'#STRENGTH': A CRITICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE CONTEMPORARY REPRESENTATIONS OF MEN AND WOMEN IN FITNESS COMMUNITIES ON INSTAGRAM

By

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Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTERS

GENERAL LINGUISTICS

at

Stellenbosch University

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DECEMBER 2017

DECLARATION

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Robyn Luyt

December 2017

Abstract

Contemporary linguists seek to describe and analyse all manifestations of language, including those occurring on the Internet (see Crystal 2011:1). Investigating visual and linguistic representations on the Internet can offer insights into the ways in which individuals view and participate in particular social practices. It can also highlight dominant ideologies about a particular social practice, ideologies which can limit participation amongst particular groups of people (van Dijk 2003:96). In light of this, this thesis explores the visual and textual representations of one aspect of social life (sport) on one Internet genre (Instagram). The analysis is limited to representations which include the hashtag '#strength'. Limiting the analysis in this way necessarily means that the data is representative of ideologies related to gender, strength and power in a sporting context.

In line with more contemporary research into language and discourse, this thesis adopts the view that the visual and linguistic features of a text are not removed from the social context but can offer researchers a deeper understanding of the context in which the text is produced, circulated and read (Breeze 2011:521). By drawing on Fairclough's (2003) method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), genre studies (Jones 2012), Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) framework for multimodality as well as feminist theory (Bordo 2004), the researcher ensures that the text is analysed and understood on multiple levels.

An initial thematic analysis of one hundred Instagram posts with the hashtag 'strength' reveals that male and female users are still limited to traditional gender binaries that separate sport types as appropriately 'male' or appropriately 'female'. This initial analysis also reveals that online representations of sport are still restricted by masculine hegemonic norms, as female users are overwhelmingly represented in individual, non-contact or aesthetic sport types. A detailed CDA and multimodal analysis of twenty purposively selected Instagram posts reveals the presence of shared visual and linguistic markers that perpetuate male dominance and female subservience. By drawing on social theoretical understandings of contemporary life, this thesis eventually argues that the narrow representations of masculinity and femininity present in the data set work to limit or even exclude both men and women from participating in certain aspects of social life.

Key words: *CDA, Instagram, social media, multimodality, genre studies, feminism, gender, sports, masculine hegemony*

Opsomming

Kontemporêre taalkundiges poog om alle manifestasies van taal te beskryf en te analiseer, insluitende dié wat op die Internet voorkom (sien Crystal 2011:1). Deur visuele en taalkundige voorstellings op die Internet te bestudeer, verkry ons inligiting oor die in die maniere waarop individue bepaalde sosiale praktyke beskou en daaraan deelneem. Dit kan ook dominante ideologieë oor 'n bepaalde sosiale praktyk uitlig, ideologieë wat deelname tussen bepaalde groepe mense kan beperk (van Dijk 2003:96). In die lig hiervan ondersoek hierdie tesis die visuele en tekstuele voorstellings van een aspek van sosiale lewe (sport) in een Internet genre (Instagram). Die analise is beperk tot voorstellings wat die hutsteken '#strength' insluit. Deur die ondersoek op hierdie manier te beperk beteken dat die data verteenwoordigend is van ideologieë wat verband hou met geslag, krag en mag in 'n sportkonteks.

In ooreenstemming met meer moderne navorsing oor taal en diskoers, is dit hierdie tesis se siening dat die visuele en taalkundige eienskappe van 'n teks nie losgemaak kan word van die sosiale konteks nie, maar dat dit aan navorsers meer insig gee oor die konteks waarin die teks geproduseer, versprei en gelees word (Breeze 2011:521). Met verwysing na Fairclough (2003) se metode van kritiese diskoersanalise, genrestudie (Jones 2012), Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) se raamwerk vir multimodaliteit en feministiese teorie (Bordo 2004), verseker die navorser dat die text op verskeie vlakke ontleed en verstaan word.

'n Aanvanklike tematiese ontleding van honderd Instagram-plasings met die hutsteken '#strength' toon dat manlike en vroulike gebruikers steeds beperk is tot tradisionele geslagsverdelings wat sportsoorte as paslik 'manlik' of paslik 'vroulik' klassifiseer. Hierdie aanvanklike analise onthul ook dat aanlyn-voorstellings van sport steeds voorgeskryf word deur manlike hegemoniese norme, aangesien vroulike gebruikers hoofsaaklik verteenwoordig word in individuele, nie-kontak- of estetiese sportsoorte.'n Gedetailleerde kritiese diskoersanalise en multimodale analise van twintig uitgesoekte Instagram-plasings onthul die teenwoordigheid van gedeelde visuele en taalkundige merkers wat manlike oorheersing en vroulike onderdanigheid bestendig. Met verwysing na sosiale teoretiese begrip van die hedendaagse samelewing, voer die tesis aan dat die beperkte voorstellings van manlikheid en vroulikheid wat in die datastel voorkom, mans en vroue beperk (of selfs verhoed) om aan sekere sosiale praktyke deel te neem.

Sleutelwoorde: *kritiese diskoersanalise, Instagram, sosiale media, multimodaliteit, genrestudie, feminisme, geslag, sport, manlike hegemonie*

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. <u>Background and rationale</u>

Linguists seek to describe and analyse all manifestations of language (Crystal 2011:1). It is not surprising then that the world's largest language database, the Internet, has prompted linguists to explore this new medium that is now an integral part of contemporary life. This has subsequently given rise to a new field, Internet Linguistics, which involves the study of language on the Internet (Crystal 2011:1). The main aim of Internet Linguistics is to establish the linguistic character of the various entities that make up Internet discourse, such as chats, blogs, emails and tweets, because these new varieties have led to the expansion of the expressive options available in language (Crystal 2011:9,7). However, according to Crystal (2011:10), the Internet also poses a new array of research challenges for linguists wanting to explore this medium. A challenge of particular relevance is keeping pace with the speed of change and expansion of new technologies and their linguistic properties (Crystal 2011:10). Crystal (2011:7) further asserts that there is still considerable room for contribution with regards to understanding electronically mediated language.

In light of Crystal's (2011) views presented above, this study aimed to investigate Instagram, a free online mobile photo-sharing, video-sharing and social networking application that was released in October 2010 by its creators Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger before it was sold to Facebook for approximately one billion U.S. dollars in 2012 (Buck 2012). The word Instagram is a portmanteau of 'instant camera' and 'telegram', which captures the idea that users or 'Instagrammers' can share images instantaneously and in real time (Buck 2012). This thesis adopts Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a central investigative tool and thus it is not enough to simply describe or identify the linguistic properties of a social media platform like Instagram because an adequate CDA investigation must achieve two central tasks. First, CDA concerns itself with tasks of linguists, namely, the study of discourse grammar, speech acts, semantics or conversational moves (Fairclough 2003:119). At the same time, CDA also aligns itself with tasks of the social sciences including the observation and analysis of social inequalities at high levels of abstraction (van Dijk 2003:119).

To this end, discourse structures, often in the form of texts, are seen as artefacts of the cultural, moral, socio-political and ideological positions within society (van Dijk 2003:96). However, the underlying ideological meanings inherent in texts are not explicit or easily

accessible to all readers and so must be revealed through a detailed analysis and the assignment of meaning to the linguistic features of these texts (Fairclough 1995:3). Furthermore, texts are not only representations or reflections of social reality, but can also construct or transform realities and cultural meanings (Fairclough 1992:2). In fact, Knight and Giuliano (2001:225), in their study on gendered portrayals of athletes in the media, demonstrated that by foregrounding an athlete's attractiveness as opposed to their athletic ability, participants were more likely to hold negative perceptions of that athlete. In other words, in reality, the media does not merely reflect public opinion, but also actively shapes it (Knight and Giuliano 2001:225). With this real world implication in mind, this investigation into the social and cultural meanings attached to the human body and the role of men and women in the fitness arena is pertinent as users of social media platforms, like Instagram, are growing in number and influence.

According to Cooky, Messner and Hextrum (2013:203), sport news and media continue to convey a message to audiences that sport is by, for, and about men, despite women's increasing participation in sport and the advances made in the sexual emancipation movement (Ponterotto 2014:96). This point is supported by Ponterotto (2014:109) who argues that mainstream sport print media harbours and propagates ideologically-motivated, sexist stereotypes which then become sites for the legitimisation of patriarchy and male hegemony. The persistence of these gender-role stereotypes, according to Ponterotto (2014:97), work to confirm and sanction male hegemony by confining women and men to the traditional male/female binary which defines men as "rational, aggressive, exploitive, strategic, independent, competitive" and physically dominant and women as "intuitive, emotional, submissive, empathetic, spontaneous, nurturing, corporative" and physically weaker than men.

This study is interested in the abovementioned prevalence of gender stereotypes, patriarchy and the marginalisation of female athletes and so, like Ponterotto (2014:97), takes a standpoint that is unequivocally feminist. This feminist interpretive perspective is adopted to investigate the particular rendering of 'strong' as it applies to male and female bodies by analysing the images and captions that accompany the hashtag "strength" on Instagram. However, unlike the studies by Cooky, Messner and Hextrum (2013:203) and Ponterotto (2014:97) which focus on media institutions as the producers of representations of social actors, this study seeks to determine whether discriminatory features of news reporting translate and manifest in the realm of social media where users are typically the producers of

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these representations of themselves. In this way, this thesis seeks to reveal the potential link between discourse structures and gender structures within society.

1.2. <u>Research hypothesis</u>

This study hypothesises that the hashtag "strength" is problematic in its representation of both women and men who engage in fitness activities. This is premised on the idea that male and female social actors, who make use of the hashtag "strength", are participating in a pre-existing conversation which perpetuates the reductive male/female categories identified by Ponterotto (2014:97). A further hypothesis of this study is that, when men and women use the hashtag "strength" they are participating in two competing discourses; namely, that of performance and that of aesthetics.

These hypothesises are based on Ponterotto's (2014:94) analysis of the representations of female athletes in English and Italian sports journalism which revealed discursive strategies that trivalise and eroticise the body of the female athlete by focusing on physical attractiveness, traditional female attributes and sexual desirability at the expense of athletic ability and competence. By searching for textual patterns across two very different cultures (British and Italian), Ponterotto (2014:105) argues that this eroticism of the female athlete is a constant rather than an occasional feature of news reporting. For this reason, it is believed that the two competing discourses should become clearer on investigation of the contemporary representation of 'strong' as it applies to women and men on Instagram. The dictionary definition of 'strength' is "the quality or state of being strong" with "strong" then defined as possessing "the power to move heavy weights or perform other physically demanding tasks" suggests that both men and women will be conceptualised on the basis of performance rather than appearance (Hornby 2005:146).

Then again, as Hargreaves asserts (2004:7), sports are politicised and, as a culture, perpetuates and legitimises cultural ideologies of sexual difference and male dominance. For this reason, it is believed that the representation of 'strong' men will be rooted largely in performance whereas the representation of 'strong' women will be rooted largely in aesthetics. Ultimately then, despite the fact that women on Instagram seek to compete in the predominately masculine discourse of 'strength', they are most likely still underrepresented or portrayed in a subordinate light which, according to Harris and Clayton (2002:409), is typical of press coverage of sportswomen. However, an investigation within CDA requires that such a potential link between social structures and discourse structures must be grounded

in evidence revealed by thorough linguistic scrutiny as well as an understanding of the broader societal currents that shape the social problem in question (van Dijk 2003:96; Fairclough 2003:24).

1.3. <u>Research questions</u>

Fairclough (2003:23) has identified three levels of analysis for studying discourse that demonstrates the potential link between texts, namely Instagram posts, and social structures, namely gender structures in modern society. At the macro-level, the first level of analysis, the CDA practitioner looks at the discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice and subsequently takes into account the broad, societal currents that affect the social problem in question (Fairclough 2003:24). At the meso-level, the practitioner is concerned with the analysis of discourse practices such as the processes of text production, consumption and distribution and, subsequently, the producers and consumers or audiences of these texts (Fairclough 2003:24). At the final level of analysis, the micro-level, the CDA practitioner is concerned with textual or linguistic features such as syntax or rhetorical devices (Fairclough 2003:23).

These three levels of analysis prompt the formulation of three research questions that can be expressed as follows:

1. What is the social context in which the text is produced?
2. What are the unique characteristics of this particular textual and discursive genre?
3. What is the particular linguistic form (such as grammar and vocabulary) and visual grammar of Instagram posts with the hashtag "strength"?
    a. What are the linguistic and visual features that reflect an in-group identity for male and female users as well as the 'strength' fitness community as a whole?

An in-depth analysis at the levels identified by Fairclough (2003:23), and the consequent answering of the above research questions, should aid in answering the central research question of this investigation which can be formulated as follows:

What representations of men and women are evident in the Instagram posts with the hashtag 'strength'?

As previously mentioned, it is first necessary to understand the societal currents that affect the social problem before a detailed linguistic investigation can be conducted. The next chapter aims to sketch out the social landscape that surrounds the social problem, namely

gender structures, by addressing core concepts in relevant theories of sport, gender and feminism from fields like sociology, anthropology, psychology and the sports sciences. The third chapter will look at CDA as an approach followed by a discussion of several studies within CDA that are significant to the social problem in question. A methodological approach will be given in chapter four with specific attention paid to Fairclough's (2003) dialectical relational approach, genre analysis and the social semiotic approach of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006). Subsequently, chapters five, six and seven constitute the analysis of the data, namely; an investigation of the generic features of Instagram posts, the dominant features of the data set and an in-depth analysis of twenty purposively selected posts. The last chapter consists of a discussion of the findings by directly relating the data to the research questions and highlighting the main relationships between, and significance of, the findings of this study.

Chapter 2

The social context

As mentioned in the first chapter, CDA advocates that social problems be situated in their social, political and cultural contexts. Fairclough (2003) identifies this interest as the macro-level of analysis in his framework, one which requires the researcher to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to the research problem. This chapter aims to sketch the social landscape of sport and gender and identify key social theories and terms that aid in understanding the relationship between the two. As this thesis takes an explicitly feminist approach, special attention will be paid to key feminist terms such as 'patriarchy', 'social marginalisation' and 'hegemony'. This chapter also presents a summary of the research on the representations of men and women in sports journalism textbooks by Hardin, Dodd and Lauffer (2006) and "The Televised Spots Manhood Formula" by Messner, Dunbar and Hunt (2000) in the final section.

2.1. Sport history and athletic feminism

Messner (1988:197) argues that, in the 20th century, two key periods can be identified as a crisis in masculinity. These were accompanied by significant feminist movements as well as a rise in organised sports. During these two periods, each marked by drastic changes in the work and domestic space, organised sports functioned as a crucial arena for the contest over the ideological meanings of masculinity and femininity and the power relations between men and women (Messner 1988:199). Clarke and Clarke (1982:63) argue that sports appear to be outside of the sphere of society in so far as it is believed to involve biological or innate physical skills and capacities of the sexes and so succeeds at presenting these ideological images of men and women as if they were "natural". However, sport should be understood, according to Messner (1988:198), as a dynamic social space where dominant class ideologies or beliefs are perpetuated as well as challenged and contested. In this way, sports have become a powerful cultural arena for the perpetuation of male dominance and superiority.

The first crisis of masculinity, from the 1890s to the 1920s, was spurred by the expansion of the industrial era and the consequent creation of the public and private sphere (Messner 1988:199). At first, these separate spheres formed the basis of the breadwinner role which afforded men privilege and domination in the household (Messner 1988:199). However, mounting industrialism simultaneously undermined traditional forms of male domination in other ways (Messner 1988:200). The rise of wage labour and increase in ownership of

productive property destablised the traditional breadwinner role as fewer men were able to own property or control their own labour (Messner 1988:200). These changes in the domestic sphere and workplace were coupled with a rise in female-dominated public schools, urbanisation and the widespread fear of "social feminization" which lead to the first crisis for masculinity at the turn of the century (Messner 1988:200). According to Wilkenson (1984:4), men compensated by manifesting a defensive preoccupation with physicality, toughness and the need to create a separate cultural sphere where "true manliness" could be instilled in boys and expressed by men (Messner 1988:200).

With this context in mind, it is easier to understand the increasing importance of organised sports as a male-created homosocial cultural sphere that works to privilege men while providing proof of their "natural superiority" (Messner 1988:200). However, the industrial era was also characterised by an active feminist movement that challenged the entrenched Victorian assumptions and prescriptions concerning femininity. It saw its efforts reflected in the achievement of female suffrage as well as the first wave of athletic feminism in women's colleges at the end of the 1920s (Messner 1988:200; Vertinsky 1994:13). Nineteenth century Victorian preoccupations with the female body focused on enforcing gender differences by means of scientific and medical discourses that idealised women as reproductive vehicles and focused on the "inherent inability" of young women to control their own bodies (Vertinsky 1994:14).

These assumptions consequently barred the entrance of women into higher education and regulated their participation in sports (Vertinsky 1994:14). For this reason, women's entrance into sports, according to Vertinsky (1994:24), is more important than any other symbol of women liberation and fight for higher education because it highlights women's seeking to become physically and intellectually educated and liberated in the nineteenth century. However, this female athleticism was met with resistance and opposition as it was seen to conflict with the traditional female ethos (Messner 1988:200). This led to the establishment of the anticompetitive "feminine philosophy of sport", which called for women's sports to be moulded to the lives and physical activity patterns of women and popular views of femininity at the time (Vertinsky 1994:15). While this philosophy allowed for the survival of women's sports despite opposition, it also led to the creation of single-sex spheres in training institutions (Vertinsky 1994:15). The abovementioned breakdown of the Victorian assumptions of femininity in the 1920s had some other contradictory effects on the social deployment of women's bodies in the coming years (Messner 1988:201). On the one hand, it

allowed for the female body to become a marketable item as it could be used to sell products and services, which reflected the subordination of women at the time, but also allowed women to do more with their bodies than ever before (Messner 1988:201). In other words, the first wave of athletic feminism forced the acknowledgement of female physicality, albeit in a limited way, but these predominant cultural images of women would only be drastically challenged in the 1970s following the second crisis in masculinity (Messner 1988:201).

Similar to the first crisis, the second crisis in masculinity was also coupled with changes in economic and social life following the end of the Second World War. The development of capitalism and consequent transformation from industrial production and manual labour to a service-orientated economy, led to greater levels of structural unemployment and further erosion of traditional male expressions of identity as the breadwinner of the household (Messner 1988:201). This decline in the relevance of physical strength in work and warfare, however, was not met with a decline in the psychological need for an ideology of gender differences and the diminution in importance of representations of the male body as a symbol of strength, virility and power (Messner 1988:202).

The marriage between sport and television played an important role during this time when inequality between the sexes, especially in terms of physicality, was contested in all areas of public life (Messner 1988:201). The shift from industrialism to corporate capitalism, and consequently from the protestant work ethic to consumerism, led to the establishment of sport as an object of mass consumption and spectatorship (Messner 1988:201). Messner (1988:201) argues that sports increased in importance because of its ability to link men to a more patriarchal past by means of the dominant themes of patriotism, militarism, violence and meritocracy. Sports, and especially televised sports, symbolically link men of diverse ages and socioeconomic backgrounds because it gives them the opportunity to identify with all men as a superior and separate caste (Messner 1988:202). Televised sports, such as football or rugby, represent the most extreme version of the male body in contrast to the representation of the female body relegated to the cheerleader or sex-object (Messner 1988:202). These representations of male and female bodies in televised sports, Messner (1988:202) argues, work to give testimony to the undeniable "fact" that men are superior to women in at least one arena of public life.

On the flipside, the end of the Second World War and the transition to a service-orientated economy also had significant implications for the women's liberation movement which had

been easily ignorable from the 1930s to the 1960s (Messner 1988:202). By the 1970s, following the rapid post-war movement of women into the labour force and a revived feminist movement, a second wave of female athleticism had emerged (Messner 1988:202). A surge in female participation in sports was accompanied by women's push for equity achieved in the form of a legal benchmark, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 (Messner 1988:202). However, efforts made by the athletic establishment to limit the scope of Title IX meant that equity in the United States remained, and still remains, decentralised and halted in training centres and schools across the nation (Messner 1988:202).

With this historical context outlined, it is argued in this thesis, as Brownmiller (1984:195) did in 1984, that the modern female athlete has placed herself "on the cutting edge of some of the most perplexing problems of gender-related biology and the feminine ideal". According to Bordo (2004:22), the human body is swaddled in culture from the moment it is designated one sex or race. This dynamic tension is illustrated by the ideological terrain of the female athlete as women are still forced to choose between being an athlete, as represented by a strong, muscular and powerful woman, or being feminine, as traditionally represented by passivity, weakness, helplessness and dependency (Messner 1988:203). In outlining the historical landscape of sport and athletic feminism, it would seem that feminism served, and continues to serve, as a useful system of critique of the relation between sport, gender and power. The following section will delineate feminist theories, and focus on popular ideas relating to the body as well as gender and power relations.

2.2. <u>Feminism as a system of critique</u>

In many ways, the aims of feminism as a system of critique are similar to those of CDA in that scholars from both strive towards an enhanced consciousness of the power, complexity and systemic nature of culture and strive to deliver a critique of the manifestations of unequal power structures within society (Bordo 2004:19). However, feminist theories focus specifically on gender inequality in all aspects of private and public life and usually maintain that society is patriarchal in so far as men often have a higher stake in maintaining institutions within which they have historically occupied positions of dominance over women (Bordo 2004:18). That being said, the different branches of feminist theory vary with regards to the extent that women's behaviour is believed to be constrained and determined by

patriarchal structures. As there are several subtypes of feminist theories and orientations, only those relevant to the topic at hand will be briefly discussed.

Mainstream feminism, which has its roots in first wave feminism, is used in reference to movements that fall anywhere on the broad political spectrum as opposed to a distinct political orientation like that which is taken by radical feminism. It also tends to be more inclusive of men than radical feminism and focuses on issues that are not as contentious such as women's education or equal political participation (Beasley 1999:51). Liberal feminism, which meant the same as mainstream feminism during the 19th and 20th century, advocates for the equality of men and women through the political and legal reform of societal structures (Beasley 1999:52). More recently, liberal feminism has taken a narrower meaning as it now emphasises the choices and actions of women and men, rather than political and legal structures, as a sight to transform society (Beasley 1999:52). On the other hand, radical feminism, and its subtypes such as separatist, lesbian and black feminism, asserts that women can free themselves only once they have done away with the inherently oppressive and dominating patriarchal system (Beasley 1999:55). The radical feminist considers the male-controlled capitalist hierarchy to be the defining feature of female oppression and so believes that men cannot aid women in reconstructing and uprooting society through political and legal reform (Beasley 1999:55). Some branches of radical feminism, specifically separatism, assert that the sexual disparities between men and women are so great that women should completely separate themselves from men and all male institutions, relationships, roles and activities (Beasley 1999:56).

