that's both profound and glamorous, as well as convenient and easy for the movement's followers to proudly wear.

Furthermore, this thesis is important because of the aforementioned *selfie-objectification*,

which corroborates the history of women in self-portraiture as images to be looked at, posed, styled, and edited. The three steps that the Kite sisters promote are meant to combat and disconnect from *selfie-objectification* (Kite & Kite, 2014). Although what they advocate is admirable and empowering, future studies such as this one about selfies will hopefully combat and transform the general narrative of selfies as an action that is purely narcissistic.

The seven categories were Clothing and Nudity, Social Distance, Visual Modality (Cropped), Visual Modality (Lighting and Filters), Posing (Standing), Posing (Sexually Suggestive), and Mouth. Clothing and Nudity referred to the clothing shown in the selfies and Social Distance referred to the distance between the subject and the camera in the selfie. Visual Modality (Cropped) was about the cropping of the selfie when it was posted on Instagram and Visual Modality (Lighting and Filters) was about the lighting and the use or non-use of filters when the selfie was posted. Posing (Standing) referred to standing poses in the selfie and Posing (Sexually Suggestive) referred to any pose that suggested sexuality. Finally, Mouth was about any mouth gestures that were made by the subject in the selfie.

Many points will be discussed with the main one being the connections between selfies and gender, and the results mostly corroborating the prevalent notion that selfies are feminine and are taken more by women than by men. Other points include the artist as the both the artist and the subject, the similarities in the results amongst all seven categories, the progression of empowerment that women have when taking selfies, and the observation that selfies are gender-neutral and are not strictly a female-driven phenomenon.

Clothing and Nudity

Results demonstrate a statistically significant difference between female celebrity selfies and male celebrity selfies in regard to clothing and nudity, but not a statistically significant

difference between female celebrity selfies and male celebrity selfies in the other categories.

Although results showed that the female celebrities placed more attention to clothing and nudity in their selfies, close analysis showed each of the male celebrities had at least one shirtless selfie, and Austin Mahone posted two mirror selfies that showcased his outfits. Nevertheless, with female celebrities having a higher number in the clothing and nudity category, it corroborates the idea that “selfies are strictly for women,” and that they are for women to show off certain aspects of their lives, including “hot outfits.” Moreover, it also corroborates past notions that women take selfies to display aspects of themselves that men “actually” care about including cleavage from multiple angles and what they look like in their pajamas while they are lying around being sleepy and bored (Elliot, Misha, and Matt, 2014). Therefore, the statistically significant difference between female celebrity selfies and male celebrity selfies in regard to clothing and nudity reflects society’s more prevalent standard that women place more emphasis on clothing and nudity in their selfies than men and that women wear less clothing than men in their selfies.

Social Distance

Results show that the difference between female celebrity selfies and male celebrity selfies was not significant and was in fact very close, with women having an observed frequency of 399 and men having an observed frequency of 395. Social distance is not an important factor as the other categories in that there is no significant difference between women and men, and again, because their observed frequencies are so close. The results for social distance neither confirms nor denies nor extends past research about social distance, which is based on Hall’s (1996) study of proxemics, or the psychology of people’s use space.

Given the nearness in frequencies between women and men, the psychology between

their uses of space might not be that different after all, with both women and men utilizing a variety of spaces between the camera on a smartphone and themselves, such as an intimate close-up shot, far social distance (whole figure with or without a mirror, shows space around it), or public distance (with at least two or more people in the image, or an *ussie*).

Visual Modality

As was the case with Social Distance, the difference between female and male celebrity selfies on Instagram in terms of Visual Modality (Cropped, Lighting, and Filters) was not that significant and was close with females having an observed frequency of 272 and males having 214.

Out of all the categories in this study, Visual Modality is the most vital and influential category in regard to the connection between selfies and vanity in that it is the only category that deals with the alteration of the image in the selfie after the selfie is taken on a smartphone, laptop, or tablet. Visual Modality refers to whether the selfie is cropped or not, if a special filter was used, or if certain lighting was taken into consideration when the selfie was taken. These editorial aspects happen before or after the selfie is taken and speaks volumes about how one wants to present themselves in his or her selfie, whether that person is a celebrity or not.

