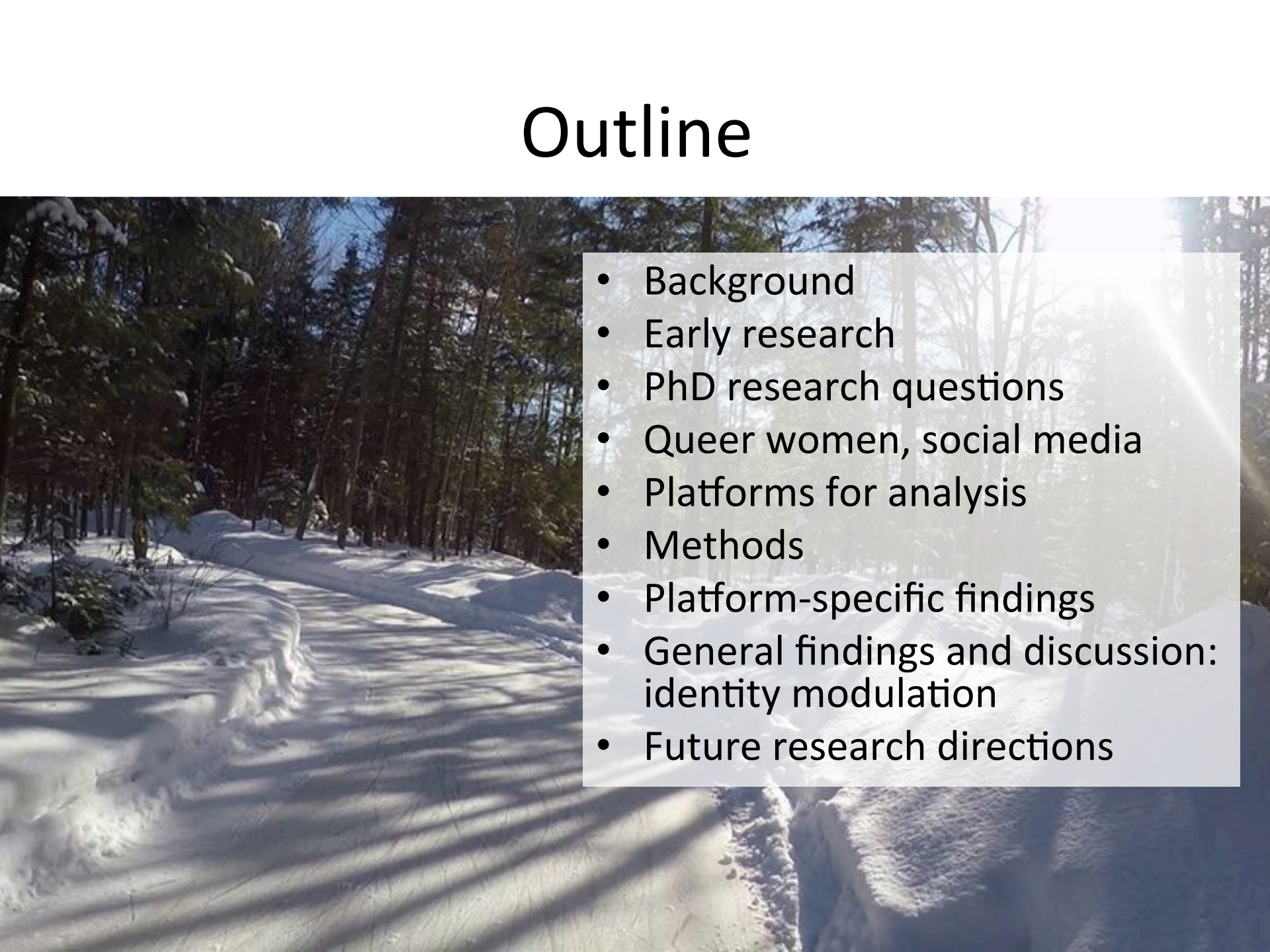# Negotiating visibility:

Queer women's identity modulation on Tinder, Instagram, and Vine

Dr. Stefanie Duguay
Assistant Professor, Communication Studies
stefanieduguay.com
@DugStef

February 23, 2018
LabCMO Seminar
UQAM, Montreal

Outline

- Background
- Early research
- PhD research questions
- Queer women, social media
- Platforms for analysis
- Methods
- Platform-specific findings
- General findings and discussion: identity modulation
- Future research directions

Background

Digital media in everyday life
&
Identity and social media

Focus areas:
- Sexual identity
- Platforms
- Digital methods

Commitment to:
- Social justice
- Health and wellbeing
- Research application

Coming Out in Networked Publics

- Networked publics (boyd, 2011; 2014)

- "How do LGBTQ young people experience and negotiate context collapse on Facebook?"