There are two overlapping branches of feminism deemed important for this thesis, namely; New Age feminism and postmodern feminism. New Age feminism emerged in the late 21st century in response to existing feminist culture that claims to embrace equality between men and women, and, at the same time, continues to seriously devalue traditional feminine qualities as often demonstrated by radical feminist strands (Beasley 1999:65). New Age feminism does not deny female biology, and even recognises biologically influenced differences between men and women, but demands that these differences be accommodated for rather than used as a means to justify oppression and unequal treatment (Beasley 1999:66). New Age feminism also stresses the socially constructed nature of "feminine" qualities and argues that both women and men should be free to embrace, or refuse, these qualities without shame or guilt. New Age feminists champion equitable treatment, respect in the workplace and equal opportunity for women, and men, rather than demanding special

treatment for women or rejecting male practices (Beasley 1999:65). This research identifies with the approach of New Age feminism in so far as it advocates for equitable treatment of both men and women, but deviates from the theory in its reliance on the traditional distinction between sex and gender. In this respect, this thesis aligns with postmodern feminist theory which argues that sex, and not just gender, is constructed by language (Beasley 1999:70). Postmodern feminism is critical of the traditional distinction often drawn by previous feminisms between sex as biological and gender as socially constructed and argues that the dualism is essentialist (Beasley 1999:70). As this study is concerned with gender and gender relations in sport, some elaboration of the postmordern feminist approach to gender is considered both necessary and useful.

2.3. <u>Postmodern feminism on gender and the body</u>

As stipulated in its name, postmodern feminism is founded on postmodern tendencies which refer, in a broad sense, to the contemporary inclination toward the fluid, unstable, fragmented, heterogeneous, and ironic, and an interest in phenomena which resists closure, definition and fixity (Bordo 2004:24). These tendencies translate into a fascination with semiotic indeterminacy, conceptions of subjectivity, inabilities of systems, and cultural resistance (Bordo 2004:24). As previously mentioned, feminist criticism aims to guard against the feeling of comfortable cultural oneness (Bordo 2004:19). The systemic nature of culture that feminism guards against is highlighted in a basic definition of culture as a *system* of beliefs, knowledge, and patterns of customary behaviour (Spradley & McCurdy 2008:2). Postmodern feminists argue that previous feminisms fail to address the complexity, multiplicity and ambiguity of meaning-making by participating in essentialist conversations that frame "women's experiences" or the "female identity" as historically constituted (Bordo 2004:25). Butler (1988:530) takes a similar stance and argues that it is politically important for feminist theory to represent women but this must be achieved without distorting or essentialising the very group that the theory seeks to emancipate. To this end, postmodern feminist scholars like Butler (1988:521) transcribe the postmodern principles of heterogeneity and indeterminacy in conceptualising the body as a text and gender as a performative act (Bordo 2004:25).

In western societies, the enduring differences between men and women are seemingly supported by the division of labour into either men or women's work, the elaborate differentiation between masculine and feminine attitudes and behaviours, and the structural

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arrangements of society that are presumed to be responsive to these natural and essential properties of individuals (West & Zimmerman 1987:128). In the 1960s and 1970s, scholars began to distinguish between sex, as the biologically given anatomy, hormones and physiology of the individual, and gender, as an achieved status constructed through psychological, cultural and social means (West & Zimmerman 1987:125). This sex-differences approach, however, led to confusion as gender was reduced to a fixed set of psychological traits or unitary variables much in the same way as sex had been reduced to biological variables (West & Zimmerman 1987:128).

In an effort to circumvent this confusion, role theory proposed *gender role* which conceptualises gender as a situated identity that is learned, constructed, enacted, and relinquished as the situation demands (West & Zimmerman 1987:128). However, this idea of gender as a situated identity proved to be of little use in discussions of power and inequality as it posed a problem at the level of face to face interaction (West & Zimmerman 1987:129). In light of this shortcoming, Goffman's account of *gender display* proposes an explanation of the way in which gender might be exhibited through interaction (West & Zimmerman 1987:129). Goffman sees gender displays as highly conventionalised behaviours or expressions that, although optional performances, might reveal clues to the underlying, fundamental and essential dimensions of the male or female (West & Zimmerman 1987:130). Genders, according to Goffman, are less a consequence of essential sexual natures, and more likely an interactional portrayal or socially scripted dramatisation of a culture's idealisation of masculine and feminine natures that are prompted by an audience or location (West & Zimmerman 1987:130). However, according to West and Zimmerman (1987:130), the notion of gender as scripted performances obscures the effects of gender on a wide range of human activities. Instead, these authors suggest that gender be viewed as an ongoing activity embedded in everyday interaction.

That said, at the genesis of understanding postmodern thoughts on sex and gender, is the understanding of postmodern interpretations of the human body. As previously mentioned, postmodern thoughts advocate for the attention to heterogeneity and indeterminacy as principles for interpreting culture, history and texts (Bordo 2004:25). This multiplicity with regards to possibilities of interpretation and meaning-making are also attributed to the body which, according to Bordo (2004:24), is a "malleable plastic" shaped by the meanings ascribed to it. The body, although often dealt with as a neutral and biological model, is actually always mediated by constructs, associations and images of a cultural nature, and so,

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carries a heavy ideological weight (Bordo 2004:22). In fact, Bordo (2004:23) and Butler (1988:521) agree that the body is both a construct and a resource. Butler (1988:521) states that the body is not only an "historical idea but [also] a set of possibilities to be continually realised". In other words, the body can be understood as a text or resource with the potential to embody a never-ending set of meaning possibilities that are then read or interpreted by others (Butler 1988:521).

This idea of the culturally inscribed and historically located body aids in understanding the postmodern account of gender offered by Butler (1988), and West and Zimmerman (1987). Postmodern feminists, like the aforementioned scholars, are critical of the reliance of previous feminist theories on the distinction between sex and gender, and the resulting uncritical appropriation of gender identities which sustain the discrete and binary categories of man and woman (Butler 1988:522). According to Butler (1988:519), gender should be understood as an identity constituted in time by a stylised repetition of acts, and more specifically, through the stylisation of the body. However, gender is not a seamless identity, but rather a compelling illusion or performative accomplishment brought about by the ability of the individual to compel the body to conform to the historical idea of 'woman' or 'man' (Butler 1988:522). Ultimately, for Butler (1988:522), gender would not exist without the various acts that constitute it, or the authors and audiences that are so entranced by these performances that they are compelled to believe it is both necessary and natural.

West and Zimmerman (1987:136) offer further valuable insight into the motivation and manner for 'doing gender' in society. According to these authors, individuals often design actions with their audience in mind, that is, how these actions might look or be characterised by onlookers (West & Zimmerman 1987:136). An individual is held accountable for the performance of an activity as a man or woman, and their performance can be used to credit or discredit their other activities (West & Zimmerman 1987:136). In fact, according to West and Zimmerman (1987:137), doing gender is unavoidable and an individual is always at risk of gender assessment as virtually any interactional situation sets the stage for the depiction of sexual natures. The authors go on to distinguish several resources that individuals can use to 'do gender' which involve the features of the social setting like a public restroom, the equipment and furnishings of that setting like urinals for men, standardised social occasions like sports, and assortative mating practices like paying for dinner (West & Zimmerman 1987:138). Ultimately, gender is something an individual does, and does recurrently, in

interaction with others who then judge the properties of conduct and respond in particular ways (West & Zimmerman 1987:140).

Having said this, if the body becomes gendered through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time, then it is possible to transform or transgress gender norms by breaking that style or set of acts (Butler 1988:520). The individuals who fail to or choose not to live up to the normative conceptions of masculinity and femininity risk discrediting their other activities and ideas (West & Zimmerman 1987:136). Gender is managed because it is something that individuals strive to achieve in encounters with others, and if others communicate that an individual is out of place or in transgression of gender norms, then, for the sake of accomplishing gender, it is likely that the individual will produce a gender that is more appropriate (Butler 1988:140). However, the relationship between gender management and institutional structures will be discussed in the next section with specific focus on gender structures within the sports arena.

2.4. <u>Sport and gender relations</u>

Sports are perceived by the general public to be a harmonising force which contributes to the well-being of society (Hargreaves 1994:9). Additionally, modern sports are viewed as a progressive movement which reflects the general enfranchisement of wider and wider sections of the population (Hargreaves 1994:9). However, as discussed earlier, sports have a long history of male domination and traditional assumptions of sexual difference between men and women (Hargreaves 1994:7). Sports history also reflects male domination in academic discourse as male sports are used as the basis from which generalisations are made for all human experiences and society (Hargreaves 1994:8). These generalisations are problematic because, as Gramsci notes, mankind is not ruled by force alone but also by ideas, and these ideas are often determined by those in power, a power structure which he called cultural hegemony (Bates 1975:352). For the purpose of lending clarity to the next section, cultural hegemony is defined then, as the domination and management of cultural ideas, beliefs, explanations, perceptions and values of a culturally diverse society by, and in the interest of, those institutions or individuals in power, so that worldview of those in power becomes the norm (Bates 1975:353). Therefore, these male-orientated accounts in academia are problematic when sport is understood as a culture and gender is treated, not as a variable, but rather as an organising principle with significant implications for all spheres of human life (Hargreaves 1994:4).

As this thesis adopts a postmodern feminist lens, a particular point of interest is the implication of sports in the construction of womanhood, manhood and the ways in which gender relations have been built, reproduced and contested in the sports arena. However, according to Hargreaves (1994:2), previous feminist interventions in the sports arena have fallen into the trap of the sex-differences approach as there is a strong tendency for the debate on women's sports to dwell on reductive categories, such as masculinity versus femininity, which consequently masks the multiple realities of women's lives. There is also the tendency of previous scholars to place women at the centre and treat gender as a variable rather than a relationship of power which, although noble in its intentions, results in a discourse that maintains the existing polarisation between men and women's sports (Hargreaves 1994:4). In light of these shortcomings, this research aims to delve deeper into gender as a category for analysis and argue that gender oppression in sports means oppression of both women and men. This leads to the recognition that the problem of male power and domination in sports is fundamental, but also that sports do not produce a straightforward system of domination of men over women (Hargreaves 1994:3).

The first point of departure is the conceptualisation of sports as a masculine cultural sphere. As addressed earlier in this chapter, organised and televised sports increased in popularity among men precisely because it provided confirmation of male superiority at a time when this status was thrown into question (Messner 1988:202). To this end, sports commentators employed the rhetoric of robust health and athletic prowess to portray masculine excellence and depict sports as the natural territory of men (Vertinsky 1994:18). In other words, sports were constructed as a platform where manhood could be earned and where the traits necessary to thrive in industrial capitalism could be developed (Vertinsky 1994:19). However, while sports were believed to be good for the bodies and souls of all men, masculinity in the Western sports arena came to be reconstituted as white middle class masculine hegemony that celebrated aggression, physical strength, skill, violence and athletic competence as inherently male traits (Bryson 1987:357). Then again, this hegemonic notion of the 'manly man' makes little sense unless male and female traits are compared and contrasted (Vertinsky 1994:18).

According to Bryson (1987:350), negative evaluations of women's capacities are implicit in the masculine hegemony in which sport is embedded. In the sporting arena, this hegemony manifests in the construction of sports as natural male territory and competent sporting abilities as inherently male traits at the detriment of female traits and sports. Furthermore, in

order to promote solidarity between men, women must be excluded from the sporting arena (Bryson 1987:350). Bryson (1987:351) argues that sport sanctions male hegemony in two fundamental ways. The first way involves linking maleness to highly valuable and visible skills, and the second way involves linking men to the positively sanctioned use of force and violence which require the skills afforded to men (Bryson 1987:350). This co-opting of sport for men results in the subordination and marginalisation of 'femaleness' and female activities, especially in sports (Bryson 1987:350).

With regards to female representation and marginalisation, Bryson (1987:351) identifies four processes which contribute to the maintenance of masculine hegemony in sport, namely: definition, direct control, ignoring, and trivialisation. *The Council of Europe Sport for All Charter* defines sport as those activities which are institutionalised, strictly organised and highly competitive, as well as those which are freely arranged, recreative and aesthetic (Hargreaves 1994:2). However, according to Bryson (1987:351), sport is largely defined as an activity which men and children, especially boys, participate in and this definition seeks to engage men rather than women. This definition process is further reflected in the fact that men are more likely to watch televised sports and school children, including girls, are more likely to have male rather than female sporting heroes (Bryson 1987:351). Additionally, this male-orientated definition of sport is reflected in the single-sex groupings or divisions present in sports and the distinction between sports that are deemed appropriate for men, which tend to be high-contact team sports like rugby, and sports deemed appropriate for women which tend to be individual non-contact and aesthetic sports like figure skating (Hardin, Dodd & Lauffer 2009:438). In fact, Bryson (1987:350) goes as far as to argue that, while recognised as an 'art form', these aesthetic and traditionally 'feminine' sport types like gymnastics are treated differently from the 'real' sports as defined for male interests.

The second process involved in the maintenance of male hegemony in sports identified by Bryson (1987:352) is the direct control of women's sports at the hands of men. Executive positions in sport committees, administration, news agencies, officiating, and coaching are still held almost exclusively by men even in when the sport has a largely female following as in the case of figure skating (Bryson 1987:352). The effect of this direct control, usually in men's interests, range from poor funding, inferior sport grounds, equipment and time for matches through to poor access to media, sponsorship, and training facilities and coaches (Bryson 1987:353). This said, even when women do manage to overcome the structural

boundaries that are put in place to bar them from overstepping their designated sports, they are still faced with other challenges as female athletes.

Since the inception of Title IX, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of women participating in sports, particularly in team and contact sports such as basketball (Hardin, Dodd & Lauffer 2006:441). Female athletes have made substantial gains in the last twenty years and scholars have recently pointed out that the degree of difference between male and female athletic performance, known as the 'muscle gap', has closed substantially in recent years (Messner 1988:197). In some cases, women's performances are equal to or even surpass men's as illustrated in endurance events by the impressive records held by female swimmers or the performance of women in mixed sports such as the jockey premiership or shooting (Bryson 1987:355). It would seem that men are slowly losing their foothold in the sports arena, but as Bryson (1987:355) points out, the achievements of female athletes and teams are likely to be ignored or forgotten by the media, which is still predominately controlled by men, as this exclusion is the only way that men can maintain their power. This lack of media coverage is justified by the biological argument that, because women are less able to produce feats of strength and skill, women's sports are less intrinsically interesting than men's sports (Bryson 1987:356).

However, if women do scramble through the obstacles and lack of support, they are likely to find their efforts and sports achievements trivialised (Bryson 1987:356). This trivialisation, identified by Bryson (1987:356) as the fourth mechanism in the maintenance of masculine hegemony, ranges from the prevention of female coaches of male teams to the construction of women as sex objects and mothers in media coverage (Bryson 1987:356). Women are made to seem incompetent by media coverage that focuses on appearance, relationship, and marital status or family situations as opposed to relevant athletic performance, which strategically implies that women's 'real role' is subordinate to men (Bryson 1987:356). When it is not enough to marginalise or eroticise female athletes, Messner (1988:205) argues that sport commentators revert to overt hostility. Outstanding sportswomen are labelled 'unfeminine' because they are reported to play like men (Messner 1988:205). These comments cast doubt on their true sex, and as mentioned in the discussion above on gender, ultimately works to discredit their other activities and achievements (Messner 1987:305; Hargreaves 1994:1). The expectation of sportswomen to behave like women even when playing a man's game is best illustrated by the treatment of female bodybuilders (Bryson 1987:356). Bryson (1987:356)

reveals that bodybuilding competitions have different definitions or standards of muscularity for female bodybuilders that are restricted to an agreed upon definition of "feminine" traits.

2.5. <u>**Masculine hegemony and the media**</u>

As mentioned above, Bryson (1987:353) reported that, in the 1980s, the media continued to focus solely on men's sports and that four to five times as many male sports as female had their results reported. In 1980, 200 hours and 39 minutes of television time on Australian capital city channels were dedicated to sports, of which five minutes were devoted to women's sports (Bryson 1987:355). It is expected that these marginalisation strategies might have dissipated over recent years. However, a more recent study by Hardin, Dodd and Lauffer (2006:429) reveals that the "symbolic annihilation" of sportswomen is still alive and well. These authors present some alarming statistics in their study on the reinforcement of male hegemony in sports journalism textbooks. According to Hardin *et al*. (2006:430), female sports continues to receive only 5-8% of total sports media coverage, despite the fact that 40% of sports participation is by women. By neglecting and marginalising women's sports, the media perpetuates discrimination against women as athletes and as sports journalists (Hardin *et al*. 2006:430).

The study by Hardin *et al* (2006:435), which examined the status of women in eight sports journalism textbooks, provides further insight into the kinds of representation men and women receive in sports media. The study reported that references of men to women as athletes or sports journalists were almost 5 to 1, and there was little diversity in the references to women as athletes or sports journalists (Hardin *et al*. 2006:437). Of these total references, 48% referred to women as not affiliated with any sport and 46% of references referred to men affiliated with team sports (Hardin *et al*. 2006:438). The authors drew a further distinction between non-contact sports (e.g. tennis), aesthetic sports (e.g., gymnastics or figure skating) and contact sports (e.g., football or ice hockey). The results of the content analysis revealed that 94% of references to contact sports involved men in contrast to only 9% of references to non-contact or aesthetic sports involving men (Hardin *et al*. 2006:438). Images in these textbooks were also overwhelmingly of men, as 81% of images were of men whereas images of women often depicted them in individual, non-contact sports with an aesthetic component such as figure skating or ballet (Hardin *et al*. 2006:438). What is more, Hardin et al. (2006:439) report that the newer textbooks in the data sample did not deviate significantly from older texts in any of these aspects.

With these figures in mind, it is important to revisit the aim of this thesis, that is, to investigate the representations of men and women in sports. The media does not only marginalise and discriminate against women, but also against those men that do not live up to the dominant masculine hegemony perpetuated by sports media. Sporting events have a ritualistic element that promote solidarity between men (Bryson 1987:357). However, according to Messner, Dunbar and Hunt (2000:380), sports media, and especially televised sports, consistently present men and boys within a narrow portrait of masculinity. These authors conducted an investigation into the dominant themes that constitute the 'Televised Sports Manhood Formula', which, ultimately, aims to discipline the bodies, minds and consumption choices of the male population (Messner *et al*. 2000:380).

Based on a textual analysis of 23 hours of televised sports shows and their accompanying advertisements, Messner *et al*. (2000:381) identified ten recurrent themes that make up the 'Televised Sports Manhood Formula'. The first dominant theme identified is that white males are voices of authority because, although often shown as athletes, black men and women were rarely present as voices of authority in the commentators' booth (Messner *et al*. 2000:382). This ties in with the next recurrent theme of the consistent foregrounding of white persons in commercials illustrated by the fact that Black, Latino or Asian individuals never appeared in a commercial unless there was a white individual present (Messner *et al*. 2000:384). This narrow racial composition is mirrored by the equally narrow gender composition as identified in the third, fourth and fifth dominant themes. These themes are that sports is a man's world, men are foregrounded and women are sex-props or prizes for men's successful sport performances or consumption choices (Messner *et al*. 2000:382). Women almost never appear in commercials unless they are in the company of men as only 3.9% of commercials in the data set portrayed only women (Messner *et al*. 2000:383). According to Messner *et al*. (2000:383), when women did appear in commercials, it was most often in the stereotypical role of the bikini-clad woman who functions as a sex-prop or to cheer men on. Furthermore, the incidence of commercials and sports programmes typically representing women as supportive props for men's successful athletic performance or consumption choice occurred 58 times in the 23 hours of data which is as frequent as twice an hour (Messner *et al*. 2000:384). This narrow representation of women as heterosexualised commodities is further aggravated by the overall absence of images representing women as athletes (Messner *et al*. 2000:384).

The other themes identified by Messner *et al*. (2000:385) provide further insight into the type of masculinity and male traits that are celebrated by televised media. Viewers are continually presented with the message that aggressive players get the prize and nice guys finish last as commentators typically praised athletes who successfully exhibited physical toughness and employed aggressive play (Messner *et al*. 2000:385). This heroic framing of the male body as a weapon is played off against athletes who were performing poorly due to lack of aggression, emotion or desire (Messner et al. 2000:386). Messner *et al*. (2000:386) report that commercials typically employed this tactic to play on the insecurities of men, that they are not strong or tough enough, and so must purchase a particular product to overcome their geekiness and passivity. This "tough guy'" identity is further supported by the heroic framing of athletes, who put their body on the line for the team by engaging in dangerous plays or manoeuvres (Messner *et al*. 2000:386). In fact, another recurring message conveyed by the sarcastic language of commentators was that rough-housing or fights were to be expected because "boys will be boys" (Messner *et al*. 2000:386).

This theme of violence is further supported by the dominant metaphor present in the data set that SPORTS IS WAR (Messner *et al*. 2000:388). According to the findings presented by Messner *et al*. (2000:388), sport commentators consistently (on average five times an hour) used martial metaphors and language of weapons and weaponry to describe sport action. This mirrors a point made earlier in this chapter that televised sports has served for many years as a mechanism to fuse the values of nationalism and militarism with team identity and athletic aggression (Messner *et al*. 2000:386; Messner 1988:201). The final dominant theme identified by Messner *et al*. (2000:389) is the need for male athletes to show bravado in the face of danger, especially in extreme sports, which is then equated with the athlete's ability and skill. Ultimately, Messner *et al*. (2000:390) conclude that these themes fuse together to provide a message to male viewers about what it means to be a "real man".

In other words, the masculine hegemony present in sports media limits masculinity to the narrow portrait of the 'real man' who exhibits physical toughness, aggression, bravery, power, violence and strength to become a 'winner' in the sports arena and win the affections of the stereotypically portrayed female supporter (Messner et al. 2000:391). However, this hegemonic masculinity works to exclude those sections of the male population, never mind the female population, that do not live up to this ideal of the 'real man' (Messner *et al*. 2000:391). With this in mind, if sport is defined according to the most extreme versions of the male body, which even excludes some men, then it stands that women remain at a

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decided disadvantage (Messner 1988:206). According to Messner (1988:206), women and men do differ in terms of their potential for physical strength, agility and grace and women will be "fighting biology all the way" if they compete on male turf. In fact, women's "equal opportunities" to compete against men are often framed by the media as support for the natural superiority of men over women, because female athletes do not possess the "physical equipment" to measure up to male athletes when given the opportunity to do so (Messner 1988:207). These media reports raise questions about the ideological terrain of the female athlete as a sight of contestation over the relationship between femininity and athleticism. This ideological landscape and the representation of the female athlete in the media is investigated further in the next chapter.

Chapter 3
Literature review

This research adopts CDA as a tool for inquiry because it is a theoretical paradigm that seeks to reveal and critique the way in which social power, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in social and political contexts (see van Dijk 2003:352 but also Breeze 2011:495, Wodak & Meyer 2008:3 and Wodak 2002:11). However, this demarcation of CDA as an academic discipline remains a contested process because, as Wodak (2002:6) points out, the labelling of CDA as an established academic discipline with the same rituals and practices as other disciplines may, ironically, mean that CDA has become 'uncritical'. In other words, CDA, framed as an expert discourse, perpetuates the very phenomena it seeks to reveal and critique in society (Van Dijk 2003:352; Wodak & Meyer 2008:4). Consequently, Vannini (2007:125) argues, researchers must be aware of the limitations of expert discourse and the power dynamics at play when publishing research. This critical reflexivity, which is one of the characteristics of CDA, should likewise be adopted when selecting an academic approach or paradigm in which to conduct research.