This research corroborates past research that is rooted in art history and in the history of self-portraiture. Women were always the subjects—or objects—in works, and they did not have control over how they were portrayed until the era of photography (Loewenberg, 1999). The selfie, the modern descendant of self-portraits, is the ideal format in which women can combat its history as always being the subject of the work and take control back by being both the artist and the subject. By doing so, women can delineate themselves in any way that they want to (Loewenberg, 1999), and that includes the aspects of visual modality, such as cropping, lighting,

and special filters or even sans filter.

Besides the prevalent notion that taking and posting selfies and the vanity associated with the action of taking and posting a selfie are regarded as feminine (Benson, 2014), women have the higher observed frequency (in this category and all categories) in this study because they have complete control over their representation, which as art history has proven, was not always the case.

Posing

Results show that the difference between female and male celebrity selfies is not that significant with women having an observed frequency of 166 and men having an observed frequency of 123. Again, like the previous three categories, the significance is not that large, but also again, women had a higher observed frequency than men. Posing, like Clothing and Nudity and Mouth, is a category that involved the sexual content of a selfie. Selfies, and the vanity that is associated with them, are perceived as feminine and men do not want to be subject to the same gaze as women. Moreover, men perceive selfies as emasculating and associate them with vulnerability, whether that is letting your guard down, being goofy, or sharing something personal about yourself (Benson, 2014).

A large majority of men take selfies, including major celebrities like actor James Franco, rapper Snoop Dogg, and pop star Justin Bieber, but the stigma that is associated with men and selfies is a target for humor and satire. Although women take and post more selfies, Franco is a great example of someone who posed the way that he wanted in his selfie and posted it regardless of the stigma surrounding men and selfies. In the same vein as a famous nearly nude selfie posted by Kim Kardashian West, Franco posted a selfie on Instagram in 2014 of himself posing in a mirror. However, Franco being nearly nude in the photograph brought controversy,

but Franco defended the selfie by saying that it was showing the “real him” (Bender, 2014).

Franco and other male celebrities choose to pose the way that they want to pose in their selfies, but girls and women have been taught their entire lives to be images to be looked at, which includes being carefully posed in photos. Selfie culture perpetuates this traditional notion, and this called *selfie-objectification*. This term is defined as:

noun: to present oneself as an object, especially of sight or other physical sense, through a photograph that one takes of oneself, for posting online, which process manifests itself in three steps (Kite & Kite, 2014).

Men are just as much open to objectification in their selfies as women are, but women are still the ones who are perceived to be the gender who care about how they pose in their selfies. The 2014 technologically-advanced study “Selfiecity,” which was conducted in five major cities, showed that women take more selfies than men with 1.3 times as many in Bangkok, 1.9 times as many in Berlin, and 4.6 times as many in Moscow. Furthermore, the results of the Posing section corroborated Selfiecity in that Selfiecity found that women's selfies show more expressive poses than men—with the average amount of head tilt for women being higher than men (12.3 degrees vs. 8.2 degrees) [Williams, 2014a].

Mouth

Results show that the difference between males and females when it comes to the category of mouth is not that significant with men having an observed frequency of 269 and women having an observed frequency of 305. Once again, like the past four categories, the differences in the various usages of the mouth in selfies between males and females is not that significant. Like Clothing and Nudity and Posing, the category of Mouth may have a sexual connotation, but could also be something simple or very popular such as doing a duck face or

fish gape.

The perception that “selfies are strictly for women” corroborates this data. Examples of activities within this perception are women showing off aspects where a mouth would be involved, like how well they applied their makeup or how good their lips look in a new shade of lipstick (Elliot, Misha & Matt, 2014). Furthermore, the male celebrity selfies demonstrate that men are also capable of sticking their tongues out, opening their mouths, duck facing, and fish gaping just as much as the next woman. The prevalent stereotype is that when it comes to taking selfies, women are still more dominant in utilizing and showcasing their mouths in their selfies.

Conclusion

Summary

The focus of this study was to discover whether there was a significant difference between women and men when it comes to one of the biggest phenomenon of our technologically-advanced culture, the selfie, and its delineation on another form of our technologically-advanced culture, Instagram.