- Interviews and participant-led social media exploration

Image courtesy of Changing Attitude

Context Collapse and Prevention

- Intentional and unintentional context collapse
- Prevention:
  - Social steganography
  - Separating audiences
- User agency, Goffman, and digital literacy

Duguay, S. (2016). 'He has a way gayer Facebook than I do': Investigating sexual identity disclosure and context collapse on a social networking site. *New Media & Society, 18*(6), 891-907. (First published online in 2014)

Queer Women and Social Media

- What is distinctive about queer women's public participation and self-representation with their use of contemporary social media?
  - How do **queer women** use social media for their participation and representation?
  - How do **social media** shape queer women's participation and representation?
  - What kinds of **networked publics** are queer women forming?

Focusing on Queer Women

- Stigmatized sexuality and gender inequality

- Increased public participation, sometimes

- Increased and varied media representation (Dhaenens & van Bauwel, 2012; Dhaenens, 2014)

Focusing on Social Media

Networked publics in a platform context

- Authenticity building (Robards, 2014)

- Micro-celebrity (Senft, 2008; Marwick, 2016; Abidin, 2016)

- Emergent communities and technocultures (Brock, 2012)

"Platform paradigm"

(Burgess & Banks, 2014)

- Platform politics and economic drivers

Platforms for Analysis

Methods

1. App walkthrough
2. Textual analysis
3. Interviews

Photos by **irenesco**, **tvwithcheese**, **hammo85**, **hacchi312** **arielvargasruiz**.

The Walkthrough Method

Closely examines an app's technological mechanisms and embedded cultural references

A. Environment of expected use:

- Vision

- Operating Model

- Governance

B. Technical walkthrough

Light, B., Burgess, J., & Duguay, S. (2016). The walkthrough method: An approach to the study of apps. *New Media & Society*. DOI: 10.1177/1461444816675438
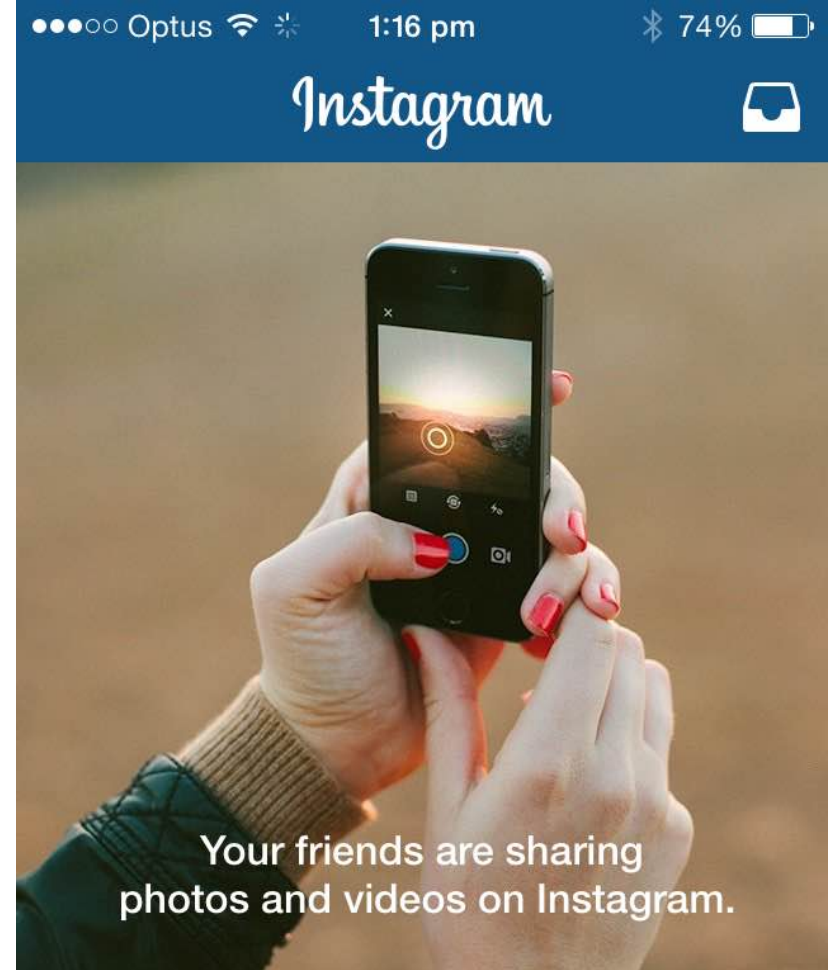
Image courtesy of Michel Balzer