For the sake of critical reflexivity then, it is first necessary to briefly discuss the aims, core principles and criticisms of CDA as a theoretical approach, or research programme, if it is to be used as the foundation of this investigation. As mentioned, it is difficult to demarcate the boundaries of CDA as a homogenous theoretical entity, not only because it might become an "intellectual orthodoxy", but also because its theoretical foundation is eclectic in nature (Breeze 2011:494). In order to further clarify certain key concepts, the dialectical-relational approach of Norman Fairclough will be discussed followed by an exposition of relevant studies within the CDA approach. However, for the sake of clarity at this point in time, CDA should be understood as a research programme that consists of two essential elements as previously mentioned in the first chapter. The first tenet is a political concern with the ideological and power structures in society while the second tenet concerns the way in which language, or discourse, contributes to, perpetuates or reveals these inner structures (Van Dijk 2003:352; Breeze 2011:495).

3.1. A brief history of CDA

The start of CDA as a network of scholars was marked by the publication of van Dijk's journal *Discourse and Society* in 1990. The manifold roots of CDA lie in Text Linguistics, Rhetoric, Philosophy, Anthropology, Socio-Psychology, Pragmatics and Applied Linguistics

(Wodak & Meyer 2008:1). Despite its eclectic disciplinary background and shared features with other fields like Discourse Studies, CDA is characterised by the common interest of its scholars to demystify power and ideologies through the systemic investigation of semiotic data (Wodak & Meyer 2008:3). Distinct approaches within CDA were mapped out in the early 1990s following a meeting between a small group of scholars, namely Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, who met to discuss theories and methods of Discourse Analysis (Wodak & Meyer 2008:3). The meeting led to the establishment of new approaches which were different from Discourse Analysis in theory and methodology, but shared a sameness in their programmatic underpinning (Wodak & Meyer 2008:3). Since then, multiple journals have been created, regular CDA meetings and conferences take place, and CDA has, essentially, become an established discipline institutionalised across the globe (Wodak & Meyer 2008:4).

3.2. <u>Research oInstagra,bjectives</u>

Despite the acceptance of CDA as an established discipline, van Dijk (1995:17) points out that it is not easy to demarcate the aims, principles or theories and methods of CDA, in part because of its eclectic disciplinary background and assorted items of research, but also because of the dangers that can befall any academic discipline (Wodak & Meyer 2008:4). Then again, works in CDA share the commonality of an explicit research agenda which is exemplified by the efforts of its scholars to be transparent about their own positions and interests (Wodak 2002:10). As a critical theory, CDA is fundamentally defined by its political aims, although it has been questioned whether this critical stance or aim is justifiable as some argue that CDA researchers tend to assume this position uncritically (Breeze 2011:520). Furthermore, because of this critical stance, works in CDA have come under fire for propagating a deterministic view of society as a result of an overwhelming interest in the way in which discourse works to maintain ideologies and unequal power structures (Breeze 2011:521).

That being said, these criticisms, Wodak and Meyer (2008:6) argue, can be addressed by critiquing the position of the researcher or analyst as is advocated for by the self-reflexive nature of CDA research. Researchers are not outside of the hierarchy of power or status afforded to them by society; however, the 'critical' position of CDA implies superior ethical standards in that CDA researchers have sworn to make their intentions, research interests and values as explicit as possible and so, unapologetically, can adopt a 'critical' stance (Wodak &

Meyer 2008:6). Henceforward, 'critique' should be understood as making plain the interconnectedness of things, and more specifically, underpinned by the idea that the use of language, or discourse, could lead to the mystification of social events (Wodak & Meyer 2008:7). This idea ties in with the central research aim of CDA which is to elucidate these hidden structures and convey knowledge that will make individuals or agents aware of hidden coercion and domination present in discourses thereby emancipating them to determine their own true interests (Wodak & Meyer 2008:7; Wodak 2002:10). Therefore, CDA research is not only interested in describing or explaining the way in which discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce or challenge social relations of power and dominance within society, but also seeks to practically apply such knowledge so that positive transformations can be brought about in certain discursive and social practices (van Dijk 2003:353; Breeze 2011:521).

3.3. <u>Common ground: discourse, ideology and power</u>

This preliminary understanding of the research objectives of CDA raises further questions about the definitions of key terms such as 'politics', 'power' 'ideology', 'discourse' and 'analysis' (Breeze 2011:495). According to Wodak and Meyer (2008:5), the definitions of 'discourse', 'ideology' and 'power' are central to understanding CDA, but are manifold and so it is necessary that CDA researchers define these terms for the purpose of their research or approach. As stipulated in its name, CDA is interested in the analysis of 'discourse', but the term is used very differently by researchers of different academic disciplines. Even within CDA, there are variations in the levels of abstractness when defining 'discourse' as some scholars, usually from the Central European context or discourse-historical approach, prefer to distinguish between 'text' as the concrete realisation of abstract forms of knowledge, namely, 'discourse' (Wodak & Meyer 2008:6).

However, one CDA approach, namely the dialectical-relational approach of Norman Fairclough, offers a widely popular definition of 'discourse' that is adopted for the purpose of this study as it has become commonly used across CDA approaches. CDA scholars, particularly those within the dialectical-relational approach, view discourse as a form of 'social practice' which implies that the context of language use is significant (Wodak & Meyer 2008:5). This understanding stresses a dialectical relationship between these discursive events and the situations, institutions and social structures which frame them because each is jointly shaped by the other (Wodak & Meyer 2008:6). In this way then, CDA

researchers view 'discourse' as the relatively stable use of language which constitutes situations, objects, knowledge, and social identities and relationships between individuals or groups (Wodak & Meyer 2008:6).

At the same time, Jones (2012:28) reminds scholars that the analysis of discourse includes more than just language. According to Jones (2012:29), discourse is the *what* and *how* of communication as he refers to it as a "socially constructed body of knowledge that represents social practices and actors and informs these practices by providing social actors with the resources or tools to make meaning". Language is only one of the many cultural tools that social actors can use to take action and make meaning (Jones 2012:29). Other systems or tools for making meaning, called semiotic modes, include speech, images, writing, colour, dress and so on (Jones 2012:29). Different modes have different affordances, constraints and sets of meaning potential that allow social actors to accomplish different actions or goals (Jones 2012:79). These diverse ways of acting or of producing social life in a semiotic mode are termed 'genres' by Fairclough (1992:2), which he believes is a necessary concept in understanding the *how*, or form, function and content, of communication. For this reason, the theory of genre analysis will be discussed in the next chapter. Furthermore, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:17) argue that other semiotic modes need to be treated as seriously as linguistic forms have been as they are independently organised systems of meaning that display regularities which can be formally analysed with reference to linguistic theories. Therefore, because the data of this study is multimodal in so far as it consists of a graphic and linguistic element, the social semiotic theory of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) will also be discussed in the following chapter.

Nevertheless, as mentioned several times throughout this thesis, CDA consists of two tenets and is not only interested in investigating linguistic phenomena, but also in studying social phenomena which requires a multidisciplinary and multi-methodological approach (Wodak & Meyer 2008:2). The critique within CDA ultimately focuses on revealing ideologies and hidden power structures that are socially constituted, organised and transmitted by language (Wodak & Meyer 2008:7-8). Here it is necessary to provide the definitions of 'ideology' and 'power' due to the fact that they are multifaceted and difficult to capture even within CDA as an approach. At its core, 'ideology' has been defined across many different academic disciplines as a coherent and relatively stable set of beliefs or values (Wodak & Meyer 2008:8). However, CDA is not interested in the surface ideologies of culture, but rather in the hidden, more latent type of everyday beliefs that are often disguised as metaphors or

analogies (Wodak & Meyer 2008:8). Furthermore, it is the functioning of ideologies in everyday life that intrigue CDA scholars as dominant ideologies may appear neutral and remain unchallenged when individuals start to think alike about certain matters (Wodak & Meyer 2008:8). This hegemony or social order of discourses, as identified by Foucault and Gramsci, ties in with the topic of power that also attracts the attention of CDA researchers (Wodak & Meyer 2008:8).

According to Vannini (2007:134), discourses are plural and social actors may use discourses to accomplish goals by means of semiotic resources or modes to interpret reality. However, as it is social actors that make use of discourses to make meaning, it also stands that a social struggle over meaning exists in so far as power is a central condition of social life (Vannini 2007:134; Wodak & Meyer 2008:10). Here, 'power' is understood as the opportunity that an individual has in achieving his or her own will in social relationships even against the resistance of others (Wallimann, Tatsis & Zito 1977:231). Typically, CDA researchers are interested in unequal power structures, that is, the power abuse of one group over another, and the way in which this domination may be resisted (van Dijk 1995:19). This relationship between language and social power is a long standing topic of study in CDA and has led to the important perspective that texts are sites of struggle because they show traces of different discourses and contending ideologies competing and struggling for dominance (Wodak & Meyer 2008:10). In other words, language indexes and expresses power, but can also be used to challenge it, and so within CDA it is seen as a vehicle for expressing, constituting and legitimising social structures and inequality in society (Wodak & Meyer 2008:10; Wodak 2002:11).

3.4. <u>Core principles of CDA</u>

From the above discussion of the three key concepts of 'discourse', 'ideology' and 'power', it is possible to outline several core principles of CDA as an approach or research programme despite its disciplinary and methodical heterogeneity. As CDA is concerned with both the tasks of linguistics and the tasks of the social sciences, it must be interdisciplinary and draw on various theories and methodologies (Wodak 2002:14; van Dijk 1995:17). In other words, CDA is a problem orientated approach with social problems, like racism or sexism, as items of research. These social problems can be studied from various disciplines and perspectives and so the integration of grand social and language theories is a necessary foundation for analysis (Wodak 2002:14).

Furthermore, CDA incorporates fieldwork and ethnography to further explore the social problem, which may entail drawing data from multiple genres and public spaces as well as studying respective interdiscursive and intertextual relations (Wodak 2002:14). Another qualifying trait is the constant movement between such empirical data and the selected theories as well as the situation of selected texts and discourses in their appropriate historical and social contexts (Meyer 2001:27; Wodak 2002:14). Lastly, it is the researcher who decides on the categories and tools for analysis in accordance with the abovementioned principles which usually involves the application of Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics in one way or another (Wodak 2002:14).

3.5. <u>Different approaches to CDA</u>

In order to move away from a shallow understanding of the core principles and methodologies of CDA, it is necessary to briefly discuss the different approaches of the programme with specific focus on the approach, namely the dialectical-relational approach, chosen as the framework for this study. In this regard, Wodak and Meyer (2008:19) draw a useful distinction between deductively and inductively orientated theories. More inductively orientated theories, like the discourse-historical approach of Wodak and Reisigl or the corpus-linguistics approach of Mautner, tend to choose problems that invoke curiosity and attempt to discover new insights through in-depth case studies or ample data collection (Wodak & Meyer 2008:19). At the other end of the spectrum, deductively orientated theories, like the dialectical-relational approach of Norman Fairclough or the sociocognitive approach of Teun van Dijk, tend to propose a closed theoretical framework and illustrate their assumptions with a few examples that seem to fit their claims (Wodak & Meyer 2008:19).

However, despite these differences in scientific reasoning, all approaches within CDA recognise that discourses should be understood in their social and historical contexts and that this ideological and social component postulates an interdisciplinary procedure (Wodak 2002:14). That said, the interdisciplinary research is implemented in accordance with the approach in question. The dialectical-relational approach, along with related approaches to deductive research, include interdisciplinary research as part of its theoretical framework (Wodak & Meyer 2008:21). This is illustrated by the inclusion of the macro-level in Fairclough's three-dimensional approach which focuses on the broad societal currents that exert an influence on texts and the social problem (Lawson 2008:5). However, this connection between language and society is not taken to be deterministic as CDA rather

invokes the term *mediation* to characterise this relationship (Wodak & Meyer 2008:21). The various CDA approaches draw on differing theories and units of analysis to reflect on issues of mediation which ultimately involve the study of ideology and power (Wodak & Meyer 2008:21). The discourse-historical approach and socio-cognitive approach make use of theories of cognition, whereas the dialectical-relational approach draws on Halliday's theory of metafunctions, which will be discussed in the next chapter, and Foucault's notion of the order of discourses as mentioned earlier during the discussion of power (Wodak & Meyer 2008:23). Finally, these various theories are translated into methodologies to systemise the units of analysis, processes of data collection, and analysis of data within the various approaches (Wodak & Meyer 2008:23). However, this connection between theory and methodology, specifically pertaining to the dialectical-relational approach, will be the focus of the next chapter.

3.6. <u>Relevant studies within CDA</u>

As noted several times throughout this chapter, the relationship between the social and linguistic sciences within CDA cannot be stressed enough. For this reason, it is of vital importance to situate the social problem, namely unequal gender structures, within its social landscape. This macrosociological perspective has been sketched out in the previous chapter; however, it is also necessary to situate the social problem within the linguistic landscape. For this reason, this section aims to highlight several significant studies that have been carried out within the framework of CDA and so bring together the two research tasks, namely social and linguistic, of CDA as an approach.

There are numerous works that have been conducted within the context of media studies and CDA, which, like this study, adopt an explicit feminist position. However, it seems that very little to even no work has been conducted within the realms of social media as the focus has remained predominately on news media in the form of magazines or newspapers. A study by Hinnant (2009:317) is one such work that investigates the manner in which women's magazines configure health issues and engage with feminist discourses. According to Hinnant (2009:317), health advice in women's magazines typically plays an unusual role in that exhibits traces of feminist discourses which are situated in a neoliberal medium fraught with sexist undertones and imagery. This dual agenda results in content that, all at once, validates women's bodies as worthy of attention, but also subjects it to scrutiny, treats women as subjects with agency over health decisions, but also as objects within a patriarchal

system, and lastly, provides women with vital health care information while still keeping them in a position of perpetually needing such information (Hinnant 2009:318). Another study by Mandzuik (2001:191) similarly highlighted this paradoxical role of magazines as her findings suggested that the narratives within served as a hegemonic force in stabilising consensus around women's traditional roles while, at the same time, deflecting critique away from the unequal system towards internal individual struggles.

The sample of the Hinnant (2009:233) study consisted of the top nine highest circulating women's magazines in the United States during the month of April 2004. This included magazines such as *Good Housekeeping*, *Family Circle*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Glamour* to name but a few, in which 148 health related articles were selected for the analysis (Hinnant 2009:323). By looking at the way in which the sample of women's magazines constructed agency, autonomy and subjectivity, and whether health issues were constructed as individual or collective, Hinnant (2009:317, 320) found that traces of post-feminist discourse were more likely than liberal or radical feminism as these post-feminist traces suggested that the goals of feminism were already met and that women should focus on themselves rather than collective goals. What is more, while health reporting would typically be qualified as a 'feminist' topic, in comparison to traditional topics like housekeeping, cooking or fashion, Hinnant (2009:319) found that the problem-solution formula adopted by many of the articles implied that women are in need of counselling and they essentialised the state of womanhood by providing 'one-size-fits-all' advice. This generalised health advice suggested that women should strive to maintain a docile body, and so, according to Hinnant (2009:320), these magazines work as a strategy for social control by imparting constructs of normalcy and deviation with regards to the female body.

Furthermore, Hinnant (2009:321) found that these magazines advocated for individualism disguised by the discourse of empowerment which opposes the collective action against systemic inequality advocated for by liberal and radical feminism. This hyperindividualism was typically evident in the "you"-centred discourse addressing the reader on a personal level (Hinnant 2009:324). Additionally, the tone of many weight loss articles insinuated a rhetoric of self-love in that a woman should want to change her body because she loves it and not because she hates it (Hinnant 2009:321). However, Hinnant (2009:321) points out that these devices endowed the reader with a false sense of post-feminist agency as these health articles provided women with methods to achieve a normalised female body rather than encouraging collective critique of the overarching beauty and body standards. This discouragement of

critique borne by agency was also evident in the role that experts or health authorities play in women's magazines (Hinnant 2009:326). These medical authorities were often presented as the objective truth which denies women's autonomous sources of knowledge (Hinnant 2009:325). On the other hand, those articles that did not rely on authority and chose to share information 'woman-to-woman' rarely contained any referable sources and so denied the reader the ability to interrogate the information or its source (Hinnant 2009:326).

That being said, although the majority of the sample of women's magazines were littered with post-feminist devices, Hinnant (2009:328) reveals that there were still a few important instances of liberal and radical feminist discourse. Liberal-feminist discourse could be identified in articles that provided women with useful health information or constructed women's bodies as sites of wellness rather than sites of illness, weakness or hysteria (Hinnant 2009:328). Articles that demonstrated radical feminism, by questioning the capitalist health system and advocating for collective political involvement, were even more infrequent (Hinnant 2009:328). According to Hinnant (2009:329), the promotion of systemic change through radical-feminist discourse would fundamentally go against the interest of a magazine as a producer of mass culture. For this reason, women's magazines typically avoid advocating for change because they are indebted to consumerism, and advertising, and so it is in their best interest to encourage individual surveillance and maintenance of wellness in order to ensure a future market (Hinnant 2009:328).

While the study by Hinnant (2009) on the discourse of health reporting in women's magazines is relevant to the feminist perspective adopted by this investigation, the social problem under investigation is specifically concerned with gender structures in the sports arena. The following study by Ponterotto (2014:94) deals specifically with language reserved for women in sports settings as it addresses the representation of female athleticism in the press by means of a corpus assisted analysis of British and Italian newspapers. According to Messner and Cooky (2010:3), sport audiences are actually receiving less coverage of women's sports than 20 years ago and sport news anchors and producers remain predominately male. For this reason, Ponterotto (2014:96) rationalises that, despite the advancements made by the sexual emancipation movement, gender-linked stereotypes still condition the assignment of professional value to women in sports settings. Other studies, like one by Harris and Clayton (2002:397), have additionally noted that a female athlete's physicality and sexual attractiveness are more highly valued than athletic competence.

In her study, Ponterotto (2014:97) collected newspaper articles about the female athlete, Maria Sharapova, from the sport sections of *The Times*, England, and *La Repubblica*, Italy, over the timespan of Sharapova's presence in tennis competition from 1 January 2003 to 20 August 2009. Using the taxonomies of thematic strategies and conceptual metaphors, Ponterotto (2014:98) identified the dominant theme of the eroticism of the female body, and the presence of two chief conceptual metaphors comparing women to either animals or to children. Other thematic strategies included the invisibility of the female athlete (the woman as visible; the athlete as invisible), as well as the emphasising of traditional male traits, coverage of 'appropriate' sporting roles for women, non-task relevant commentary and the trivialisation of female accomplishments in sport (Ponterotto 2014:100). Furthermore, the characteristics endowed to women, by the conceptual metaphor WOMEN ARE CHILDREN which appeared in both the British and Italian data sets, included immaturity, lack of strength, dim-witted state of mind, and an irrational or emotional disposition (Ponterotto 2014:104).

As the above mentioned thematic and metaphorical strategies were found across languages, genres and cultures, Ponterotto (2014:105) argues that ideologically-motivated, gender related stereotypes permeate the sports world and the representation of female athletes. Discriminatory discourse strategies, like non-task relevant commentary (expressions which were not related to sports) and the portrayal of female athletes in traditional feminine roles (passive, sexually desirable, and fragile and child-like) worked to de-emphasise the female athlete's athletic ability and highlight her physical attractiveness and sexual desirability (Ponterotto 2014:105). These representations of female athletes as desirable sexual commodities and/or incomplete adults, Ponterotto (2014:106) argues, work to trivialise the body of the female athlete, impose gendered performances of athleticism, and prescribe fixed ideals of masculinity and femininity. In this way, the normalised and homogenised construction of gender roles presented in the media means that these texts have become another place for the affirmation of male hegemony at the expense of gender justice (Ponterotto 2014:107). Ponterotto (2014:109) maintains that the danger inherent in these representations of female athletes in the media, as one of the primary sites for the legitimisation of patriarchal ideology, undermines the attempts made by feminist movements to achieve greater gender equality.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that CDA has been criticised for possessing inadequate theory about the way in which texts work in social contexts. More specifically, skeptics have argued that the CDA researcher's interpretations of a text assume a specific reader response,

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for example, Ponterotto's (2014:109) conclusions assume that the discriminatory discourse strategies found in her sample will be interpreted by the reader as the trivialising and erotising the female athlete's body (Breeze 2011:520). As anticipated by the research objectives of CDA, Ponterotto (2014:108) then uses these interpretations to argue that stereotyped journalistic reporting should not be tolerated and to advocate for social and legislative change that targets such sexist operations. However, the critics of CDA would claim that such social and political action, based on these interpretations, is ungrounded (Breeze 2011:521).

In rebut of this criticism, Knight and Giuliano (2001:217) have taken CDA research one step further into the realm of cognitive psychology and investigated the real world implications of media coverage of women's sports. Their study aimed to examine the effect that media coverage has on people's perceptions of athletes (Knight & Giuliana 2001:217). According to these authors, women's participation in sports is at an all-time high, but media coverage still lags behind and conveys the idea that women's sport is inferior to that of men's sports (Knight & Giuliano (2001:218). In order to explain the qualitative findings that report the trivialisation and eroticism of female athletes by the media, as found by Ponterotto (2014), Knight and Giuliano (2001:219) draw on schema theory. Schema theory proposes that individuals have implicit cognitive structures that provide them with expectancies when processing information (Knight & Giuliano 2001:219). Knight and Giuliano (2001:219) suggest that female athletes are perceived to be in violation of gender schemas, namely their traditional feminine roles, and so the media emphasises their "femaleness" to seemingly protect them from rejection. According to schema theory, this rejection results because schema-inconsistent individuals are perceived more negatively than schema-consistent individuals (Knight & Giuliano 2001:219).

In order to test these claims, Knight and Giuliano (2001:220) conducted a quantitative study using 92 white undergraduate students from a small liberal arts university in the South West of America. Participants were presented with a hypothetical Olympic profile in which the focal point of the article was either a male or female athlete's physical attractiveness or athleticism (Knight & Giuliano 2001:220). It was predicted that the female athlete described as attractive, or gender schema consistent, would be perceived more positively than the male athlete who was described as attractive because the gender schema for male athletes leads individuals to expect his athleticism, rather than his attractiveness, to be the focus of the article (Knight & Giuliano 2001:220). However, the findings revealed that, regardless of

athlete gender, a focus on attractiveness at the expense of athletic ability resulted in negative perceptions of both the male and female profiles (Knight & Giuliano 2001:225). Qualitative interviews also revealed that participants were dissatisfied by the type of trivialising coverage given in these conditions (Knight & Giuliano 2001:225). Furthermore, despite the fact that the same image was used in both female conditions, the female athlete portrayed as attractive was perceived to be more attractive than the female athlete portrayed in terms of athletic competence (Knight & Giuliano 2001:224).

On the basis of these findings, Knight and Giuliano (2001:225) argue that their study provides empirical evidence to support the burgeoning CDA studies regarding the role of media. In agreement with the dialectical relational approach of CDA and the earlier definition of discourse, Knight and Giuliano (2001:225) maintain that the media does not only reflect public opinion, as it so often merely claims to do, but also actively shapes it. The media and social institutions, according to these authors as well as Ponterotto (2014:108), need to be conscious of, and held responsible for, the effects of this type of sexist coverage and recognise that it might not be the kind of coverage that the public wants after all (Knight & Giuliano 2001:227).