With selfies being perceived as a feminine action and as being mostly taken and posted by women and girls, the connection between gender and selfies was the focus of this study with the analysis of celebrity selfies on Instagram. Although many of the notorious selfie takers in the celebrity world are women, like reality television stars Kim Kardashian West and Kylie Jenner, and actress Shay Mitchell, this study also analyzed the selfies on Instagram of men, such as pop star Justin Bieber, actor James Franco, and NBA player LeBron James. This study focused on the connection between gender and selfies from the perspective of the specific differences between the celebrity selfies of both female and male celebrities on Instagram. In studying gender and

selfies, this study analyzed specific differences in how women and men form and present themselves through their selfies. More so than a question of whether women take selfies more than men, this study discovered how women and men take their selfies and how they form, present, and establish their identities through their selfies on Instagram.

The history of the selfie began with self-portraiture, with the act of taking a selfie manifesting itself in many mediums, including sculpture, painting, and photography. Furthermore, today's manifestation of the selfie and its prevalence on social media began with photography, and with the first photographed selfie by Robert Cornelius in 1839 using a silver-lined daguerreotype. The progression of today's selfie continued with the concurrent emergence and prominence of smartphones and social media, and with popular social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat permeating the selfie around the world for everyone to see.

A selfie is defined as a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and uploaded to a social media website (Oxford English Dictionary, 2013a). The bridge between self-portrait and technology was made when the word selfie was first utilized in an Internet forum in Australia in 2002, and then its introduction into the world of social media was made when the hashtag #selfie was used in 2011 by Jennifer Lee. The selfie is directly descended from the self-portraits that were manifested in paintings, sculptures, and photographs in art history, and its perfection was made by its incorporation into technology and social media.

Selfies and their prominence is attributed to social media, but it can also be attributed to its users. Although the selfie has been made famous and noteworthy by celebrities, a selfie is an aspect of social media that is just as popular and important to non-celebrities. Unlike self-

portraiture, which was usually reserved for the wealthy and well-respected figures in society, the selfie bridges that class divide, and anybody in any part of the world who has a smartphone, a tablet, or a computer can take and post a selfie, regardless of its level of art, class, or other standards or demographics.

Celebrities are the most notorious and recognized selfie takers and posters on social media today, and although both celebrities and non-celebrities take selfies, it was easier and more efficient to sample the selfies on Instagram of celebrities for this study. Celebrities take and post selfies on their social media accounts, especially on Instagram and Snapchat, because it is the utmost way to be both their own publicist and paparazzi. Like self-portraiture in art, when a celebrity takes and posts a selfie, they have the opportunity to act as both the artist and the subject, and again, they have full control over how they delineate themselves to the public.

The popularity of the selfie is directly correlated to, or was catalyzed by, the popularity of the social media application and platform Instagram. The top celebrity selfie takers and posters, including selfie queen Kim Kardashian West and pop star Justin Bieber, post most of their selfies on Instagram. The hashtag #selfie was first used on Instagram by Jennifer Lee, and as of June 2017, the hashtag #selfie has been used in posts on Instagram over 302 million times.

Furthermore, more celebrities post their selfies on Instagram, than on Twitter, another popular social media network and application on which to post selfies (*The Huffington Post*, 2013).

Limitations

There are many limitations to this study that involves the various aspects of this study, including the subjects and the technology that was utilized.

The Celebrities

To begin with, there are many limitations regarding the subjects of this study, which were

the female and male celebrities who are the top selfie takers and posters on Instagram, including reality television star Kim Kardashian West and rapper Snoop Dogg. Although this study focused on the top six female celebrity selfie takers on Instagram and the top six male celebrity selfie takers on Instagram based on a comprehensive list made by *The Huffington Post* in 2014 (*The Huffington Post*, 2014), the ever-changing trends in entertainment, celebrity, and pop culture could have changed this list. The most well-known selfie takers, such as the members of the Kardashian family and pop star Justin Bieber, still take and post a plethora of selfies on Instagram that gather a plethora of likes and comments. For example, Kylie Jenner's most recent selfie, which was posted on December 19, 2017 and which promoted a Daniel Wellington watch, got over 374,000 comments and over 4,000,000 likes.

But many celebrities may have taken the top spots for both women and men in the last three years since *The Huffington Post* list was published. Major female celebrity selfie takers in 2017 include popular pop stars and actresses such as Ariana Grande, Miley Cyrus, and Selena Gomez. Major male celebrity selfie takers in 2017 include NFL player Tom Brady, actor Zac Efron, actor Orlando Bloom, and late-night talk host Jimmy Fallon. With the ever-changing atmosphere of entertainment, celebrity, and pop culture, an evergreen limitation would be the female and male celebrities who are chosen for future studies of selfies based on their popularity and/or posting of selfies on social media.