Technical Walkthrough

Mediator characteristics – design elements that transform meaning and interactions

- Interface arrangement
- Functions and features
- Textual content and tone
- Symbolic representation

General stages:

- Registration and entry
- Everyday use
- Suspension, closure and leaving

Analysis of User Content
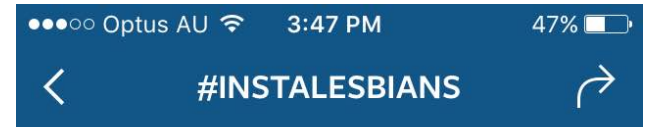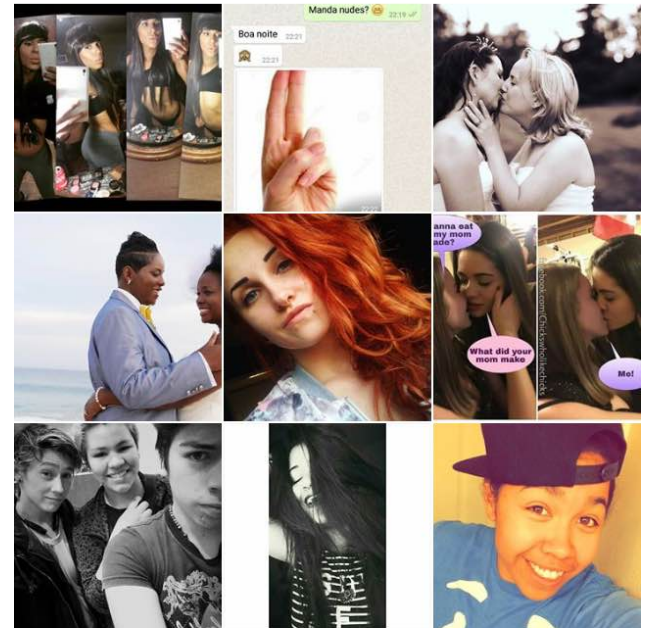
Interviews