In conclusion, CDA should not be understood as a single theory or unitary framework, but rather as a self-conscious research programme with explicit political or social objectives and a manifold of interdisciplinary approaches, methodologies and theories offered to researchers to achieve such lofty objectives (Breeze 2011:495). As previously mentioned, within CDA, it is the researcher who decides on the tools for analysis or methodological framework in accordance with his or her specific research agenda. Therefore, the next chapter aims to set out the methodological approach, namely the dialectical-relational approach of Norman Fairclough, and discuss three specific research instruments, namely genre analysis, Halliday's metafunctions and the social semiotic approach of Kress and van Leeuwen, that will be used as tools for analysis in this study.

Chapter 4

Methodology

This chapter devotes attention to the operationalisation of theoretical concepts, that is, the way in which the various methods of CDA are able to translate their theoretical claims into instruments and methods of analysis. As mentioned in the second chapter, this study is specifically concerned with the dialectical-relational approach of Norman Fairclough and Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics. The dialectical-relational approach, like many others within CDA, styles its methodologies as a variation of the hermeneutic process in that the meaning of one part can only be understood in the context of the whole which, in turn, is only accessible from its component parts (Wodak & Meyer 2008:22). For Fairclough (1992:72), this greater 'whole' is the social context that exerts an influence on, and is influenced by, the text in question. Ultimately then, the CDA research process as typified by Fairclough's three dimensional approach, is circular and involves consistent movement from theory, to the field of discourse, and back to theory again (Wodak & Meyer 2008:23).

4.1. <u>Research questions</u>

In his theoretical framework, Fairclough (2003:23) has identified three levels of analysis for studying discourse that aims to illuminate the potential link between texts, namely Instagram posts, and social structures, namely gender structures in modern society. The macro-level, the first level of analysis, looks at the discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice and subsequently takes into account the broad, societal currents that affect the social problem in question (Fairclough 2003:24). At the meso-level, the practitioner is concerned with the analysis of discourse practices such as the processes of text production, consumption and distribution and, subsequently, the producers and consumers or audiences of these texts (Fairclough 2003:24). At the final level of analysis, the micro-level, the CDA practitioner is concerned with textual or linguistic features such as syntax or rhetorical devices (Fairclough 2003:23).

These three levels of analysis prompt the formulation of three research questions that can be expressed as follows:

4. What is the social context in which the text is produced?
5. What are the unique characteristics of this particular textual and discursive genre?
6. What is the particular linguistic form (such as grammar and vocabulary) and visual grammar of Instagram posts with the hashtag 'strength'?

a. What are the linguistic and visual features that reflect an in-group identity for male and female users as well as the 'strength' fitness community as a whole?

An in-depth analysis at these levels identified by Fairclough (2003:23), and the consequent answering of the above research questions, should aid in answering the central research question of this investigation which can be formulated as follows:

What representations of men and women are evident in the Instagram posts with the hashtag 'strength'?

4.2. <u>Research instruments</u>

In order to answer the research questions presented above, this paper adopts CDA as its central tool for inquiry in which the 'analysis' usually consists of three stages (Hussain, Jote & Sajid 2015:243). In the description stage, the text is described as rigorously and as comprehensively as possible, relative to the analytical focus. A key descriptive tool used in CDA for this purpose is SFL. In the interpretation stage, the focus is inferring the cognition of readers or listeners and projecting how they might mentally interact with the text (Hussain *et al.* 2015:243). This stage also seeks to show how wider social and cultural contexts and power relations within them might shape the interpretation of a text. For Fairclough (2003:24), this is achieved through an understanding of genre. In the last stage, the explanation stage, the CDA practitioner aims to critically explain the connections between texts and discourse circulating in the wider social and cultural context, the 'socio-cultural practice' (Hussain *et al.* 2015:243). As the second chapter sketched the macrosociological landscape of the social problem, thereby satisfying Fairclough's macro-level of analysis, this chapter will focus on three specific CDA instruments, namely, genre studies, SFL, and multimodality and social semiotics, in order to address the analysis at the meso- and micro-levels of Fairclough's (2003) framework respectively.

4.2.1 <u>Genre studies</u>

A genre analysis is useful in satisfying an analysis at the meso-level where the practitioner is concerned with the analysis of discourse practices such as the processes of text production, consumption and distribution (Fairclough 2003:24). Genres, according to Fairclough (1992:2), are diverse ways of acting or of producing social life in a semiotic mode. Frow (2006:10) provides an alternative definition of genre as the ways in which different structures of meaning and truth are produced. In other words, for Frow (2006:10), genre should be understood as central to human meaning-making, as well as the struggle over meaning, and is

therefore a dynamic material and social entity. These above definitions of genre differ slightly but they are joined by the common idea that genres are 'how people get things done' (Jones 2012:8). In other words, genres should not be understood as material texts or categories but rather as communicative events and so the analysis of genres can tell scholars something about the producers and consumers of texts which, as previously mentioned, is necessary for a meso-level analysis of discourse (Jones 2012:8). Bhatia (1993) provides a useful definition of genre that will be used as the springboard for its further discussion in this chapter:

> A genre is a recognisable communicative *event* characterised by a set of *communicative purposes* identified and mutually understood by the member of the community in which it occurs. Most often, it is highly structured and *conventionalised* with *constraints* on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value. These constraints, however, are often *exploited by expert members* of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of the socially recognised purpose(s) (Bhatia 1993:13).

From the above definition, it should be clear that a genre must achieve certain communicative goals and be mutually understood by the members of the discourse community in which it occurs and so comes with built-in constraints or conventions to ensure these ends (Jones 2012:9). Members of a discourse community can demonstrate their belonging to the community through adherence to these constraints or show themselves to be expert producers of a genre by successfully blending or bending genre constraints (Jones 2012:10, 46). Thus, genres not only link people together but also link people with certain activities, identities, roles and responsibilities and consequently, in a very real way, regulate who people can be and what they can do in certain contexts (Jones 2012:10). This concern with discourse communities and the regulation of social identities should prove useful in understanding the way in which Instagram users regulate the social construction of strong men and women.

To the specific end of defining Internet genres, Crystal (2011:33) points researchers to Herring's (2007:11) notion of technological and social facets. The technological facet includes variables such as synchronicity, granularity, persistence, length of a single message, channels of multimedia, identity of users, audience, possible adaptation of posts, and format or appearance of the message or post (Crystal 2011:33). The social facet includes variables such as the participation structure, participant characteristics, purpose for sending or posting the message, activities or means to achieve this purpose, topic, tone, norms of social

appropriateness, norms of language and code or language varieties used by participants (Crystal 2011:34). In chapter five, these variables are used as a guideline in conducting a genre analysis of Instagram, a relatively new social media platform, in order to answer the second research question concerning the unique characteristics of Instagram as a communicative genre on the Internet.

4.2.2 <u>Systemic Functional Linguistics</u>

As mentioned earlier, Fairclough's (2003:23) micro-level of analysis concerns the textual or linguistic features such as syntax or rhetorical devices of a text. In developing his three-pronged approach, Fairclough adopted Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) for CDA purposes. Halliday argued that any use of language satisfies three functions, or metafunctions, all at once (Jones 2012:12). The *ideational* metafunction refers to the use of language to represent the world in some way or another, the *relational* metafunction refers to creating, ratifying or negotiating relationships with others through language, and the *textual* metafunction refers to the joining of linguistic elements and ideas together to form cohesive and coherent texts (Jones 2012:12). In his framework, Fairclough split the relational metafunction into an *identity* function, concerned with the construction of social identity and subjectivity, and a *relational* function, concerned with the way in which relationships between people are constructed (Locke 2004:46). Fairclough further organised the textual analysis of Halliday's grammar from bigger units to smaller linguistic units by identifying nine analytical properties. The data in question is multimodal in nature so these nine analytical properties that make up the text analysis will be used to analyse the text component, namely the caption, of the Instagram post.

Five of Fairclough's analytical properties are concerned with Halliday's ideational metafunction or the way in which language is used to constitute, reproduce, challenge and restructure systems of knowledge (Locke 2004:48). In this regard, Fairclough draws on text structure, specifically large scale organisational properties, such as *connectives and argumentation*, verb *transitivity*, *theme* and nominalisation, *word meaning*, *word choice* and, lastly, *figures of speech* such as metaphor, metonymy, similes and personification (Locke 2004:51). In respect to the relational level, Fairclough identifies the property of *interactional control*, that is the power relations involved in the turn-taking, selection of topics and control of agenda of a text, along with the other properties of *modality*, or the strength with which a particular statement is endorsed as indicated through modal auxiliary verbs and adverbs,

politeness (or register) relating to the use of language relative to context, and lastly, *ethos,* namely the 'sorts of social identity' people implicitly signal through their language use (Locke 2004:47).

4.2.3   Multimodality and social semiotics

With the regards to the analysis of the visual component of the Instagram post, the social semiotic approach of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) is useful. As stipulated in its name, CDA is interested in the analysis of discourse, which includes more than just language (Jones 2012:28). The term 'discourse' refers to a socially constructed body of knowledge that represents social practices and actors and informs these practices by providing social agents with the resources or tools to make meaning (Jones 2012:133). Language is only one of the many cultural tools that social agents can use to take action and make meaning (Jones 2012:29). Other systems or tools for making meaning, called semiotic modes, include speech, images, writing, colour, dress and so on (Jones 2012:29). In their book, *Reading Images*, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:17) argue that these other forms of communication need to be treated as seriously as linguistic forms have been, especially as most texts today consist of a complex interplay of written texts, images and other graphic elements. In their social semiotic approach, the authors also argue that visual modes, like all other semiotic modes, are independently organised systems of meaning and so an urgent need exists to develop adequate ways of thinking and talking about the visual mode (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:17). Their book, which provides the first systematic and comprehensive account of the grammar of visual design, aims to satisfy this need by offering a valuable 'toolkit' for examining the way in which images communicate meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:33).

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:20), all semiotic modes must serve several representational and communication requirements or metafunctions as first identified by Halliday. Like Fairclough (2003), these authors adapted Halliday's framework in forming their approach by defining the ideational metafunction as the ability of any mode to represent aspects of the world or represent objects and their relations in a world outside the representational system (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:40). In other words, images have a deeply important semiotic dimension as ideational choices allow sign makers to produce images of reality that are bound up in the interests of the social institutions in which they are produced, circulated and read (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:45). There are several ideational choices that can be made with regards to the representation of participants, processes,

circumstances or concepts (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:73). In order to discuss these choices, that ultimately involve the representation of actors and processes Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:74) suggest several key concepts to classify actors, or the participant in the image that is represented as carrying out the action, such as *reacter, interacter* or *goal* as well as different types of processes such as *conversion, mental process* or *verbal process*. These terms will not be discussed at length in this section but will be applied later in the analysis of Instagram images.

The second metafunction, the interpersonal function, refers to the ability of the mode to represent the relationship between the producer of the message, the recipient of the message and the figures represented in the message (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:17). Interpersonal relationships can be realised in images by means of various camera angles, such as vertical or horizontal, that position the viewer in a specific position of power, as well as being realised through the proximity of actors or size of frame to create social distance (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:119). For this reason, the authors attach a set of meanings to each angle of gaze, eye level or camera shot for example an intimate or personal relationship can be attributed to a close up shot (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:154). Another interpersonal feature of interest, although not the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), is the presence of *face-ism* in an image. Face-ism, according to Cheek (2016:1), is the tendency of visual media to focus on the faces of men and the bodies of women.

Lastly, the textual metafunction refers to the semiotic mode's ability to form texts or a complex of signs that cohere both internally with each other and with the external context in and for which it is produced (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006:43). Written texts, like this document, are usually organised linearly, whereas images are organised spatially in terms of orientations like up, down, left, right, centred or figure proximity (Jones 2012:76). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:224) have therefore also attributed meanings to text composition for example, elements at the top of an image are usually associated with the 'ideal' or abstract whereas elements at the bottom of an image are associated with the 'real' or concrete. As previously mentioned, the authors offer several other concepts that will be discussed and applied to aid in a micro-level analysis of the multimodal texts of Instagram.

4.3. <u>Data collection</u>

Instagram provides users with a search function that was used in this study to filter the data on the explore page. Any Instagram user that searches a specific hashtag, for example

'#foodie', will be presented with the same posts as other users regardless of their search or like history. These posts are ordered chronologically from most to least recent and the page is constantly refreshed as new posts are uploaded. According to Crystal (2011:12), the temporal identity of internet language can prove to be a challenge for researchers exploring this medium. Language outputs on the internet are increasingly transient as older data, in this case posts on the Instagram explore page, are steadily replaced by newer data (Crystal 2011:20). However, Instagram posts are time stamped which aided in collecting data despite the challenge of an ever-changing explore page. For this reason, data was collected on one day, the 6 April 2017, by capturing a screenshot of each post which was then transferred to a Microsoft Word document. A second, third and fourth challenge that Crystal (2011:13) identifies as faced by researchers of Internet media are those of accessibility, the practice of anonymity and ethical considerations regarding the permission to use data. Here it is worth mentioning that only those Instagram users who have made their page public will appear on the explore page, and as Crystal (2011:14) asserts, their posts have become property of the public domain although care must still be taken when dealing with questions of ownership.

In total, one hundred Instagram posts containing the hashtag 'strength' were collected. The hashtag 'strong' was initially considered as the hashtag that would be used to filter the data. However, several investigation sessions prior to data collection showed that the hashtag 'strong' yielded an explore page that was littered with spam, posts unrelated to fitness or the body, and a large number of posts with non-English captions or no captions at all. For this reason, the hashtag 'strength' was explored and proved to be more useful in that it yielded an explore page with a greater number of relevant fitness related and English posts. This is possibly due to the classification of 'strength' as an abstract noun or a quality that an individual possesses whereas 'strong' is classified as an adjective that can be used to describe a wider range of concrete objects unrelated to the human body.

In order to reach the total number of one hundred Instagram posts, the posts on the explore page were filtered according to a specific set of criteria. Firstly, as this study is concerned with the representation of men and women in the fitness community, posts that did not include a human body or persons were excluded from the data set. This means that posts which included only images of, for example, food, animals, landscapes or locations, were excluded from the data set. The second criterion for inclusion is the language of the caption which accompanies the post. As the researcher is a first language speaker of English, only posts that had English captions were collected. While it may be that the analysis is then

limited by language and culture, or even the geographical location of Instagram users, according to Ponterotto (2014:105), the discursive strategies that trivialise and discriminate against sportswomen are cross-cultural and cross-linguistic so these textual patterns should still manifest regardless of language. Following the cleaning of data, all one hundred posts were sorted and briefly analysed to reveal any trending or shared features of the data set such as hashtag collocations, subject matter, use of pronouns, frequency of adjectives, verbs and emoticons as well as shared visual elements such as image subject matter. Subsequent to this, ten posts that represent men and ten posts that represent women were purposively selected and analysed in accordance with the methodology outlined above. A purposive selection process means that the ten posts representing men and ten posts representing women were selected because they are considered emblematic of the data as a whole.

Chapter 5
Instagram as a genre

5.1. <u>The Internet as a medium</u>

Since the inception of linguistics, scholars have been thinking of language in terms of speech, writing and, later, signing (Crystal 2011:16). However, according to Crystal (2011:19), the Internet has added a fourth dimension to the linguistic communication triad typically conceptualised as phonic, graphic or visual media. This fourth dimension, that he terms digital or electronic media, strays from its predecessors in its similarities to speech and writing (Crystal 2011:19). The Internet, as a mixed medium, is at one end of the spectrum much like writing in that many varieties of written language can be found on the web (Crystal 2011:20). At the same time, Internet genres, particularly those in the social network category, share several of the core properties of speech because they are transient, time-governed and typically delivered with as much energy and force as an immediate response (Crystal 2011:20). On the whole, Crystal (2011:21) surmises that language on the Internet is better seen as speech that has been written down, but it remains neither speech nor writing because it is more than an aggregate of spoken and written features.

It stands then that the electronic medium both constrains and facilitates human communication in unprecedented ways. Although the various internet outputs, or genres, vary widely in terms of constraints and affordances, some of the general constraints of communication on the Internet include limited message size, message lag and lack of simultaneous feedback (Crystal 2011:33). Among facilitations are hypertext links, emoticons and the opportunities provided by multiple conversations and multiply authored texts (Crystal 2011:33). This is only a partial account of the affordances and constraints offered by electronic communication, which, as mentioned, complicates not only when one genre is addressed, but also as genres are compared to one another or continue to evolve at a rapid pace.

Susan Herring (2007:11) has addressed this problem of defining Internet genres in terms of design features by grouping these features into the two broad categories of *technological facets* and *social facets* (Crystal 2011:33). Technological facets are determined by the hardware and software of the medium as well as the various protocols that govern the specific genre, for example Twitter, Facebook or, in this case, Instagram (Crystal 2011:33; Herring 2007:11). As mentioned in an earlier chapter, these facets include synchronicity, granularity, persistence, length, channels, identity, audience, adaptation, and format. On the other hand,

the social facets characterise the number, relationship and behaviour of those participants using the medium as well as the content and purpose of their communication and the kind of language used (Crystal 2011:33; Herring 2007:18). To this end, Herring (2007:18) identifies the variables of participation structure, participant characteristics, purpose, activities, topic, tone, norms of organisation, norms of social appropriateness, norms of language, and language variety (Crystal 2011:34).

However, Crystal (2011:33) points out in his book, *Internet Linguistics*, that multimedia genres, like Instagram, will need an extension of Herring's (2007) approach. He elaborates further by arguing that the only way to appreciate the uniqueness of a new genre is to carry out a linguistic investigation of a sample of data from that genre (Crystal 2011:35). A general account of the first Internet genres, that is email, chat, virtual worlds, blogging and instant messaging, is already available in works like those of Crystal (2011). For this reason, this chapter, armed with the theory offered by Crystal (2011) and Herring (2007), seeks to achieve the lofty objective of conceptualising a more recent genre whose linguistic origins lie in a combination of Internet and mobile technology.

5.2. <u>The history of Instagram</u>

Instagram is a free online photo-sharing, video-sharing and social networking application that was released on the Apple App Store in October 2010 by its creators Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. In 2012, it was sold to Facebook for one billion U.S. dollars (Buck 2012). At the time of the deal, Instagram only had 30 million users (Smith 2016). The application was later released for Android phones in April 2012 where it was downloaded one million times in less than one day (Tsotsis 2012; Houston 2012). The name "Instagram" is a portmanteau of 'instant camera' and 'telegram', which captures the idea that users or 'Instagrammers' can share images instantaneously and in real time (Buck 2012). Instagram is distinct from other platforms like Twitter because each post must include a short video or image. Here, image refers not only to photographs captured by Instagram's built-in photo camera, but also images, like memes, images of text, and photographs, uploaded from the user's gallery. To date, more than one billion images have been uploaded to Instagram (Daniells 2012).

Another defining feature of Instagram, the hashtag, was launched in January 2011, which enables users to discover both other users and images they might like (Van Grove 2011). In November 2012, Instagram launched website profiles which allowed anyone to see users' feeds from their desktop web browser instead of just a mobile phone (Hamburger 2012). In

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the same year, Instagram introduced the explore tab, a tab inside the app that displays popular images based on user search and like history as well as trending tags and places (Constine 2017). Another significant change included the incorporation of video capability in June 2013, which saw five million videos uploaded in the first 24 hours and the subsequent addition of a 'Videos You Might Like' channel on the explore tab in April 2016 as shown in *Figure 1* below (Aslam 2017; Buhr & Constine 2016).

In October of 2013, Instagram began its monetisation efforts which meant that advertisements would start appearing in between posts on the news feeds of users (Bort 2013). At first, only a limited number of brands were allowed to advertise in sample advertisements, but, following the strong performance of the advertisement format, Instagram announced in 2015 that all advertisers would be allowed to buy 'carousel' advertisements, which allows brands to upload up to five images as a catalogue that users can swipe through (Dove 2014). In this same year, Instagram announced the launch of new tools for business accounts, including new profile settings, insight analytics, and the ability to turn Instagram posts into advertisements (Sullivan 2015). In February 2016, Instagram reported that it had 200,000 advertisers on its platform which increased to one million advertisers in March 2017 (Ha 2016). In 2017, approximately 70% of global brands are using Instagram as an advertising platform and 90% of the top 100 brands in the world have an Instagram account (Smith 2016). In 2017, Instagram is expected to generate about 1.5 billion US dollars in mobile advertisement revenue and up to five billion US dollars in 2018 (Aslam 2017).

In addition to the main application, Instagram has developed three stand-alone applications that have specialised functions. Bolt, which was released in 2014, is somewhat similar to another social media platform, Snapchat, in that it allowed users to send an image to a friend which quickly disappears after being viewed (Ingram 2017; Yeung 2017). The release of Hyperlapse followed this which allowed users to create tracking shots and fast time-lapse videos as well as the creation of Layout, which allows users to create collages of several images (Shontell 2014). The latest application, Boomerang, was released in October 2015, which combines photos into short one-second videos that then play in a loop (Mediakix 2017).

The latest in-app additions to the Instagram application have caused rivalry with some of its social media competitors, particularly Snapchat (Mediakix 2017). In December 2013, Instagram launched Instagram Direct, an in-app feature that allows users to interact through

private messaging in contrast to the previous public-only requirement (Statt 2017; Roettgers 2017; Crook 2013). Amongst other updates, as of November 2016, Instagram users are able to make their private messages disappear much like the messaging services offered by Snapchat (McHugh 2015). This ephemeral feature is mirrored by a later Instagram update in August 2016, Instagram Stories, which allows users to add effects to photos or videos that are then added to their story which expires 24 hours after being uploaded (Strange 2016).

Instagram Stories, represented by user icons in a circle, was also included on the Instagram explore tab as shown in *Figure 1* below. In November 2016, the live video functionality was added to Instagram Stories, which allows users to broadcast themselves live, and is indicated to other users by 'live' at the bottom of the user's story icon as shown in *Figure 1* (Constine 2016). A more recent update, Gallery, allows users to upload up to ten images or videos in a swipeable catalogue format (Pierce 2017). Aesthetically, Instagram has undergone many facelifts, the latest revamp taking place in May 2016 which included the move to a black-and-white theme and a modern, more abstract icon (Perez 2016; Titcomb 2017). The latest addition to Instagram, launched during the writing of this chapter, is Face Filters, which, once again, mirrors the face filter feature offered by its competitor, Snapchat. These animated filters, including options like a bunny, koala and princess, along with the earlier addition of Stickers, are aimed at gearing users to generate more creative and innovative Instagram Stories.
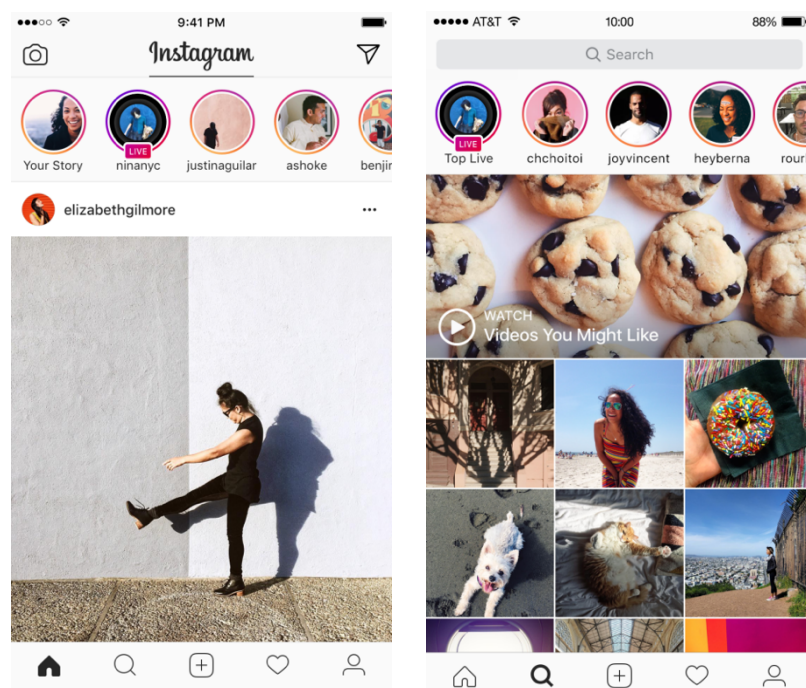
Figure 1: Instagram user news feed (right) and explore tab (left) in 2017 as viewed on a mobile phone

5.3. The social media matrix

Instagram is often referred to as a social media platform. However, this term is actually quite broad and refers to a wide range of Internet-based mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user-created content, or join online communities (Dewing 2012:1). Through the use of social media, users can choose to seek out information, exchange photos, share news and stories, post their thoughts or opinions, seek employment, participate in online discussions, or even take a mental break from more strenuous work-related activities (Greenwood *et al.* 2016; Dewing 2012:1). There are several kinds of internet genres that fall into the category of social media, sometimes termed Web 2.0, that differ in comparison to earlier web forms like email or instant messaging (Dewing 2012:1; Crystal 2011). The forms associated with social media include, to name but a few, blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, social network sites, status update services, virtual world content, and media sharing sites (Dewing 2012:1).