App Developments in Instagram

Along with the ever-changing world of entertainment, celebrity, and pop culture, there is the ever-changing world of technology. The most popular social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat, have developed immensely since their introductions with new and innovative features. Furthermore, the competition within that range is heated with

Facebook and Instagram mimicking the transient concept of Snapchat with their Facebook Live Videos and Instagram Stories respectively.

There are limitations within Instagram because of these developments—it is no longer just an app where you can post photos and videos. Along with the Instagram Stories feature, there is the ability to post longer videos within the app, and the ability to direct message, or DM, and chat with followers within the app. Selfies posted on Instagram is not only for your account, but selfies can also be posted on your Instagram Story or to a friend who you are chatting with, both in photo or videos form. Moreover, like Snapchat, you can customize your photo or video in your Instagram Story with a plethora of extra details, such as filters, stickers, text sizes and colors, and drawings on the screen.

Methodology and Categories

This study was quantitative, and utilized the chi-square method, which was the best method for analyzing media. Past research studies on images, such as magazine covers and photographs, utilized categories for coding sheets which were utilized for this study.

Furthermore, another limitation for this study is the option of it being a qualitative study with the inclusion of interviews or surveys about celebrities and selfies. Moreover, analyzing the connection between gender and selfies, especially with gender neutrality and transgender issues in the zeitgeist, using qualitative methodology would yield results that may differ from this study or other quantitative studies about selfies.

Directions for Future Research

Given the ever-changing world of technology and social media applications such as Instagram, there are many directions for future research that can be conducted on selfies and its connections with gender. Furthermore, there are many directions for future research that can be

done with other social media applications.

To begin with, there was a study published in *Visual Communication Quarterly* in November 2016 called “The Selfie Study: Archetypes and Motivations in Modern Self-Photography” which discussed the motivation behind why people take and share selfies. Using a Q-method analysis, the researchers both quantitatively and qualitatively identified motivations for taking and sharing selfies. Those motivations were categorized into three archetypes: communicators, self-publicists, and autobiographers (Holiday, Lewis, Nielsen, Anderson, & Elinzano, 2016).

It would be interesting to conduct a future study that uses Q-methodology to discover the motivations behind why women and men specifically take and share selfies on social media. Discovering the similarities and differences between why women and men take and share selfies, especially with the ever-increasing popularity of selfies between women and men, with the continual development of social media applications, and with new categories of gender identification.

Another study by Derek Conrad Murray called “Notes to self: the visual culture of selfies in the age of social media” that was published in *Consumption Markets & Culture* in July 2015 explored the connections between selfie culture and gender through feminism. With the help of the history of feminist representational politics, Murray studied the selfie as either a form of narcissism—its commonplace perspective—or as a form of resistance (Murray, 2015).

Murray’s study has a strong foundation upon which a future study can be conducted on the selfie as a form of resistance for women and girls, especially given its prominent symbol as feminine and narcissistic, and the current political climate. The resistance movement against the current administration has manifested itself in many ways, from women’s marches around the

world to an increased number of women interested in running for political office in the future. It would be fascinating in these days of fervent feminism being in the zeitgeist to analyze selfies as a form of resistance, as a tool of activism, and as a break from narcissism.

A third study called “Sharing the small moments: ephemeral social interaction on Snapchat” that was published in *Information, Communication & Society* in July 2015 explored the emotional experiences of the popular social media application Snapchat. Furthermore, it compared face-to-face interactions to Snapchat and its overall role in social relationships (Bayer, Ellison, Schonebeck, & Falk, 2015).

It would be interesting to conduct a study that applies the analysis of the positive and negative emotional effects of Snapchat with an analysis of the emotional effects of selfies on Snapchat, or any other social media application for that matter. With selfies being a manner through which to fabricate your identity, an examination of selfies on Snapchat and its emotional effects on both women and men would be fascinating, especially because transience is the main concept of Snapchat.

Given my background studying art history, a final study that would be interesting to conduct is based on an article by *The New York Times* about the large amount of people who take selfies when viewing the famous painting "Starry Night" by Vincent van Gogh at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City (Clines, 2017). The article includes quotes by the Ann Temkin, the Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture at the MoMA, who said of all of those taking selfies (and photos in general) with the iconic post-Impressionist painting that "the problem with all the photo-takers is that they make it impossible for someone who wants to do that [look at the photo in a slow and thoughtful way] kind of looking to do so."