- Sampling tailored to platform

- 10 Tinder, 8 Instagram, 2 Vine = 20 total

- Range of participants and experiences

Findings

Tinder, Authenticity, Swiping

- Mobile dating
- Facebook as verifying authenticity
- The swipe's perceived affordances
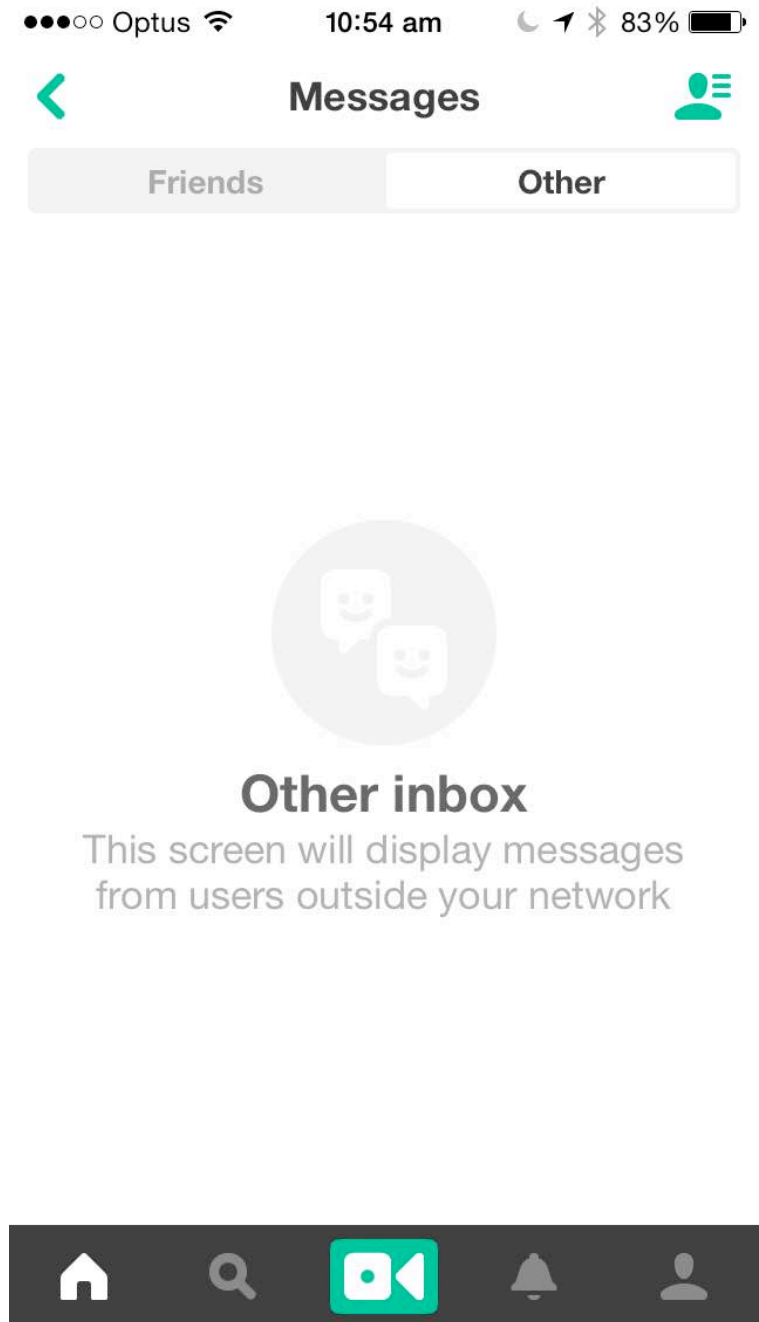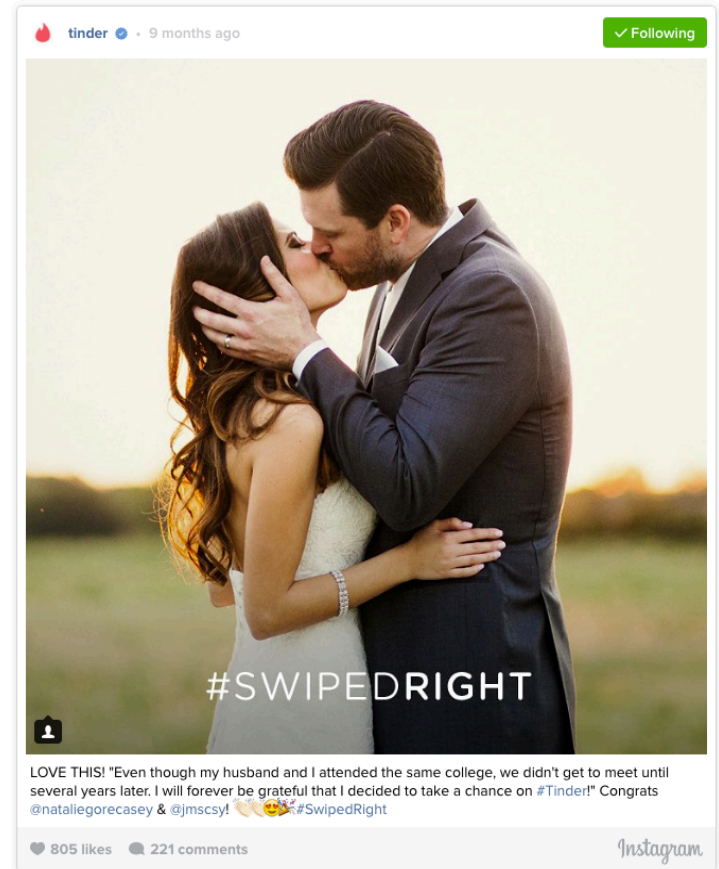

Duguay, S. (2017). Dressing up Tinderella: Interrogating authenticity claims on the mobile dating app Tinder. *Information, Communication & Society*, *20*(3), 351-367.