These abovementioned categories overlap to some degree, especially in newer social media platforms. For example, Twitter is a combination of a social network site as well as providing status-update services, whereas Facebook is a social network site which has media-sharing affordances. A social network site allows users to create a (semi-)public profile within a bounded system, connect with others users with whom interests are shared, and view the connections made within the system between themselves as well as others (Dewing 2012:1). Status update services, like those offered by Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, are also known as 'microblogging' and enable users to share short updates about events as well as interact with the updates posted by other users (Dewing 2012:2). YouTube, along with Instagram, Facebook, and Pinterest, is an example of a media-sharing site which means that users are able to share images and videos as well as other multimedia content (Dewing 2012:2). According to these descriptions then, Instagram can be classified as a social network site that offers status update and media-sharing services.

Although each variety of social media differs in the way that users can interact, there are several attributes of social media that permeate classification boundaries. One of these attributes is persistence, because a great deal of content on social media platforms, like Facebook and Instagram, remain permanently online by default although ephemeral social media sites, like Snapchat, are an exception to this rule (Dewing 2012:2). Other generalisable

features include replicability, that is that content can be copied and shared, and searchability, or the ability to easily find content using online search tools (Dewing 2012:2). Another key feature of social media is that it can be used anywhere and at anytime, provided that Internet connection is available (Dewing 2012:3). This ease of access raises questions around comprehensibility, social appropriateness and context of communication as the reader audience remains 'invisible' in terms of their identity and motives (Dewing 2012:3).

In short, social media has increased the amount of digitised user-generated content on the Internet, and so presents interested researchers with a rich source of information about the social world. Yet, as mentioned in the previous chapter, there are several computational and analytical challenges posed by social media research most significantly in the area of defining social media and distinguishing the boundaries between various applications, tools and sites. Given that there are several features that can be generalised across all social media, it is important to distinguish Instagram from its most conceptually related platforms, specifically other social network platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and LinkedIn. It may be tempting to use these other more heavily studied platforms as a point of methodological reference, particularly given the shared hashtag feature, but this may obscure some of the unique elements and features of Instagram. For this reason, it is important that social media researchers use the kind of typology offered above by Dewing (2012) to determine the type of social media they intend to study and, subsequently, focus on distinguishing that platform from its comparable counterparts.

Although Instagram is one of the most widely used social media platforms, Facebook continues to be the most popular social networking site (Greenwood *et al.* 2016). At this junction, it is worth mentioning that, at the time of writing, limited data is available on non-U.S. usage patterns for Instagram and other social media platforms. Figures reveal that, of the total American population, 79% of adults use Facebook, while 32% use Instagram, 31% use Pinterest, 24% use Twitter and 29% used LinkedIn (Greenwood *et al.* 2016). Additionally, Facebook numbers have risen both in terms of users, up 7% from 2015, and in terms of daily site visits which has grown from 70% in 2015 to 76% of users in 2016 (Greenwood *et al.* 2016). In contrast to Facebook, younger Americans are more likely than older Americans to use Twitter which is also the case with Instagram, but this trend will be further discussed in coming sections (Greenwood *et al.* 2016). Twitter, like LinkedIn, is also more popular among the highly educated as 29% of U.S. users with a college degree use Twitter compared to the 50% of users who use LinkedIn (Greenwood *et al.* 2016). Additionally, LinkedIn appears to

be the social media platform that proves to be more popular among high income earners, whereas Instagram appears to cut across income levels (Greenwood *et al.* 2016). This is possibly due to the nature of LinkedIn as a social network platform geared towards professionals and employers who are seeking to gain, or offer, employment. As the statistics above demonstrate, a slightly larger share of Americans use Pinterest, but users of this site are less likely to access this platform on a daily basis, whereas 55% of Facebook users report that they visit the site several times a day, and 51% and 42% of users access Instagram and Twitter respectively on a daily basis (Greenwood *et al.* 2016).

The importance of these statistics becomes clearer when considering that social media users continue to use a diverse array of platforms. Facebook continues to be the starting platform for most social media users, which shows a high reciprocity with the other platforms like Instagram (95%) or Twitter (93%) (Greenwood *et al.* 2016). This reciprocity is further compounded by the capabilities and social elements offered by most social media and web sites to seamlessly interact, share or engage with other platforms (Creighton *et al.* 2013). Outside of Facebook, 65% of Twitter users also use Instagram, while 49% and 54% of Instagram users use Twitter and Pinterest respectively (Greenwood *et al.* 2016). Apart from these user demographics and usage patterns, Instagram is distinctive from its counterparts for several other reasons specifically with regards to visual and textual practices, hashtag usage, as well as the affordances and benefits it offers to both its users and potential researchers. For this reason, as Baym (2015:74) argues, these differences in digital affordances lead to differences in group behavior and so the rest of this chapter will be dedicated to conceptualising Instagram as a unique Internet genre.

5.4. <u>Technological facet of Instagram</u>

A significant challenge in identifying the design features of an Internet genre is that studies of this nature always run the risk of being out of date as soon as they are written. This is particularly relevant in the case of Instagram which, in the last six months alone, has launched several new features and demonstrated impressive user growth that makes it difficult to challenge its status as one of the most popular and powerful global social media platforms (Mediakix 2017). For the sake of accuracy then, only those design features that are still current will be discussed, where applicable, guided by the technological and social facets listed earlier.

In terms of *synchronicity* and *channels of communication*, Instagram is defined by the ability of users to share multimedia posts, in the form of either images or videos paired with a caption, in real-time or 'instantly'. In terms of length, captions are restricted to a 2,200-character limit, and, as of February 2017, a video can last up to ten minutes. These posts are time stamped and remain online until it is removed by the user or, in some cases, censored and deleted by Instagram because it has been reported to be in violation of the Terms of Use or Community Guidelines. The identity and audience features of the application depend on the preferences of the user. Instagram does not require a username, or Instagram handle, to reveal the true identity of the user and some users may therefore choose to remain anonymous. Furthermore, users can choose to make their page public, that is accessible to all users of the application, or choose to remain private and allow only those users accepted as 'followers' to view their page.

Additionally, in terms of *adaption*, Instagram allows users to edit their captions, even once the post has been uploaded, which is then indicated by the addition of 'edited' alongside the caption. Instagram users are also offered an array of online filters and photographic editing functions that allow them to edit their images or photographs (Frommer 2010). Lastly, with regards to the variable identified by Herring (2007:13) as *format*, a previous distinctive characteristic of Instagram was the square shape of images, similar to a Polaroid photograph, in contrast to the 4:3 aspect ratio typically used by mobile device cameras (Buck 2012). However, in 2015, this feature was modified to allow users to post images in any aspect ratio (Perez 2016a). Another significant change in terms of format included the order in which posts appear on a user's news feed. Originally, the posts appeared chronologically, from most to least recent. However, as of April 2016, Instagram introduced a new timeline algorithm which results in users seeing more posts by other users that they like rather than by chronological order (The Sun 2016). In its simplest form, a single Instagram post looks like the post in *Figure 2* below by the user *mindfulfitness_*:

Figure 2: Typical Instagram post as viewed on computer desktop

This above post in *Figure 2* demonstrates several technological features that are automatically introduced by the software, such as the user handle preceding the caption, the timestamp (*2h*) based on real time even though Instagram is asynchronous, and the hashtag, for example *#yogaislife*, in blue typography instead of black, because it is a hypertext link. Another optional feature is the inclusion of a geotag, that is the location of the post, which is included under the Instagram handle and functions as a hyperlink, because users can search for posts using the location tag. There are other generic features which, although not introduced by the software, are considered standard practice. This includes the presentation of a hashtag as a single word despite the fact that it might consist of several, as demonstrated by *#blackandwhitephotography* in the above post. In the same way, Instagram handles are always a single word, but users can introduce spaces by using punctuation for example an underscore, as illustrated by the handle of *mindfulness_educator*, or a full stop illustrated by the handle *elite.conditioning* in the comment section of the post in *Figure 2*.

5.5. <u>Social facet of Instagram</u>

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a genre analysis at the meso-level is also concerned with the producers and consumers of texts as well as the production, consumption and distribution processes of the text (Jones 2012:8). This analysis can be accomplished by

conceptualising Instagram in terms of the variables identified under the social facet of a genre, which is largely concerned with the situation or context of communication (Crystal 2011:34; Herring 2007:11). In terms of *participation structure*, or production, consumption and distribution processes, users of Instagram can share or upload their own posts in real time or contribute to the posts of other users either by liking the image or commenting on it which is then displayed under the caption of the post (Perez 2016a). Currently, there are approximately 4.2 billion Instagram likes reported per day (Aslam 2017). Instagram posts have on average just two comments which averages at 32 characters long (Manikonda *et al.* 2014). As of 2017, users are also able to like comments, which is similar to a feature offered by Facebook (Mediakix 2017). What is more, users can tag up to 20 other users in a post, which then sends these users a notification of this tag (Buck 2012). Apart from tagging and commenting to communicate with other users, Instagram users can follow (and unfollow) other users and, as of 2013, can also direct message (DM) images or videos to the private Instagram inbox of another user (Perez 2016a).

Herring (2007) delineates *participant characteristics* as the demographics, proficiency, experience, status, socio-cultural knowledge, and attitudes, beliefs and motivations of the users of the platform. In 2013, Instagram announced 150 million monthly active users. This number has risen to a total 700 million active users in April 2017 of which 400 million are daily active users and 200 million are users of Instagram Stories effectively surpassing the total number of users on Snapchat (Mediakix 2017; Byford 2017; Titcomb 2017). Instagram is truly an international application as 30% of all global Internet users are on Instagram and over 80% of Instagram users are located outside of the United States (Mediakix 2017). According to the Pew Research Centre, this geographical statistic is not the only factor in determining whether or not an Internet user will be a user of Instagram (Mediakix 2017). Initially, it was reported that Internet users who live in rural areas were less likely than urban users to be users of Instagram (Mediakix 2017). However, in 2017, rural numbers seem to be increasing as 34% of Instagram users are reported to be from urban areas, 24% from suburban areas and 35% from rural areas (Mediakix 2017).

Furthermore, Instagram has proven to be popular with the younger generation as 90% of its users are under the age of 35 years old (Smith 2014). That said, it has been reported that the number of adult Instagram users has more than doubled in since 2012, at least in the United States, from 13% of the total U.S. population to 28% of the U.S. population (Mediakix 2017). This number of adult users can be compared to the 59% of users in the United States

who are between the ages of 18 and 24 years old (Mediakix 2017). In terms of operating software, Instagram users are divided equally between iPhone and Android users (Smith 2014). However, it seems that women are more likely to be Instagram users as 68% of Instagram users are female whereas only 32% of users are male, with this gap only reported to be widening in coming years (Smith 2014; Mediakix 2017).

In terms of income or socio-economic status of participants, Instagram is reported to be almost equally popular throughout income levels. The Pew Research Centre reports that the desire to look at aesthetic images and videos, and consequently the advertisements therein, is not seemingly impacted by income level (Mediakix 2017). That said, it appears that the education background of an individual carries some weight as a participant characteristic as it is reported that Instagram is more favoured by those users that have some college education compared to those with a high school diploma or less (Mediakix 2017). Instagram has also shown to be more popular amongst non-white Internet users (Mediakix 2017). According to the Pew Research Centre, of the total number of U.S. Internet users, 47% of Instagram users are black, 38% are Hispanic and 21% are white users (Mediakix 2017).

Furthermore, over 60% of Instagram users log in daily which makes it the second most engaged network after Facebook, but only 7% of users post daily uploads (Smith 2014; Smith 2016). It has also been reported that over 29% of Instagram accounts are 'inactive', posting one or fewer uploads in a month, and over 8% of accounts are fake (Smith 2016). In terms of participation on a social media platform, there are several strategies that users of Instagram can adopt to increase engagement from other users with their own posts. These strategies include the inclusion of at least one hashtag, which gains 12% more engagement, as well as the inclusion of the location or another user's handle which leads to 79% and 56% more engagement respectively (Smith 2016). Additionally, on the whole, images receive more engagement than videos and the average engagement per post has grown by roughly 416% in the last two years (Smith 2016).

Under participant characteristics, Herring (2007:18) also identifies participant attitude and motive as a key research interest. In a survey completed by 212 Instagram users, social interaction, archiving, self-expression, escapism and peeking were listed as the five main motives for using Instagram (Eunji *et al*. 2015:553). The motives of the user tie in with the third social variable identified by Herring (2007:18) as *purpose* of the group as well as the goal of the interaction. As mentioned previously, Instagram offers specialised profile

settings for businesses and professional individuals. As a result of lifestyle blogging, advertising or brand endorsement, it is possible for users to earn an income using the platform and it is reported that 12% of Internet users, who earn more than $50,000 per year, are users of Instagram (Perez 2016b). In fact, Instagram influencers are charging up to $100,000 for a sponsored post (Aslam 2017).

Apart from using Instagram as a platform to earn an income, users can also post for various other reasons. Some of these reasons may include showing solidarity with a cause or event, sharing personal and professional lives with followers, posting photos to showcase personal talents like photography or artwork, and even participating in illegal or controversial behaviour like selling illicit drugs or posting pornography (Stoeffel 2013). The topic and tone of an Instagram post is therefore largely determined by the communicative purpose or goal that the user wishes to achieve (Jones 2012:49). Instagram encourages users to be as creative as possible especially with regards to the use of hashtags; however, users may endorse certain generic hashtags simply to gain likes or followers which is best illustrated by the use of popular hashtags like '#followforfollow', '#likeforlike' or '#instagood' (Buck 2012).

Thus, hashtagging itself serves a multitude of purposes including demonstrating solidarity, group belonging, creativity or attracting followers, linking users and filtering posts based on the user's search history (Perez 2016b). This filtering of posts to create an explore page that is tailored to each user's follow and like history consequently ensures that users are exposed to posts from other users that are similar to themselves. In other words, users are constrained to interaction with others who belong to their discourse community for example, 'foodies' or fitness enthusiasts. These filtered explore pages, coupled with information on hashtag practices, may help explain why Instagram users, as opposed to users of Twitter or Flickr, are more likely to form distinctive relationship patterns and tighter community bonds (Manikonda *et al.* 2014).

However, despite the sharing of illicit or controversial information on Instagram, there are still norms of social appropriateness that are enforced by Instagram's users, and the Terms of Use (Stoeffel 2013). The basic Terms of Use include the age requirement of thirteen years or older, restrictions against violent, nude, partially nude, or sexually suggestive images, as well as the user's obligation to remain accountable for all activity and content on his or her account (Instagram 2013). In terms of propriety rights, there have been several changes

throughout the history of the application, one in particular, which allowed Instagram to sell the content and images of users to advertisers, caused widespread outrage (Hernandez 2012). However, at present, Instagram does not claim any ownership rights of the content that users post on or through Instagram services (Instagram 2013).

A violation of Instagram's Terms of Use, particularly the posting of nudity or violence, will result in the deletion of the post or even the entire account (Stoeffel 2013). In this regard, Instagram has been criticised for unfairly censoring women's bodies, and not men's, which has spawned controversial counter campaigns like 'free the nipple' (Stoeffel 2013). Other controversies surrounding the platform included illicit drug sales in 2013 as well several million hidden pornography films unearthed in 2016 (McDermott 2012; Hinde 2015). However, these activities continue to be blocked by Instagram and the company encourages users to report any inappropriate or illegal content or behaviour using the in-application reporting feature. Furthermore, Instagram temporarily blocks users who successively post comments on the posts of others in order to promote their own page or brand (Stoeffel 2013). Ultimately, these regulatory strategies allow members of discourse communities, to not only ensure that Terms of Use are followed, but also to ensure that the content within the discourse community remains within the socially accepted norms and constraints (Jones 2012:10; Instagram 2015a).

5.6. <u>Instagram as a site of research</u>

It becomes clear that Instagram, as a unique genre, emphasises a highly visual culture by allowing users to convey meaning through images and thereby encouraging a conscious decision about aesthetics that is not required by other social network platforms like Twitter or Facebook. As mentioned several times throughout this paper, the paucity of studies on Instagram is perhaps due to its visual nature, which requires novel approaches to combining visual imagery with captions, hashtags and comments (Highfield & Leaver 2014). This chapter sought to fill the gap in literature and draw some distinctions between Instagram and its more heavily studied social media counterparts. To take this analysis one step further, and hopefully motivate the use of Instagram as a site of research, this last section will detail the specific affordances and constraints offered by Instagram to potential researchers.

As previously mentioned, Instagram offers specific benefits to its users namely, the ability to improve mediocre photos by means of in-application filters, improved speed and ease of photo uploading, instant sharing of images across multiple platforms, and consequently, the

ability to connect with people in a 'world more connected through photos' (Instagram, 2015b). However, because Instagram does not encourage skilful photography, but rather the application of filters to transform images, researchers must be mindful of this utilitarian approach to images if they choose to analyse behaviour and content on this platform. That said, the affordances that allow Instagram to be a site of research outweigh the burdens and include, amongst other features, geotags and hashtags. Geotagging, or location tags, presents researchers with the opportunity to explore location-based trends, whereas hashtag practices may reveal in-group identity or community features.

Lastly, similarly to Dewing (2012:2), boyd (2010) identifies several affordances offered by public networks as sites of research that can be applied to Instagram to motivate its use in this capacity. Instagram affords *persistence*, because, not only does it motivate users to capture what may have been fleeting moments in their lives, but also renders these moments in a rich and relatively stable source of data for researchers (boyd 2010). Secondly, unlike more private platforms like Facebook, Instagram affords v*isibility* of content, because it defaults accounts to public status and so floods the platform with a large volume of posts (boyd 2010). What is more, the affordances of *replicability* and *searchability* are both offered by Instagram as researchers can screenshot or capture posts and identify content related to their topic by using the built-in search function for usernames, hashtags, and locations (boyd 2010). Lastly, as mentioned at the beginning of this section, Instagram posts offer a high degree of *interpretability*, in that they are inherently rich in terms of data analysis, especially from a qualitative perspective (boyd 2010). That being said, data analysis of multimodal posts can be time-consuming as each post must be analysed individually; however, even this drawback can be construed as a strength, because it demands that the researcher is familiar with the data. This benefit of acquaintance with research data is confirmed in the next chapter, which seeks to outline the trending features, hashtag collocations, subject matter and the like of the data set collected for this particular study.

Chapter 6

Trend Analysis

Before a detailed analysis of the purposively selected posts can be conducted, it is useful to conduct a trend analysis of the data. A trend analysis, although somewhat impressionistic in nature, provides perspective by bringing to light the shared features of the data set as a whole. Furthermore, these shared features can act as a springboard for the deeper analysis in the next chapter. This chapter will first discuss the shared visual features of the data which includes the type of sport represented, the gender and location of the actor in the image as well as the position of the actor's body. This will be followed by a focus on the textual elements of the selected Instagram posts, that is, the caption. This section will include a thematic analysis, an overview of common metaphors and figurative devices, as well as an overview of individual lexical items such as pronoun and emoticon or emoji usage. The final section in this chapter concerns the pattern of hashtag use, such as popular hashtags, frequency of hashtags, and frequent hashtag collocations or pairings.

6.1. Shared visual features

As mentioned above, texts were organised in accordance with the gender of the actor in the image as well as the location of the actor. The type of sport represented in the image is also of interest and is analysed according to whether it is a team or individual sport as well as whether it is a contact sport, non-contact sport or an aesthetic sport (see Hardin *et al.* (2006:438) and chapter two of this thesis). In some cases, the type of sport or training style could not be deduced, but these instances were few.

An additional category for the classification of the images in the data set includes the presence of face-ism. As explained in chapter four, face-ism is the tendency of visual media to focus on the faces of men and the bodies of women (Cheek 2016:1). This data was coded as the visual absence or obstruction of the actor's face in the image. The 'selfie', which refers to the actor using the front camera of his or her mobile device to capture an image of him or herself, comprises another category for analysis. A subcategory of this is termed the 'mirror selfie' which refers to an image of the actor captured by the actor in a mirror. The actors in the images were further classified in terms of body position. Those images that represent actors who are considered to be posing, or adopting a particular body position for the purpose of the photograph, are classified in the 'pose' image category whereas those actors who are trying to increase the visibility of their muscles by flexing are classified in the 'flex'

category. Other miscellaneous categories include transformation posts, which shows the 'before' and 'after' of an actor's fitness journey, as well as the additional categories of 'parent and baby' and images that contain text as a part of the image.

The first category for discussion, which for the purpose of this study is considered as a binary classification, is the gender of the actor in the image. In the data set totaling one hundred posts, female actors are represented in 58 posts, or 58% of posts, whereas male actors are represented 37 posts or 37% of the images in the data set. The remaining five posts represent a mixed group, or groups consisting of both men and women. However, not all those posts representing men or women contain only a single actor. Of the 58 posts representing only women, eight posts represent multiple women, that is, more than two women in a group. By contrast, of the 37 posts representing men, only four posts represent men in a group with other men. The tendency of men to represent themselves as an independent actor or 'lone wolf' may point to other more interesting group behaviour characteristics, but this will be discussed in more depth in following chapters.

With regards to the types of sport represented in the images, this study divided sport into individual sports, (for example, pole dancing), and team sports (for example, soccer). Of the one hundred posts, 96 posts represent individual sports. The remaining four posts represent team sports, of which three posts represent male actors and one post represents a mixed group. In terms of contact sports and non-contact sports, 94 posts represent non-contact sports like yoga or running, whereas six posts represent contact sports like soccer and boxing. In the category of contact sports, five of the six posts represent male actors and the remaining post represents a mixed group. Another category identified by Hardin *et al*. (2006:438) is aesthetic sport, like pole dancing, of which 27 posts are included in this category.