It would be interesting to conduct a study on selfies that are taken at art museums,

especially at the most famous art museums, to see which painting and sculptures get the most coverage on social media or on Instagram. It would be fascinating to analyze the amount and type of selfies that are taken at the Louvre in Paris, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the MoMA in New York City, the Tate Modern in London, etc. Finding out if more men or more women take selfies in art museums, finding out paintings, sculptures, or installations are the most selfie-worthy, and even seeing the art museum encourages taking a selfie with a work, such as through a hashtag or a promoting the posting of it, would be advantageous to both selfie research and art marketing research.

Final Words

This study is a multi-faceted study that analyzes how people utilize social media, dissects how people create their identities through selfies, and compares how those identities are created between women and men. The motivation behind this study was the massive phenomenon of the selfie, which crosses generations and cultures, as well as my ardent affinity for selfies. The prevalent notion in pop culture is that women take more selfies and care about selfies more than men, and although this study has proven that notion correct, this study has also shown that men are not entirely apathetic when it comes to both taking selfies and establishing their identities through selfies.

The world of social media and technology is rapidly evolving every day, and the advancements in social media and technology will surely bring to light more scholarly studies on social media, selfies, identity, and gender. The evolution of the selfie from the eras of portraiture in painting and sculpture to photography to today's prevalence of smartphones and tablets will continue, and studies will be conducted that help connect the selfie to both the current times and to ourselves. The real question is—what will the next evolution be? In today's hyper-technical

world, it seems like anything is possible and the future is as bright as ever. The selfie is beloved by all ages and crosses cultures and backgrounds all over the world. It will continue to be a foundation upon which to create our identities, show who we are, and express how we feel. As technology evolves to advance ways to take and post a selfie, the scholarly world needs keep up and understand that this phenomenon which will never die.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Master's Thesis: Celebrity Selfies on Instagram - Coding Sheet

Post #: _____ Celebrity: _____

	Present	Absent
1. Clothing and Nudity		
a) Highly-revealing or skin-tight clothing	_____	_____
b) Somewhat revealing (men and women with exposed midriffs)	_____	_____
c) Slightly revealing clothing (women wearing modestly low necklines, exposed arms or shoulders)	_____	_____
d) Wearing minimal clothing (wearing one or two items of clothing and nothing else)	_____	_____
2. Social Distance		
a) intimate (face and head only; close-up)	_____	_____
b) close personal distance (head and shoulders)	_____	_____
c) far personal distance (from the waist up)	_____	_____
d) far social distance (whole figure with or without a mirror, shows space around it)	_____	_____
e) public distance (with at least two or more people in the image)	_____	_____
3. Visual Modality (cropping)		
a) not cropped photos (not fitting the photo into the grid window in the Instagram application)	_____	_____
4. Visual Modality (lighting and filters)		
b) well-lit image (utilizing a filter or not utilizing a filter with #NoFilter)	_____	_____
5. Posing (standing)		
a) Standing upright	_____	_____
6. Posing (sexually suggestive)		
b) Sexually suggestive poses (lifting one's arms overhead, any kind of leaning or sitting, head-tilt)	_____	_____
c) Overtly posed for sexual activity (lying down or a woman with her legs spread open)	_____	_____
7. Mouth		
a) Mouths that don't suggest sexual activity (closed lips, broad toothy smiles, or active singing, talking or yelling)	_____	_____
b) Mouths that are suggestive of sex (parted slightly; but not smiling; duckface, fishgape, kissy face)	_____	_____
c) Explicitly suggestive of sex (wide open mouths, tongue sticking out, or finger in his or her mouth)	_____	_____