Duguay, S. (forthcoming). Tinder. In J. Morris & S. Murray (Eds.), *Appified: The Culture of Mundane Software.*

Superficial Tinder

"If they start talking dirty straightaway or they ask for nudes, then it's a guy. That's happened to me probably five times – probably more than that actually." - Julia

Any swipe can change your life.
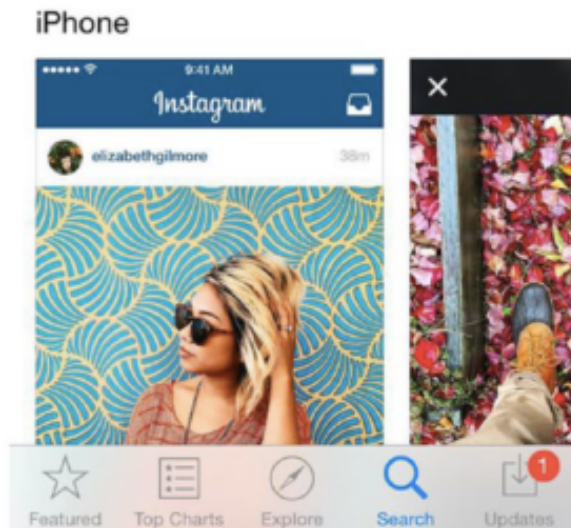
DOWNLOAD NOW

CONTACT   PRIVACY   TERMS   SAFETY

Instagram Aesthetic

Duguay, S. (2016). LGBTQ visibility through selfies: Comparing platform mediators across Ruby Rose's Instagram and Vine presence. *Social Media + Society*, 2(2), 1-12.

Everyday Instafame

- Instafame (Marwick, 2015)

- Networked intimate public (Olszanowski, 2014)

"We went to a roller derby event Saturday night and one of the roller girls came up to me and said, 'Oh my God, Queenie Von Curves, I stalk you on Instagram.' …I feel like, especially locally, I have a really great exposure to people through Instagram…"
 - Queenie

Duguay, S. (forthcoming). "The more I look like Justin Bieber in the pictures, the better": Queer women's self-representation on Instagram. In: Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self: Platforms, stories, connections.* Routledge.

Vine's Affective Intensity

- 6.5 second, looping video
- Narratives, jokes, emotion
- Repetition and remixing

Vine by @Dom

Collective Identity

- Shared identity
- Close-knit communities
- Networked counterpublics (Renninger, 2014)
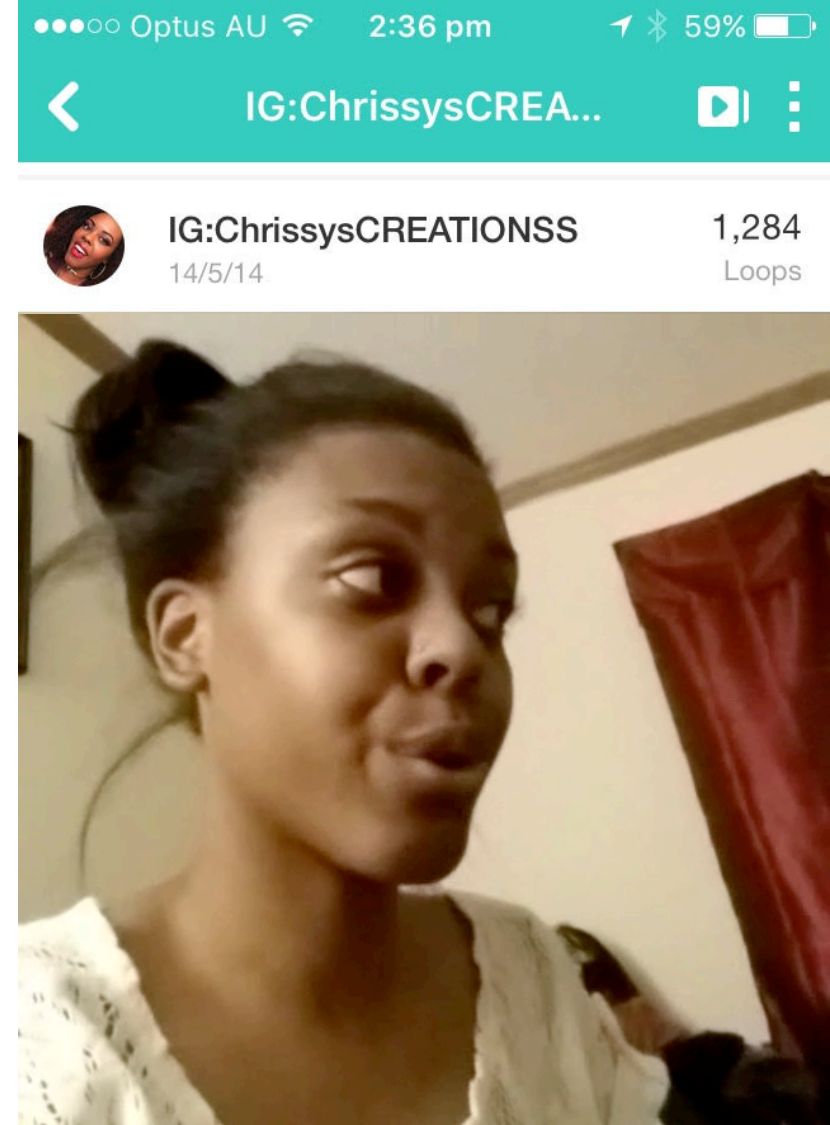
when #blackmothers say they gon whoop your ass you'll do what they say #doitforthevine #IAintGoneDoIt