The most popular sport or fitness activity is weightlifting or resistance training. This category contains 40 posts in total, of which 23 posts represent male actors, 16 posts represent female actors, and only one post represents a mixed gender group. The second most popular represented sport is yoga which, like weightlifting, also classifies as an individual sport, but is considered to be more aesthetic in nature. Fifteen posts in total represent actors engaging in yoga, of which 14 posts represent female actors and one post represents a mixed group. The third most popular sport type is 'CrossFit' or functional training. This category contains nine posts, of which seven represent female actors and two represent male actors.

Other types of sports are also accounted for, although their representation in the data set is not as prominent as the aforementioned sports. Pole dancing is represented in a total of five posts, all of which represent female actors. Gymnastics, or a variation thereof, is represented in four posts, of which two posts represent male actors, while one post represents a female actor and a mixed gender group respectively. Other sports, which are represented in a total number of two posts each, include Pilates, soccer, marathon or triathlon, boxing, karate, motocross or cycling, and lastly, running. The posts in the Pilates category represent only female actors, whereas the posts in the categories of boxing, motocross, and soccer represent male actors in all posts. On the other hand, the two posts in the karate category represent only mixed gender groups, which accounts for two of the five mixed group posts in the data set as a whole. Another mixed group can be found in the triathlon or marathon category. The other represented sports, which tallied one post each, include cricket, fencing, and barre training. The chart below represents the different types of sports that are represented in the data set.
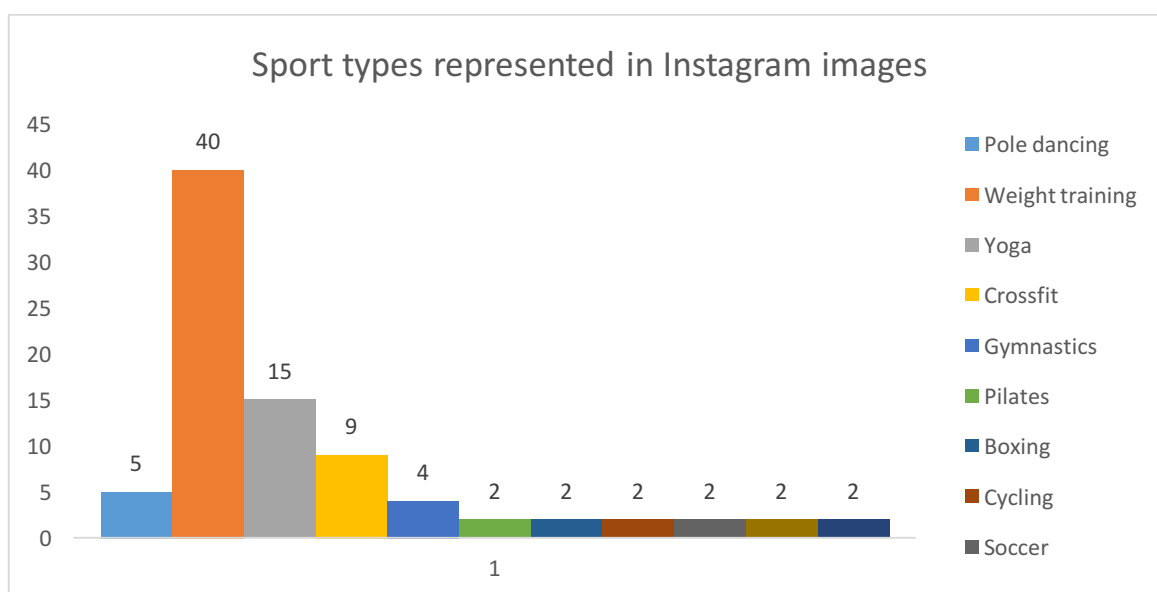
A further category for analysis is the location of the actor in the image. As in the case of sport type, the location of all actors could not always be deduced, which was often the case with selfies or mirror selfies as these could have been taken either at home or the gym. However, of the one hundred posts, 56 posts show clear indication of the actor being in a gym or public indoor location designated for exercise, for example a yoga or pole dancing studio. Of these 56 posts, 32 represent female actors, 20 represent male actors, and four represent a mixed gender group. On the other hand, there are 15 posts that represent actors exercising at home, all of which represent female actors in this location. In terms of outdoor exercise locations, only five posts in total represent actors on either an outdoor field or track. Of these five posts,

four posts represent male actors engaging in some form of physical activity outdoors, while only one post represents a female actor doing so. The other locations, which each had one post representing a male actor in this location, include a basketball court, a rooftop location, and an elevator lift.

Apart from the physical location of the actor, the body position of the actor was also taken into account as this study is concerned with the body as a semiotic mode for communication. All actors are dressed in active wear or sport uniform, aside from three posts which represent female actors in casual clothing or underwear and one post that represents male actors in casual clothing. Of the total data set, 47 posts contain actors that are classified as posing or adopting a particular body position for the photograph. Of these 47 posts, 41 posts represent female actors whereas only six represent male actors. A subcategory of this is the flex category as it is not possible to flex without posing. In total, 26 posts are classified as images that represent the actor or actors as 'flexing'. These 26 posts show an equal number of male and female actors, that is 13 posts representing male actors and 13 posts representing female actors. Another category, which concerns the body of the actor, is the category of face-ism. In the data set, 13 posts contain face-ism, that is the visible absence or obstruction of the actor's face in the image, of which 11 posts represent female actors and two posts represent male actors.

The remaining categories for analysis fall under a miscellaneous collection of noticeable features or trends. The first is the category of 'selfie' which contains a total of six posts, two representing male actors and four representing female actors. Another category, concerning a variation of the selfie, is the 'mirror selfie' which totals at 13 posts. Male actors are represented in four posts in this category, whereas female actors are represented in nine posts in this category. Transformation posts, which are usually posted to show the user's 'before' and 'after' physical transformation status, come to a total of five posts of the data set. Of these five posts, three posts represent female actors and two represent male actors. Another category of interest, which warranted a separate category altogether, was that of an image representing a parent and a baby or child. There are four posts in this category, all of which represent a female, or mother, and an infant. The last category in terms of the visual analysis concerns those posts that contain text as a part of the image. In this category, there were only two posts that contain text, which, for the purpose of this study, is taken to be part of the image rather than a part of the caption of the post.

6.2. <u>Shared textual features</u>

A brief textual analysis of the collected posts reveals several trending subject matters throughout the data set. In the coding of the data, it is possible for a post to belong to more than one category or deal with more than one topic. It is also important to keep in mind that posts need not contain captions, or at least captions in a conventional sense, and so nine posts in this data set do not include any of the topics mentioned below because they do not contain a caption other than a string of hashtags. The chart below provides a visual representation of the popularity of certain topic categories in the data set.
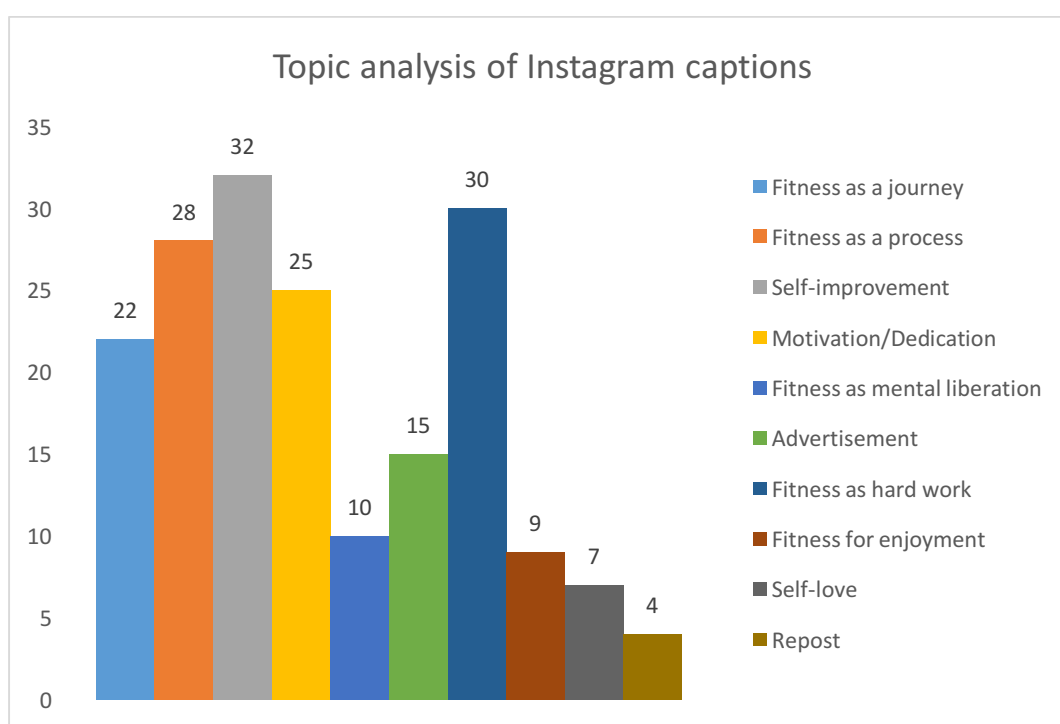
Of the total one hundred posts, 25 posts, that is one quarter of the data, are concerned with the topic of commitment or dedication to physical health and fitness. Two other common subject matters are those of self-improvement, which occurs in 32 posts, and self-love, which occurs in seven posts. Furthermore, as shown above, fifteen posts engage in some form of advertising for personal training or brand promotion, and four posts are categorised as reposts, because these users have used the reposting application offered by Instagram and shared another user's post on their own page. Aside from these common topics, there are several variations in the way in which fitness is conceptualised or framed within the various posts. Some of the more popular conceptualisations of fitness in the data set include fitness as a process which takes time in 28 posts, fitness as hard work or a challenge in 30 posts, fitness

for enjoyment or fun in nine posts, and fitness as a form of mental liberation which occurs in ten posts. Interestingly, fitness as a benefit for overall health only occurred in one post.

As mentioned earlier, it is possible for a post to deal with more than one topic or theme and for this reason, the lexical indicators that led the researcher to classify a post as dealing with a specific topic need to be made plain. These indicators refer to the kinds of adjectives, verbs, modal adverbs, pronouns, and figures of speech such as metaphors, typically used within the topic category. The subject matter of fitness as a process which takes time is typically indicated by the frequent use of temporal words, for example, two separate users report that they are "2 days out" or "5 weeks out" respectively from a fitness competition, whereas another user reveals that she is getting "better each day", which focuses on day to day progress (9, 33). In this category, there is also a focus on completing a workout program or challenge which takes a certain number of days or weeks. This is usually specified in the caption, for example one user shared her "day 6" of Yoga Builders 2.0, whereas a transformation post shows "4 weeks of training" with a personal trainer (21, 70, 46). Another indicator of fitness as a process is the frequent use of present participles that exemplify a continuous process, for example "getting", "enjoying", or "benefitting" (11, 3, 5).

A further analysis of the topic of fitness as a process which takes time reveals a common metaphor that compares fitness and health to a JOURNEY. This metaphor is used in 22 posts which refer to fitness as a "quest" or something which requires travel, or changing locations, as is illustrated by the phrases "go hard or go home" or "come back" (1, 77, 78). The use of the word "back", as in for example "so excited to be back at my pre-pregnancy weight" provides support for the metaphor of fitness as a journey because it implies that the process is ongoing, but does require a destination or goal of some sort (93). In a similar sense, another common metaphor is one which compares PROGRESS to DISTANCE, as one user reports that she is amazed at "how far [she] has come" while another states that progress requires "moving forward" (95, 88). One user refers explicitly to a mode of transport by encouraging others to join his training plan and "jump on board", which is reminiscent of boarding a cruise ship or even a skateboard (90). Ultimately, this expression implicates a form of travel which, once again, provides support for the metaphor of fitness as a journey.

The focus on time and metaphor of fitness as a journey is often paired with the topic of commitment and consistency despite the long time period which is evidenced by the frequent use of adjectives and verbs such as "consistency", "prioritise", "determined", "focus",

"goals", and "accountability" (99, 89, 28, 55, 44, 51). However, the gravity of this commitment varies as some users choose to take a hard-core or "go hard or go home" approach, while others choose a laxer approach that requires only their "best effort" (77, 47). Evidence of the former approach is indicated by the use of verbs that refer to extreme physical force or pain like "smashed", "grind", "hurt" or "blast" to describe a workout session (41, 56, 23, 89). This stricter approach also reiterates that such a commitment to exercise requires accountability and a "no excuses" or "no bullshit" attitude (89). In contrast, the laxer approach to fitness and exercise frames a workout as an activity that should be within the means of the actor. For example, one user reports her session as a "comfortable run" that she could "manage", whereas two separate users either encourage others to "make the best" of their session or report that they "made the most" of their own session (81, 15, 16). Another user encourages readers to go easier on themselves because they are doing "enough" in terms of their fitness regimes (18).

These two approaches to commitment often go hand in hand with a specific framing of fitness either as an activity that should be viewed as a challenge or as an activity for enjoyment or fun. Fitness as a challenging activity that requires hard work is indicated by the frequent use of the adjectives "tough and sweaty" or "tough and effective" to describe workouts (29, 38). In this topic category, users also almost never appear satisfied with their performance or goals which is reflected in the statement that aiming for "new challenges [is a] must". One user frames fitness as a challenge that is meant to "destroy" the actor as she states that "she overcame what was meant to destroy her" (96). This use of the word "destroy" creates the impression that fitness is almost dangerous, violent or tyrannous as the verb "destroy" implies that it can leave nothing in its path. Another user compares her DEDICATION to a FIRE, which ties in with impression of fitness as something dangerous that can lead to destruction (78). A different user creates a similar impression of fitness as he reports to have put his "anger on the bar" (43). This frames fitness as an exercise that stems from anger.

Ultimately, the topic of fitness as a challenge seems to comprise the conceptualisation of fitness as something that leads to danger or destruction. However, within this topic category, it appears that hard work and grit is the secret to overcoming or surviving such a challenge. Evidence of hard work or grit is captured in the use of phrases like "suck it up", "never surrender" or "just do yourself a favor […] go workout" (30, 71, 7). The use of finite verbs like "go" and "do" in several posts in this topic category, instead of present participles, adds

to the sense of urgency and resolve in statements like the latter example and creates the impression that grit involves this kind of 'no-nonsense' attitude (7, 77). This sense of seriousness is further reiterated in a metaphor that FITNESS is WORK as one user reports that when "sh*t gets serious" they "don't play" (9). In other words, fitness in this topic category is conceptualised as a serious affair that should not be taken lightly.

On the other hand, there are a string of posts that suggest that fitness activities should be enjoyable and fun rather than serious and challenging. This is evidenced through the frequent use of verbs like "enjoying" or "exhilarating" as well as the use of adjectives like "fun" or "fun and spicy" to refer to workouts (2, 3, 15, 32). That said, in those cases where fitness is in fact framed as challenging, the users within this topic category take a slightly gentler approach as opposed to the hard-core approach adopted by the previous category. The topic of fitness for enjoyment or fun frames fitness activities as an opportunity to "practice" and try as many "attempts" as possible rather than suffering through a workout (98, 6, 26). This approach to fitness ties in with the next two topic categories which are those of self-improvement and self-love.

The topic of self-improvement actually occurred in more posts, that is 32 posts exactly, than the previous topics of fitness as a process that takes time and fitness as a challenge which occurred in 28 posts and 30 posts respectively. This topic is exemplified by the frequency of the adjectives "stronger", "better", or "fitter" in six posts each respectively (93, 94, 58, 59, 78, 25). Other adjectives of interest include the use of "happier" and "prouder" in two posts each (94, 65). The comparative form of these adjectives implies not only that fitness transformations take time, but also that self-improvement involves the comparison of an individual's before and after fitness level or physical appearance. At the same time, this striving for self-improvement is aimed at achieving a goal, or the best version of the actor, which is marked by the use of superlative adjectives like "heaviest", "best effort", "hardest" or "fittest I've felt" (16, 47, 46, 82). Even then, once these goals have been achieved, it is maintained that there is always room for improvement. This is exemplified by the use of the word "new" in three posts to refer to new challenges, routines or goals as well as the use of the verb "work" in phrases like "need to work on" which implies that the current standard is not good enough, and so needs to be improved (85, 87, 81).

A specific standard of fitness is also alluded to within the topic category of brand advertising or trainer promotion which occurs in fifteen posts in total. Some posts within this category

conceptualise fitness and training styles, not as challenging or enjoyable, but rather as correct or incorrect. One user for example states that his physique results are only obtainable if an individual "eat[s] correctly" and "train[s] correctly", because "real progress" requires "real food" and "real talk" (90). This focus on some fitness approaches as "real" or "natural" and others, like "fit teas" or "super shakes", as fake and "bullshit" also puts fitness on the spectrum of real and fake as opposed to only correct or incorrect (90). Another separate approach also draws on the incorrect/correct and real/fake categorisation by arguing that their training services are "good quality" and offered by "real people" (2). One trainer, who posted a transformation of his client, reveals that the results were achieved not by "crazy diets" or "crazy training methods", but simply the "basics done right" (51). Again, this places fitness on a spectrum of incorrect and correct, but these posts, as advertisements, aim to encourage readers to join the training programs because readers will require "expert guidance" to make the distinction (5).

The final two topics of interest, that is self-love and fitness as a form of mental liberation, are often paired together in several posts. Fitness as mental liberation or as a mental journey is illustrated by the use of verbs or nouns that refer to a mental faculty or abstract noun for example "if you realised how powerful your thoughts are", "more confident", "mental clarity" and "calm mind" all reflect the need or desire for a specific state of mind or mental strength (39, 81, 95, 72). On the other hand, a less desirable state of mind is illustrated by the use of expressions like "negative thoughts", "blame" or "fear" which are framed as detrimental to the goal of "positive vibes" and so users are encouraged to maintain or "retake control" of their state of mind (39, 34, 50, 35).

Fitness as a mental journey and the topic of self-love also encompasses some form of self-discovery as suggested by the phrases like "know yourself", "believing in yourself" and "single purpose" (48, 49, 40). Lastly, three posts equate fitness to a form of liberation. One posts states that there is "no force equal to a woman determined to rise" and asks the reader "how will you rise today?" which is a metaphor that compares FITNESS to FLIGHT. The other post states that individuals "don't have to be a slave" to the fear of hurting themselves during exercise, and the user of a third post compares her practice of yoga to her "quest to be free" (28, 34, 1).

The final two categories for textual analysis in this section include the use of pronouns and emoticons or emojis. These two categories are discussed together because they both

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contribute to the colloquial and relaxed register that is adopted in several of the posts. The use of first person pronouns, that is specifically "I", "me", "my", and "we" or "us", in 36 posts contributes to an atmosphere of comradeship in the community as it aims to engage with the reader on an intimate or personal level. However, use of the second person, that is "you", "your" or "yourself", is often employed to encourage readers to achieve a triumph or overcome an obstacle as is illustrated by the phrases "believing in yourself", "fight for what you love", "fuel your muscles", and "you have control" (49, 40, 97, 92). The frequency of "you" also represents the high level of personal responsibility and accountability that is advocated for by this community as "you" often involves singling out the reader to stay committed, improve on something and ultimately remember that "you get what you work for" (36).

Similar to personal pronouns, the use of emoticons and emojis, which is unique to Internet and electronic mediums, contributes to a relaxed and conversational register. Of the total of one hundred posts, 43 posts contain emoticons or emojis, whereas 47 posts do not contain any emoticons or emojis. Some of the popular emojis include the thumbs up, the flexing arm as well as the flame emoji and the running man emoji. Of the 43 posts that contain emoticons and emojis, 35 posts were posted by female users, seven posts were posted by male users and only one post was a business account that does not have a gender. As gender is a category for analysis that intersects with other categories in this study, it might be useful to consider the patterns of use of personal pronouns and emoticons or emojis as variables of gender in a future study.

6.3. Shared hashtag features

The use of specialised lexical items like hashtags is of interest to the researcher as it is a defining characteristic of, although not exclusive to, Instagram as a communicative and multimodal genre. As lexical items, hashtags are always written as one word even if they consist of several for example "#girlswithmuscle" or "#strongnotskinny" (59). Furthermore, some hashtags identified in the data set are more generic as they could apply to communities other than the fitness or health-conscious community of interest. These include hashtags like "#motivation" or "#inspiration". Then again, as mentioned in the genre analysis of Instagram, users are encouraged to be as creative as possible in their use of hashtags. What is more, users often include several hashtags in a caption as this increases their popularity on the explore page which consequently increases the number of likes and followers they will gain.

For this reason, a detailed coding and analysis of all the hashtag variations and combinations is not possible in this brief analysis. However, 39 of the most popular hashtags were identified and used as a starting point. Furthermore, the several variations of hashtags considered to be semantically or thematically similar are grouped together in a single category for example, the category "#health" includes other variations like "#healthy", "#healthylife" and "#wellness".

The most popular hashtag is "#fit" which includes its variations such as "#fitness", "#fitfam", "#fitlife", "#fitgear", and "#fittie". These variations occur in a total of 67 posts. The second most popular hashtag, which occurs in 41 posts, is "#gym" as well as its variations "#gymlife", "#gymlover", "#gymgirl", "#gymclass" and "#gymrat". The hashtag "motivation" occurs in the same number of posts as "#gym", that is 41, and includes variations such as "#motivational" and "#motivated". The fourth most popular hashtag, which occurs in 29 posts, is "#muscle" as well as its variations "#muscles" and "#muscular". Other popular hashtags include the category "#eatclean" which is grouped together with other thematically similar hashtags like "#nutrition", "#diet" and "#cleaneating" and occurs in a total of 28 posts.

The category of "#health", and its variations "#healthy", "#healthylife" and "#wellness", follows in popularity with a total of 24 posts. The seventh most popular hashtag category is "#inspiration" which occurs in 21 posts. The hashtag "#fitspo", which is an abbreviation of the blended word "fitspiration", occurs in 18 posts, all of which contain "#inspiration" as well. Likewise, the hashtags "determination" and "dedication" often occur together as well. There are 21 posts that contain "#dedication", of which 12 posts also contain "#determination". Several hashtags refer to a specific body part, which occurs in 21 posts, and includes hashtags like "#abs", "#core", "#arms", "#legs", "#bum" and its slang variation, "#booty". The tenth most popular hashtag refers to muscle growth. This is exemplified as "#gains", although typically spelt "gainz", and "#grow" which is often paired with "#gains". In total, 20 posts contain "#gain(s/z)" of which ten posts contain "#grow" as well.

The next few hashtags are ranked in decreasing popularity and have a range of 19 posts to four posts. The hashtags "cardio" and "lifestyle" occur in 19 posts each, whereas "#shredded" and "#ripped", which refers to a standard of leanness, occur in 19 posts and 10 posts respectively. Another hashtag that warranted a separate category is "#yoga", which occurs in 17 posts and includes variations like "#yogaaddict", "#yogalife", "#yogafit", "#yogagirl",

"#yogapose", and "#yogaeveryday". The hashtag "bodybuilder", and its variations like "#bodybuilding" and "#naturalbodybuilding", also occurs in 17 posts, while "#focus" occurs in 16 posts. Like "#motivation", "#instafit(ness)" is also a generic hashtag used to gain followers and occurs in a total of 15 posts in this data set. Other notable hashtags include "#lift", or variations like "#powerlift", in 14 posts, and variations of "#strong", like "#strongwomen", "#strongmen", "#strongbody" or "#getstrong", in 13 posts. Both "#grind", and its variations like "#pushpullgrind", "#grindout" and "#riseandgrind", as well as "#aesthetic" occurred in 12 posts each. Of these 12 posts, "#physique" co-occurred with "#aesthetic" in four posts.