Appendix B

Clothing and Nudity

a) Highly-revealing or skin-tight clothing

b) Somewhat revealing

Kylie Jenner

Kylie Jenner



c) Slightly revealing clothing

d) Wearing minimal clothing

Kendall Jenner

Justin Bieber



Social Distance

a) Intimate

James Franco



b) Close personal distance

Kim Kardashian-West



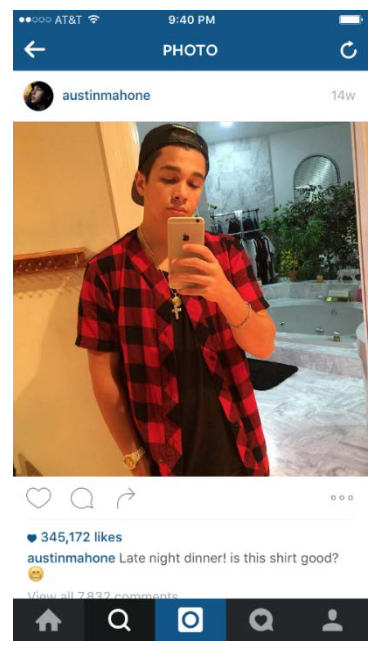
c) Far personal distance

Kevin Durant



d) far social distance

Austin Mahone



e) public distance

LeBron James



Visual Modality

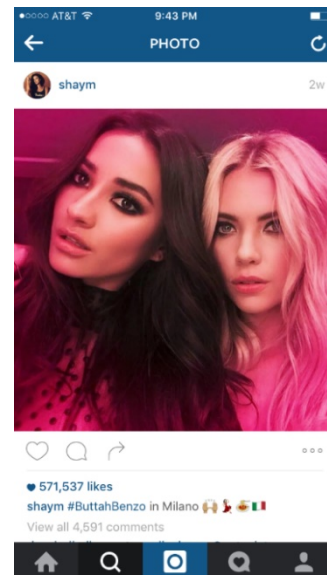
a) not cropped photos

Khloe Kardashian



b) well-lit image

Shay Mitchell



Posing

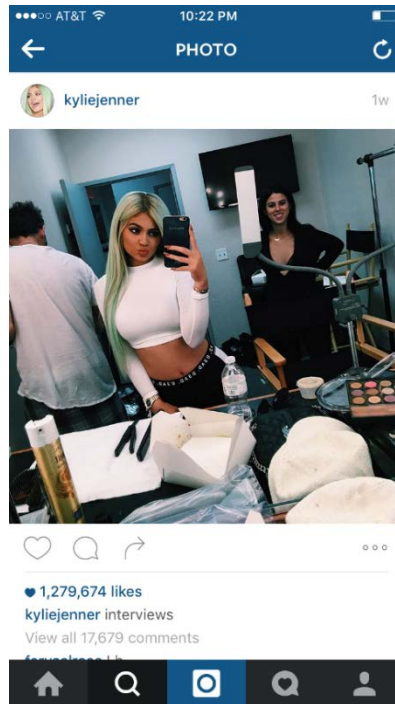
a) Standing upright

Snoop Dogg



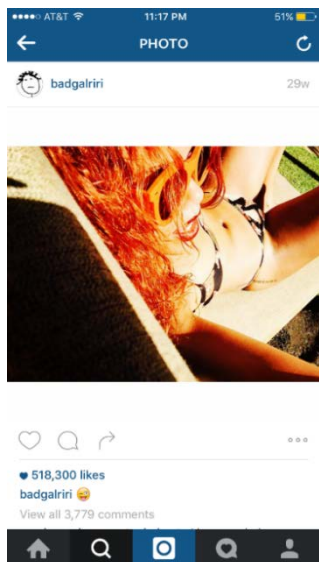
b) Sexually suggestive poses

Kylie Jenner



c) Overtly posed for sexual activity

Rihanna



Mouth

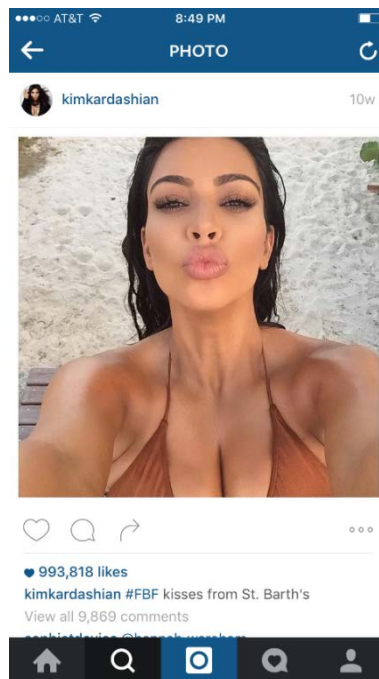
a) Mouths that don't suggest sexual activity

Justin Bieber



b) Suggestive of sex

Kim Kardashian-West



c) Explicitly suggestive of sex

Kim Kardashian-West