Duguay, S. (forthcoming). Thirst traps and #relatable Vines: Investigating a networked counterpublic of queer women. Paper to be presented at *AoIR2017: The 18th Annual Conference of the Association of Internet Researchers*, October 18-21, Tartu, Estonia.

Theorizing Across Platforms

- So, how do queer women participate in publics and self-represent with contemporary social media?

- Identity modulation
  - "Strategic outness" (Orne, 2011) – on platforms
  - Impediments: platform constraints, toxic user cultures

Future Research

- Intersectional identities
- Different platforms
- Canadian context

Image courtesy of Montreal in Pictures

Future Networks and Digital Methods

- Canadian and international digital research networks

- Montreal as a knowledge hub for digital research methods

- Collaborative focus on digital sexualities

Image: Australian Twittersphere
Axel Bruns & DMRC Team

References

Abidin, C. 2016. "'Aren't These Just Young, Rich Women Doing Vain Things Online?': Influencer Selfies as Subversive Frivolity." *Social Media + Society* April-June: 1–17. doi:10.1177/2056305116641342.

boyd, d. 2014. *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press.

boyd, d. 2011. "Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications." In *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, edited by Zizi Papacharissi, 39–58. New York and London: Routledge.

Brock, A. 2012. "From the Blackhand Side: Twitter as a Cultural Conversation." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 56 (4): 529–49. doi:10.1080/08838151.2012.732147.

Burgess, J., and Banks, J. 2014. "Social Media." In *The Media & Communications in Australia (4th Edition)*, edited by S. Cunningham and S Turnbull, 285–89. Crows Nest, NWS, AU: Allen & Unwin.

Dhaenens, F., and S. Van Bauwel. 2012. "The Good, the Bad or the Queer: Articulations of Queer Resistance in The Wire." *Sexualities* 15 (5–6): 702–17. doi:10.1177/1363460712446280.

Dhaenens, F. 2014. "Articulations of Queer Resistance on the Small Screen." *Continuum*. Taylor & Francis. doi:10.1080/10304312.2014.907869.

Marwick, A. E. 2015. "Instafame: Luxury Selfies in the Attention Economy." *Public Culture* 27 (1): 137–60. doi:10.1215/08992363-2798379.

———. 2016. "You May Know Me from YouTube: (Micro-)Celebrity in Social Media." In *A Companion to Celebrity*, edited by P.D. Marshall and S. Redmond, 333–50. Malden, MA: Wiley.

Olszanowski, M. 2014. "Feminist Self-Imaging and Instagram: Tactics of Circumventing Sensorship." *Visual Communication Quarterly* 21 (2): 83–95. doi:10.1080/15551393.2014.928154.

Orne, J. 2011. "'You Will Always Have To "out" yourself': Reconsidering Coming out through Strategic Outness." *Sexualities* 14 (6): 681–703. doi:10.1177/1363460711420462.

Renninger, B. J. 2014. "'Where I Can Be Myself … Where I Can Speak My Mind': Networked Counterpublics in a Polymedia Environment." *New Media & Society*, April. doi:10.1177/1461444814530095.

Robards, B. 2014. "Mediating Experiences of 'Growing Up' on Facebook's Timeline: Privacy, Ephemerality and the Reflexive Project of the Self." In *Mediated Youth Cultures: The Internet, Belonging and New Cultural Configurations*, edited by A. Bennett and B. Robards, 26–41. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Senft, T. M. 2008. *Camgirls: Celebrity and Community in the Age of Social Networks*. New York: Peter Lang.

Thank you!

stefanie.duguay@concordia.ca
stefanieduguay.com
@DugStef