The last few hashtags occurred in a small number of posts and so will only be listed here in order of decreasing popularity. They include "#girlsthatlift" and "#progress" in 11 posts each, "#crossfit", and its variations like "#CFfit", or "#CFbox", as well as "#stretch", and "#transformation" in a total of in ten posts each. The hashtag "swole", which is a slang term describing a muscular, usually male, individual, also occurs in ten posts. All hashtags pertaining to the category of "#positivevibes", like "#peace", "#love", "#happiness" and "#live", were grouped together and occur in ten posts as well. The variations of "#weight", like "#weighttrain" or "#weightlifting", occur in nine posts, whereas "#girlswithmuscle", "#mind", "beast(mode)", and "#power(ful)" occurred in eight posts each. The hashtag "strongnotskinny" occurred in seven posts, while hashtags like "#gymnast(ics)" and "#balance" occurring in six posts each. Lastly, variations of "#tattoo", like "#tattoogirls", occur in five posts whereas variations of "#pole", like "#polelife", "#polelove", "polefit", "#polefriends" or "#poledance", occur in a total of four posts. A common trend that can be noted here is the tendency of different fitness groups or communities to specify their belonging through the addition of the sport type to generic hashtags as seen in both the yoga, CrossFit, bodybuilding and pole dancing communities for example "#polegirl" or "#yogagirl".

Furthermore, as there seems to be a clear division between the abovementioned fitness communities, at least in terms of hashtags, it is worth noting the specific hashtags that frequently co-occur within these groups. The hashtags "stretch", as well as its variation "#flexibilty" which occurs in eight of the ten posts containing "#stretch", occur together with "#yoga" variations in a total of eight posts. These "#stretch" variations also co-occur with variations of "#pole" on some occasions. What is more, hashtags from the "#positivevibes" category like "#peace", "#live" or "#happiness", as well as variations of "#mind", such as

"#mindfulness" or "#calmmind", are more likely to co-occur with variations of "#yoga" than any other fitness group. The hashtag category of "#bodybuilding" also has a very distinct use of hashtags within its group. For example, the hashtag combination of "grind", "swole", "focus", and "lifestyle" all occur in nine posts. What is more, these nine posts also contain "#bodybuilding" or at least one of its variations. Another hashtag often paired together with a variation of "#bodybuilding" is "#muscle", which occur together in a total of ten posts.

Furthermore, "#grow" or "#gain(s/z)" occur in all cases with variations in the "#bodybuilding" category. Variations of "#grind", like "#pushpullgrind" or "#grindout", also frequently occur with each other, as is the case with most other hashtag variations, as well as co-occurring with variations of "#bodybuilding". As mentioned earlier, "#gain(s/z)" or "#grow", as well as "#swole", are used solely by the bodybuilding community, but, interestingly, the hashtag "eatclean", and its variations, occurs in a total of 14 posts with either "#gain(s/z)" or "#grow". Another two hashtag categories, namely "#girlswithmuscle" and "#girlswholift" occur together in a total of five posts, while "#ripped" and "#shredded", which is also almost always paired together, frequently co-occurs with "#bodybuilding" variations.

As mentioned, this chapter only sought to outline the various trends that are present in the data set as a whole. This analysis is largely theme driven and focuses only on key lexical items. However, the next chapter seeks to further explore the themes that have come to light by analysing twenty purposively selected posts. As gender is an intersecting category for analysis, ten posts will contain female actors, and ten posts will contain male actors. The methodology outlined in chapter four, that is the visual analysis tools offered by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and the textual analysis tools of Fairclough (1995), will be used to analyse these posts in greater detail with focus on all textual and visual features.

Chapter 7
In-depth analysis of purposively selected posts

It has become clear throughout this thesis that semiotic modes, comprised of both language and visual imagery, work to communicate meaning, albeit in different ways. In his approach to Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Michael Halliday states that any use of language satisfies three functions, or metafunctions, all at once (Jones 2012:12). In chapter four, it was shown that Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:20) broadened this notion by arguing that all semiotic modes, including visual media, must satisfy Halliday's three metafunctions at an ideational, relational and textual level.

It is important to mention here that, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:55), semiotic genesis lies in gestalt theory, that is the general understanding that parts make up the unified whole, and so the importance of the meaning attributed to geometric shapes and lines cannot be understated. For this reason, other additional sources, such as those that detail the meaning attributed to line and shape, will be used, when necessary, to supplement the visual analysis theory provided by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). In applying these concepts, this chapter seeks to provide a detailed analysis of twenty purposively selected posts from the data set. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the posts in this chapter were purposively selected because they are considered emblematic of the data as a whole. The ten posts that represent male actors will be discussed followed by a discussion of the ten posts that represent female actors. Each post is analysed first in terms of its visual grammar, namely the image, and then in terms of its textual grammar, that is the caption, while still drawing reference to other relevant posts when necessary.

7.1. Analysis of post 2

The first post of interest in the male category represents a young boy standing on top of his defeated adult male boxing opponent while a female actor looks on. It is clear that all the represented actors are located inside a boxing ring of a gym. However, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:45), images have a deeply important semiotic dimension and so there is more communicated by this image than meets the eye. At the ideational level, the gaze or eye line of the junior male actor creates a vector which is directed at the senior male actor. However, the senior male actor has covered his face with his arm, and so his gaze does not reciprocate that of the junior male actor. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:74), this process can be termed a *transactional reaction*, because a vector connects a *reactor* (the junior actor) and a *phenomenon* (the senior actor), but is not reciprocated by both actors. The female actor is also engaged in a transactional reaction, because her eye line is not reciprocated by the senior male actor and so he is also the phenomenon, or passive participant, of her gaze.

At the same time, none of the represented actors are gazing directly at the viewer or audience of the image. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:74), this absence of gaze at the viewer has meaning within the interpersonal metafunction of semiotic modes. The authors use the term *offer* to refer to this absence of interaction between the represented actor and

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viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:124). In such images, the viewer is not the object but the subject of the look and the represented actor is the object of the viewer's scrutiny (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:124). In other words, this kind of image 'offers' to the viewer the represented actor as an item of information or object of contemplation as if he or she were a specimen on display (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:124). This type of display or exhibitionism is also subtly communicated in the image by the ludicrous nature of the represented event. It is unlikely that a boy as young as the represented junior actor would be able to knock out a man as mature and physically developed as the senior actor in the image. It can then be assumed that the junior actor was let to win and so the entire event staged like a play or demonstration.

Another interest at the interpersonal level is the proximity and spatial relationship of represented actors. In this image, the junior actor is standing on top of and gazing down at the senior male actor and so, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:154), has represented actor power. The same can be said for the represented power relationship between the junior actor and the female actor, because the female actor is crouching down on her hands and knees while the junior actor is standing upright on a higher level. Furthermore, this spatial arrangement translates in the textual metafunction as well. In most Germanic languages like English, texts, including images, are read from left to right and from top to bottom (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:224). In the textual metafunction, Kress and van Leeuwen attribute meaning to this organisation principle. Elements at the top of the image, like the junior actor, are considered representations of the abstract or 'ideal', whereas elements towards the bottom of the image, like the senior male and female actor, are considered concrete or 'real' (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:224). For this reason, it could be argued that the junior actor is a representation of the ideal male youth which is realised in this image as boisterous, competitive, and aggressive enough to overtake even an older opponent.

A textual analysis of the caption of this post reveals that the post functions as an advertisement for personal training at this particular gym as illustrated by the inclusion of the contact details of "@guzzfit" for a "FREE Trial PT session". The specific sport type, that is boxing, is also advocated for by the use of positive adjectives like "exhilarating, invigorating, safe and satisfying". Boxing, a contact sport which is usually associated with physical violence and aggression, is constructed as "safe", not only by the use of this adjective in the caption, but also by the image which depicts a young boy as safe, unharmed and victorious. In addition to this notion, this post as an advertisement also makes several other claims about

the quality of training services offered in this post. Once again, this is evident in the use of positive adjectives like "good", "great", and "positive" in, for example, "good quality fitness training" and "great physical results". The reference to a specific training as "good quality" also reflects the correct/incorrect and real/fake categories identified during the trend analysis in most of the personal training advertisements. Another example of these categories in this post includes the statement that such training is offered in an environment surrounded by "real people". This categorical approach could be seen to serve as a competitive marketing strategy that polarises the competition as fake or bad. Lastly, the first two sentences of the caption are given as a quote. This might be an attempt to provide evidence for the claims made regarding the personal training services. However, the speaker of the quote remains unnamed and so readers are unable to confirm these claims.

7.2. <u>Analysis of post 7</u>
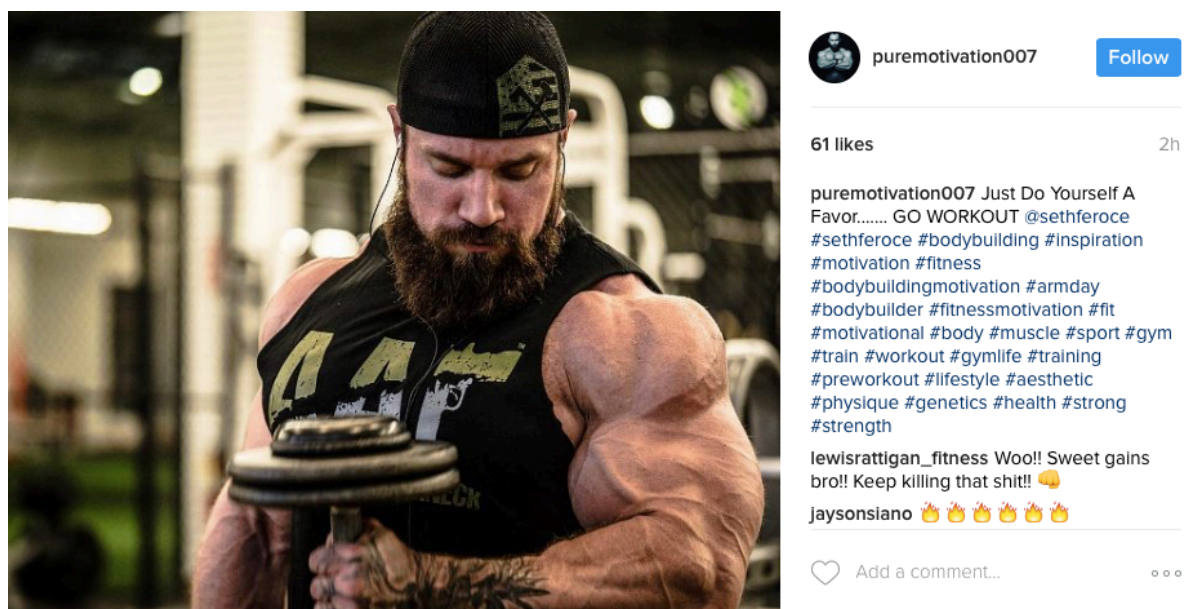
The next post is posted by a fitness motivation account, which means that the represented actor in the image is not the user of the account. The represented actor is in fact the famous bodybuilder Seth Feroce who is pictured flexing his bicep and lifting a dumbbell in the gym. Like the two male actors in the previous post, the actor of this image is also wearing active wear, more specifically a muscle up shirt that reveals his very lean, muscular arms, as well as adorning earphones and a backwards cap. Additionally, the represented actor has a full beard as well as visible tattoos on his forearm. At the ideational level, the represented action can be termed a *transactional reaction*, because the gaze of the actor does not point at another actor but rather draws attention to the actor's flexing arm as the phenomenon of his gaze (Kress &

van Leeuwen 2006:74). The actor's eye line also emanates a vector towards the dumbbell in his hand. This, together with the actor's expression of focus and determination, suggests that these dumbbells are significant to him because they pose a challenge. In some ways then, the image represents the visual performance of strength as the ability to move heavy weights (Hornby 2005:1467).

Furthermore, the gaze of the represented actor can also be attributed meaning at an interpersonal level. As previously mentioned, the absence of gaze at the audience is termed offer by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:154), because it 'offers' to the viewer the represented actor as an item of information or object of contemplation much like a specimen on display. This item of information, that is the represented actor Seth Feroce, is further emphasised by the text composition. At this level, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:225) use the term *salience* to refer to the degree to which an element draws attention to itself. The represented actor is salient, because the background is out of focus while he is in focus in the foreground of the image. What is more, the represented actor's flexing bicep also draws the viewer's attention due to its large size and the aforementioned vector created by the actor's eye line.

As mentioned in the visual analysis section, this post is an example of a type of 'fitspiration' or 'fitspo' that is posted on Instagram to motivate followers. These accounts like "puremotivation007" are usually run anonymously and rely on the fame or success of other fitness personalities to gain likes and followers. It is conventional to tag the fitness personality, for example "@sethforce", to give the aforementioned personality notice that their content has been used and thereby also acknowledge that the content is not the account's own. In terms of register, the caption is colloquial but still maintains distance from the audience. This is achieved by the use of the second person pronoun in "just do yourself a favor" and the use of the imperative to signal a command in the phrase "GO WORKOUT". The use of second person allows the author of the caption to exclude him or herself from the statement, because it only refers to the reader audience and so places the author in an authoritative position. To this effect, the tone of the caption comes across as urgent and serious. This tone is illustrated by the use of finite verbs "do" and "go" in "just do" and "GO WORKOUT", as well as the use of all capitals in the latter example, which gives the impression that the words are important and could even be shouted in conversation.

In terms of figurative devices, there is a metaphor present in the caption which compares FITNESS to a FAVOUR or good deed. In this sense, the account user suggests that fitness is a beneficial endeavor that should be carried out for the individual's own good. However, the emphasis created by the adverb "just", coupled with finite verbs and all capitals as mentioned earlier, creates the impression that the 'favour', or workout, is non-negotiable and more of a command than a request. This mirrors the topic of fitness as a challenge which was identified in hard-core fitness posts during the trend analysis. A last item of concern is the use of hashtags in this post. On most fronts, the hashtags of this post are similar to the hashtags typical of bodybuilding or weightlifting community posts as identified in the trend analysis. For example, this post contains variations of "#bodybuilding" as well as those hashtags like #muscle, "#aesthetics", "#physique", and "#armday" that are often paired together in this community. However, a unique hashtag of interest is "#genetics" which draws some relation to the real and fake discourse typically present in the advertisement posts. In the bodybuilding community, it is not uncommon for users to hashtag "natural" in reference to the absence of steroid use (which also happens to be commonplace in this community). In this particular case, however, the account user of this post attributes the represented actor's incredible muscle size to biology and so suggests that only a few men can naturally achieve this level of muscular definition and size.

7.3. <u>Analysis of post 36</u>

Akin to the male actor in the previous post, the male actor of the above post is also located in the gym. This male actor, however, has chosen to forgo a shirt and so his entire upper torso, which can be described as muscular and defined, is visible. Aside from the physical setting, the represented actor shares some other physical traits with the actor of post 7. These shared traits include a beard and the wearing of earphones. However, the image of this post is unique because it demonstrates some of the image editing options available to Instagram users. The image illustrates the use of a black and white filter, of which there are four to choose from, as well as the use of Instagram's sister application, Layout, which has allowed the user of this post to mirror an identical image on the vertical plane.

That said, despite the fact that there are technically two salient actors present in the image as a whole, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:224) argue that elements in a composition must not be identical or near-identical to its corresponding elements in order to be attributed meaning. For this reason, this image cannot be compared in terms of text composition, because the elements are identical. However, if only one side of the image is taken as the whole image then it can be analysed at an ideational and interpersonal level. At an ideational level, the represented actor is engaged in a non-transactional reaction, because his eye line creates a

vector that points away from the other represented male actor in the background and into the distance. At the interpersonal level, the gaze of the represented actor is similar to the actor in post 7 because both exhibit offer or an absence of gaze at the viewer of the image. However, although both images realise offer at an interpersonal level, the gaze of the represented actor in this image is slightly different because he is gazing into the distance, whereas the actor in post 7 is gazing down towards his arm. Lastly, the image of this post can be considered a medium shot which conveys a *close social distance* between the actor and the viewer and works to make the viewer feel an imaginary closeness to the actor or public figure (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:132). That said, the actor's determined facial expression and absence of gaze at the viewer, coupled with the black and white filter and down lighting in the image, work to convey a serious and gritty atmosphere and construct the actor as unapproachable.

This serious atmosphere is carried through to the caption of the post which falls into the trend analysis category of fitness as challenging or hard work. Like the caption in post 7, the use of the third person "you" singles out the reader and somewhat excludes the author of the caption. This creates social distance between the author and the reader by placing the author in an authoritative or all-knowing position. Furthermore, the caption illustrates a parallel sentence structure, as the construction THIRD PERSON-VERB is mirrored in both. The content of the caption also exhibits the use of parataxis by the juxtaposition of short simple sentences to connect ideas that are usually starkly dissimilar. In this case, the dissimilar ideas are working for something as opposed to just wishing for it.

Furthermore, the use of hashtags in this post are considered typical of the bodybuilding community, for example "gains", "shredded" and "aesthetic" were all identified in the trend analysis. One specific hashtag that provides an example of in-group behaviour in this community is the use of "#iifym" which is an acronym that stands for "if it fits your macros" and refers to an eating plan concerned with meeting a certain amount of macronutrients, that is carbohydrates, protein and fat, each day. This hashtag is not confined to the bodybuilding community alone, but is more common among weightlifters and might be indecipherable to Instagram users who do not belong to these fitness communities. Other hashtags in this post also work to exclude some individuals as they point to a certain kind of masculinity that might be desired by these weightlifting communities or even communities unrelated to sport and fitness. These hashtags include "#good" and "#fatloss" which suggests that other types of physiques, that are not as lean or muscular as the represented physique, would be considered "bad" or undesirable. The hashtags "model" and "aesthetics" draw further attention to

physical appearance and, in this case, facial attractiveness as opposed to physical performance or even health as benefits and advantages of fitness.

7.4. <u>Analysis of post 51</u>

In terms of visual features, the image of this post shares similarities with post 36 in that it represents a shirtless male actor that, by means of Layout, has been mirrored on both sides of the image. However, this post is classified as a transformation post which is post that is shared to show the physical transformation of a user before and after a lifestyle change or fitness program. In contrast to post 36, the actor in this image has his back facing towards the viewer and is not in a gym but most likely located in a home environment as evidenced by the tumble dryer in the background of the right frame. The actor's pose in both frames is identical, however, there is more down-lighting in the second frame which enhances muscle definition in photos. Aside from these image features, the actor can be said to be engaged in a non-transactional action at an ideational level, because there is an absence of other actors and an eye line in the image (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:63). As there is no eye line, the absence of gaze could, once again, be classified as an example of offer, but it is also an example of face-ism, because the actor's face is completely concealed from the viewer of the image (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:154; Cheek 2016:1). This impersonal relationship between the actor and the viewer is further heightened by the medium long shot at which the image is

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taken because it conveys an impersonal relationship between the actor and the viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:154).

Lastly, as a transformation post, the two frames represent the represented actor's physical transformation, and although the images are not time stamped, it is understood that the frame on the left represents the 'before' physique and the frame on the right represents the 'after' physique. This can be deduced because, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:224), images are read from left to right and so the composition of an image can be attributed various meanings some of which relate to the left or right orientation of elements. In more specific terms, the authors argue that elements polarised to the right of the composition are usually considered to be *new* information, whereas elements to the left of the composition are usually considered to be old or *given* information (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:224). With this in mind, the image in question not only compares the actor's old body with his new one, but also suggests that his 'before' body is less desirable than his 'after' body. This is because, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:180), the element polarised to the right of an image forms 'the message' from which the viewer must identify or learn, in this case, to loss weight and build muscle.

A textual analysis of the caption reveals that the actor of the image is in fact not the user of the account posting the image. This post, like post two, falls into the trainer or brand advert category identified in the trend analysis. The use of first person in this post, along with other conversational expressions like "hats off", "crazy", and "nothing fancy", illustrate the colloquial and personal register that has been identified in the majority of posts during the trend analysis. However, the caption itself conveys very little personal information about the account holder, who is a personal trainer, but rather focuses on the "client's personal results". Despite the fact that the account holder terms the results "personal", and that the client's face is concealed in the image, the account holder proceeds to make the results very public by posting it on his page and tagging the client "@jwatto03" in the caption. As an advert, the release of this personal information into the public domain serves as evidence of the training services provided by the personal trainer of this account.

Furthermore, the adjectives and adverbs that litter the caption work to conceptualise the quality of the services promoted in this post. Similar to post two, this post also relies on the conceptualisation of real/fake or good/bad training styles or services as illustrated by the mention of "no crazy diets", "no crazy training", "nothing fancy", and "basics done

extremely well" which suggest that all successful programmes should be simple and uncomplicated. Moreover, the caption makes reference to the trend analysis topic of fitness as an activity that requires motivation and dedication by highlighting "accountability" and "consistency" as valuable traits that lead to success. Lastly, much like the image composition, the caption suggests that the actor, by achieving an acceptable and desirable physique, has earned the respect of the account holder, his personal trainer. This respect is illustrated by the expression "hats off", which is an idiom referring to a gesture of respect, and the account holder's description of the transformation as "great work".

7.5. Analysis of post 73

The next post of interest is similar to post 7 in that the image also contains a famous bodybuilder. In this image, the bodybuilder Evrol Copeland is represented as shirtless holding a towel over his neck. Like the actors in posts 7 and 36, the actor has defined muscles, a low body fat percentage, tattoos and facial hair. However, unlike the male actors in all previous posts, the actor in this image is black and has cornrows. This image is also the first in this chapter to contain text, in the form of two logos, on the image. These logos are considered advertising because one represents a gym in the United Kingdom, namely the The Gun Club, while the other represents an annual fitness convention, namely Body Power.

At an ideational level, the actor is engaged in a non-transactional reaction, because there are no other actors in the image (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:74). As mentioned, the actor represented in the image is a famous bodybuilder. However, despite this fame, the medium shot conveys a *close social distance* between the actor and the viewer and works to make the viewer feel an imaginary closeness to the actor or public figure (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:132). Additionally, the actor is gazing directly at the viewer of the image which Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:132) term *demand* at an interpersonal level. The actor's direct gaze at the viewer demands that the viewer enters into a relation of social affinity with him (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:122). In this way, the actor's direct gaze, coupled with his serious expression and furrowed brow, almost challenges or intimidates the viewer to adopt the actor's state of determination. In terms of text composition, two features work to establish the actor as salient and dominant. The first is the white 'spotlight' that brings the actor off the black background and the second is the placement of the actor in the centre and foreground of the image, which according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:224), also gives salience to the actor.

The salience of the represented actor is continued in the caption as is illustrated by the phrase "@evrolcopeland and the rest of the Gun Club team". This phrase highlights the importance of the famous bodybuilder's 'wow factor' as a commodity for this advertisement, because he has more social standing in the bodybuilding community than an entire group, or "team", of unnamed individuals. Another marketing strategy in the post is the creation of a sense of urgency to promote the event and the gym. This is captured by the use of adverbs like "fast approaching" as well as the use of exclamation marks. In terms of in-group features, the gym itself, namely The Gun Club, has a name that metaphorically compares MUSCLES to WEAPONS. In this sense, the word "gun" is slang that actually refers to large muscular arms. The use of the word "club" creates a sense of in-group belonging or elitism, which like the "iifym" hashtag in post 36, works to include some individuals while excluding those that do not meet the physical requirements.

The gun metaphor continues in the hashtag section of the post which includes the hashtags "guns" and "gun show". The comparison of muscular arms to guns has two important outcomes in terms of connotations or associations. Firstly, guns are traditionally associated with violence as well as events involving violence like war and hunting. Secondly, it is men who are traditionally associated with violence and aggression, as they are assumed to have naturally higher levels of aggression than women, and so are usually assumed to be more

willing and able to use guns (Bryson 1987:357). For this reason, The Gun Club, sounds more like a gentlemen's shooting range or men's gym than it does a gym that caters for male and female clients and so it works to, once again, include only those individuals, and more specifically men, that meet the physical requirements of large and muscular arms.

7.6. Analysis of post 77
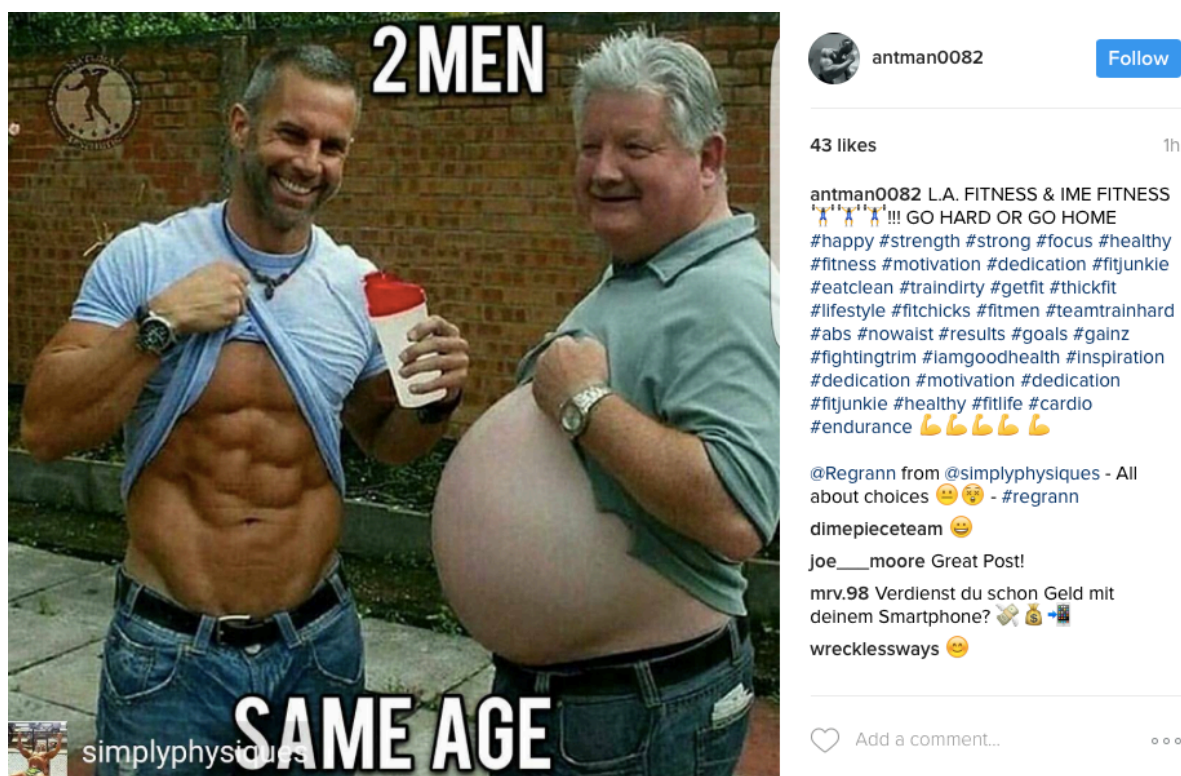
Like the previous post, this post contains text on the image and can be classified as an advertisement for a gym. However, the image does not mention the name of the gym but rather, as the text on the image suggests, invites the viewer to draw a comparison between two men of the same age. There is also text on the bottom left corner, which indicates that the post is a "regram", or a post belonging to the account of another user, namely "@simplyphysiques", that has been reshared by the account "@antman0082". Aside from being the same age, both actors are wearing casual clothing and adopting the same pose to expose more of their torso. This similarity in body position encourages the viewer to scrutinise and compare the actors' bodies. The male actor on the left is lean, muscular, and tanned while the actor on the right appears older than the actor on the left because he is overweight, pale and has more grey hair. Another dissimilarity between the two actors is that the actor on the left has a beard, like the actors in posts 7, 36, and 73, and is holding a protein shaker in his right hand.

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At an ideational level, the eye lines of the two actors creates vectors, but not at the other actor, and so the process can be termed a non-transactional reaction (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:74). Furthermore, at an interpersonal level, the gaze of both actors is directed at the viewer of the image and so this image is another example of demand as explained by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:154). That said, the actor on the right is turned to the side, whereas the actor on the left faces the viewer head on. This difference in body angle conveys a difference in viewer engagement and confidence levels. The actor on the left seems more confident, engaged and approachable due to his forward facing position and bigger smile than the actor on the left who, because his body is turned to the side, seems more reserved and nervous. In terms of text composition, the actor on the left would be considered given information in the fitness community of the account holder, because he is the norm or ideal body type, whereas the actor on the right would be considered new information as community members would be more accustomed to seeing lean and muscular physiques on this page (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:180).

Like many of the other posts in the data set, the caption of this post reveals the conversational and informal register regularly employed to engage with readers as is illustrated by the overuse of emojis, like the flexing arm, and the overuse of exclamation marks. The topic of the caption falls into the category of fitness as challenging or hard work because the caption literally states that readers must "go hard". At the same time, the tone of the caption is forceful and commanding which is exemplified in the use of all capitals as well as the use of imperatives in "GO HARD" and "GO HOME". The author of the first caption, that is "@antman0082", takes a hard-core approach to fitness in that he only provides readers with two options, the hard way, i.e. "go hard", or the highway, i.e. "go home", so to speak. In fact, the author of the last section, "@simplyphysiques", solidifies this approach by stating that fitness is "all about choices" and that the two choices offered by @antman0082 give the two results pictured in the image, that is a fit or an overweight physique. The caption authored by @antman0082 also contains a metaphor identified during the trend analysis which compares FITNESS to TRAVEL or a JOURNEY. This is exemplified by the statement "GO HOME" which suggests that readers are moving from one location to another by reaching or not reaching their fitness goals.

As mentioned in several of the earlier posts, the hashtags often indicate the specific in-group that the post seeks to reach or target. In most cases, that target group can be classified according to sport type for example weightlifting or CrossFit. This post, however, does not

target one sport type, but rather the "teamtrainhard" as suggested by the hashtag. This exclusive group once again eliminates any outsiders that are not classified by the hashtags "fitmen", "fitchicks" or "fitjunkies". As the word "team" suggests, there is a definite separation of this group from others, however, the term "junkie" suggests that some of these in-group behaviours may border on unhealthy or obsessive. Interesting, as previously noted, the actor on the left is seen holding a protein shaker outside of the gym environment, which could point to borderline fanatical behaviours like consuming high levels of protein or supplements to achieve a desirable physique.

7.7. <u>Analysis of post 89</u>

At a visual level, the image of this post contains many of the key features previously identified in other posts. It represents a male actor in active wear at the gym lifting dumbbells. As there are no other actors in the image, the process represented is another example of a non-transactional action. A vertical vector is created by the actor's left arm which conveys a sense of stability and potential power (Bailey 2010). This meaning is fitting when considering that the arm is supporting the actor's entire body in the plank position. As demonstrated in previous posts such as posts 7 and 36, this image also demonstrates the interpersonal realisation of offer as the actor is not gazing directly at the viewer and so becomes an object of the viewer's contemplation much like a specimen on display (Kress &

van Leeuwen 2006:154). Furthermore, the actor is polarised at the top of the image and this can be attributed meaning within the textual metafunction. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:224), elements polarised at the top of a composition are attributed the meaning of *ideal* or 'abstract' whereas elements polarised at the bottom of the composition are attributed the meaning of *real* or 'concrete'. This reasoning argues then that the actor can be seen as a realisation of the 'ideal' and so the activity he is engaged in, that is working out, becomes an ideal or desirable activity as well.

At the level of textual analysis, this post is considered rich in emblematic data that represents the CrossFit community in particular. There is a clear focus on fitness as a process that takes time which is evidenced by the high number of references to time, for example, "45 minutes", "early morning", "day" as well as the date "Tuesday 6thApril". There are several incidences where time is referred to as a noun in, for example "find the time", "a lack of time", "short on time" and "always time" whereas another statement compares a WORKOUT to a RACE as illustrated by "racing against the clock". This focus on the passing or lack of time suggests that fitness is a time consuming endeavour. Nevertheless, the author of the caption argues that it is an "important" endeavour and that, therefore, there is "never a reasonable excuse" to miss a workout. In this respect, the author singles out the reader by using the third person "you" to "prioritise" and "decide" what they "want", and ensure that there is always time for a workout.

Furthermore, the caption of this post falls into the topic category of fitness as hard work or challenging despite the use of the adjective "fun" in the first sentence. Evidence of fitness as hard work is illustrated in the high frequency of verbs relating to effort and movement for example "blast", "pull", "push", "crawls" and "warm up". There are also two clear incidences of the use of the word "work" in "how much work you get done" and "midline work", both of which conceptualise fitness as work rather than play. Like some previous posts, this post also has traces of in-group behaviour which is illustrated by the use of CrossFit 'jargon'. For example, the exercises listed in the workout such as "hang power clean" and "bear crawl", would not be familiar to members of all fitness communities let alone all Instagram users. In terms of hashtags, which cannot be seen in this screenshot but were viewed on the actual desktop version of the post, the hashtags "gym Jones", which draws a cultural reference to Indiana Jones, a fictional explorer, as well as "themindisprimary", which draws attention to mental strength, were considered unique to this post.

7.8. <u>Analysis of post 90</u>

The next post is considered rich in signifiers that are emblematic of the idealised male traits of the "#strength" community on Instagram. Similar to posts 7, 36, and 73, the image of the post represents a shirtless male flexing his muscles in a gym locker room. The actor, comparable to others in posts 7, 36, and 73, also has tattoos, a beard and is seen wearing a dog tag. A non-transactional reaction is represented in this image because there are no other actors in the image, but the actor's gaze creates a vector directed at the viewer of the image. As mentioned previously in post 77, the direct gaze at the viewer of the image can be termed 'demand', because it demands that the viewer enter into a relation of social affinity with the represented actor (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:122). However, unlike the serious expression of the actor in post 77, the represented actor in this image is smiling at the viewer. This friendly expression coupled with a medium shot, which conveys a *close social distance* between the actor and the viewer, could lead the viewer to feel an imaginary closeness to the actor in the image (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:132). Nonetheless, the angle of the shot is a low angle which, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:154), places the actor in a position of power relative to the viewer. The actor's head is also tilted upwards which, coupled with the low angle, gives the impression that the actor is sizing up or challenging the viewer.

At a textual level the caption of the post illustrates not only the focus on fitness as a process that takes time, for example "June of 2015" and "June this year", but also illustrates the importance of numbers in this Instagram community. Examples of this focus include the user's insertion of his body statistics such as "81kg", "5.5% body fat", "90 kg", "9 to 10 kg lean muscle", "180cm" and even his age of "35 years old". This focus on numerical values not only represents the accountability advocated for in this community but also the focus on physical attributes like weight, leanness, and height. In reference to accountability, the use of the first person in this post, for example, "I plan on weighing" serves as an example of accountability but also lends to the construction of the reader, or the third person "you", as an inexperienced fitness novice that lacks agency and accountability. This is illustrated in the statement that the reader, or "you", must "get yourself a PT" or personal trainer to "sort you out". As mentioned earlier, the third person does not include the author, a separation which is further evidenced by the author's use of the first person to construct himself as relatable and approachable despite his expertise and experience. In the statement "yes I have had injuries [or] sickness", the user is effectively answering a faux question that he believes his many followers, or 'fans', will ask. However, despite this celebrity-like behaviour, the user also tries to construct himself as 'only human' or someone who, like his reader, also gets injured or sick.

At the same time, when paired with the third person as exemplified in this caption, the first person can be used to construct the reader as a fitness novice and the author as an expert. For example, the statement "if you eat correctly" coupled with the faux answer "yes I have had injuries" could also be interpreted as the author giving the reader valuable advice or sharing a trade secret. This sharing of 'secrets' is further illustrated by the good/bad and real/fake categories adopted in this post as well as earlier posts. The author constructs some training styles as a "proper session" and maintains that readers should "eat correctly" and "train correctly". Furthermore, the author calls certain fitness industry products out as a 'hoax' by framing "fit teas" and "super shakes" as "bullshit" and advocating for his "all natural" approach which involves "real food [,] real talk [and] real progress" instead. The reason for this strategy becomes clear towards the end of the caption when the author reveals that he is a personal trainer and offers his contact details and services as result. In doing so, he relies on a common metaphor present throughout the data set, that is comparing FITNESS to a JOURNEY, as he states that readers can "jump on board", drawing reference to boarding a plane or boat, and that he is a trainer who "walks the walk", referring, once again, to travel.

7.9. Analysis of post 94
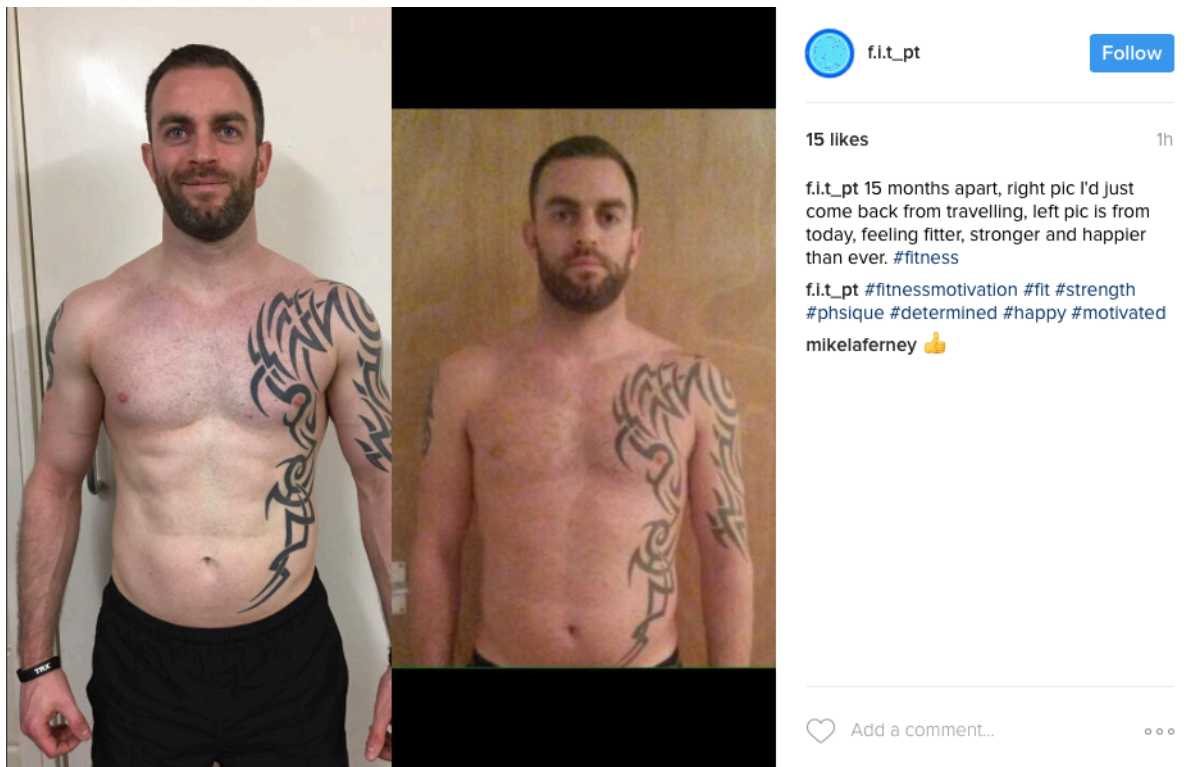
The actor in this post, similar once again to posts 7, 36, 73 and 90, is shirtless, has a beard, and tattoos. This post, like post 51, is a transformation post and so one frame represents the actor's 'before' physique and the other represents the actor's 'after' physique. However, the composition of this image does not follow typical conventions in terms of the left and right orientation of frames. As mentioned, texts like this image are read from left to right and so it is conventional to place the 'before' image on the left side because it sequentially precedes the 'after' image which is then placed on the right (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:180). Then again, it is not unheard of for users to break this convention, as is illustrated in this image that has the 'before' photo placed on the right side as opposed to the left side. However, despite this alteration, certain features in the two frames make it possible to ascertain which image represents which time frame. In the left frame, the 'after' photo is distinguishable because the actor is leaner and his abs are more visible. Furthermore, the actor is smiling more in this frame and so it can be argued that he is happier and more confident than he was in the 'before' frame where he has a blank expression.

Besides these abovementioned features, the actor's gaze at an interpersonal level also suggests an increase in body confidence. In the 'before' frame on the right, the actor is gazing directly at the viewer and so demands that the viewer focus on, and empathise with, his

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deadpan expression rather than his physique (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:154). However, in the 'after' frame on the left, the actor is gazing slightly upwards and away from the viewer. This shift in gaze from demand to offer, coupled with the physical transformation, works to establish the actor's leaner 'after' physique, instead of his less toned physique, as the salient item of information and contemplation. For this reason, together with his smiling and happier facial expression, it could be argued that the actor is more eager and willing to show off his 'after' physique in the left frame.

Several additional textual features identified in the trend analysis are present in the caption of this post. Firstly, this post contains the use of the personal and colloquial register present in many of the other posts. This is illustrated by the use of the first person as well as the abbreviation "pic" instead of picture. As mentioned during the visual analysis, this post does not conform to certain conventions regarding transformation posts. This non-conformity is mirrored by the lack of conventional punctuation as illustrated by the lack of capitalisation at the start of the sentence and the overuse of commas. There is also a spelling error in the hashtag section as "physique" is spelt "phsique". This spelling error effects the function of the hashtag as only users who spell physique in this incorrect form will be able to search for or find the post in question.

Lastly, this post demonstrates two of the features typically present in transformation posts. The first is the presence of temporal words in the caption. The author details the time lapse between the two frames in the image as "15 months apart" and so draws attention to the idea of fitness as a process that takes time. At the same time, the caption also highlights the tendency of transformation posts to focus on self-comparison as indicated by the high frequency of comparative adjectives like "fitter, stronger and happier". These adjectives also point to the preoccupation with self-improvement that is advocated for in this community and the idea that members must always strive to be the best version of themselves "today" while still working towards being better "than ever".

7.10.　　　　Analysis of post 97

The following post is considered to be emblematic of the data not only because it represents some of the key trends, but also because it emphasises these trends by presenting deviations from the norm. The image of this post is unique because it represents both a male and female actor in active wear engaging in yoga poses at a yoga studio. Aside from this, the image is also unique because it consists of a collage of images rather than a single image. However, from a text composition standpoint, these separate images still form a cohesive text and so will be analysed as such. In terms of action processes at an ideational level, the changing position of the leg of the female actor in each frame creates changing vectors that suggest movement rather than static stability (Bailey 2010). At the same time, the processes represented in the various frames are almost always non-transactional reactions because the male actor's gaze creates a vector towards the female actor but is not returned by the female actor (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:74). For this reason, the female is then the phenomenon or passive participant of the male actor's gaze in all frames excepting the largest frame.

At the level of interpersonal interaction, both actors gaze away from the viewer. This, once again, is an example of offer. The understanding of the actor as an object or specimen on display is supported by the general understanding that yoga poses are meant to be marvelled

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at for their difficulty and aesthetic value. There are also instances of face-ism in some of the frames, which provides further support for the notion of the actors' bodies as objects of information. Finally, it is worth noting that the male actor is always at the bottom of the yoga pose and so is always supporting or lifting the female actor. This could be because men are believed to possess more strength than women which is also supported by the meaning attributed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:224) to the top and bottom elements of a composition. In other words, the male actor is a realisation of the concrete or 'real' whereas the female actor is a realisation of the abstract or 'ideal'.

The abovementioned idea of the masculine figure as strong and powerful is further reinforced by the caption of the post. As mentioned earlier, this post is of interest because it represents an alternative to the norm. This is captured in the words "here's another way to achieve muscle strength and growth" where "another way" highlights this sport as an unconventional choice for some. At the same time, the statement also highlights a norm which is that men in the fitness community, particularly the weightlifting community, are focused on achieving the ultimate goal of "muscle strength and growth". By using the phrase "another way", the user of the post acknowledges that men are not typically interested in yoga, an aesthetic sport usually engaged in by females. However, for this reason, the author of the caption focuses on promoting "The Man Plan" which is a yoga plan tailored to men who wish to "lose up to 25 lbs" while still "building strength to lift". This constructs yoga not only as "aesthetically pleasing to watch" but also as "challenging" enough to be engaged in by "ALPHA MALES".

In other words, yoga is constructed as a sport that aids men in achieving the main goal of building strength and lifting weights, rather than a sport that fulfils other, possibly less masculine, needs. The "alpha male" identity is further supported by the metaphor "fuel your muscles" which compares the BODY to a MACHINE. This supports the accompanying image which represents the male actor as powerful and as stable enough to lift the female actor much like a construction vehicle lifts heavy loads. It is argued then that this post represents the intersection of two different fitness communities or sport types, that is weightlifting and yoga. This intersection is evidenced by the presence of the two communities' hashtags, that is "#yogi" and "#musclegainz", in the hashtag section. The last two features worth mentioning are the focus on fitness as a journey evidenced by temporal references like "12 weeks" and "time under tension" as well as the personal and informal register which is, once again, directed at the reader as evidenced by the third person in, for example, "your nutrition".

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7.11.   Analysis of post 9

In the female post category, this post is considered rich in visual and textual data that represents female weightlifters or bodybuilders. There are two images juxtaposed in this post, however, this is not a transformation post. Instead, the images of this post are mirror selfies that represent a very lean, tanned and muscular female actor who, like the actors in posts 7 and 36, is wearing headphones as well as, like the male actor in post 7, wearing a headscarf. Another shared characteristic with earlier posts is the presence of a tattoo on the actor's left forearm which is visible in the left frame. Furthermore, this actor is posing and lifting her shirt to reveal her flexing abs. It is also clear from these frames that the actor, like many of the earlier male actors, is in the gym and taking a photo in down lighting to enhance the visibility of her muscles.

At an ideational level, this image is an example of a transactional reaction because the actor's eye line creates a vector that points at her cell phone screen but not at another actor (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:74). This draws attention to the cell phone as a phenomenon of the actor's gaze. What is more, as identified in other posts like 36 and 89, the actor's gaze is not directed at the viewer and so her body is offered to the viewer as an object for scrutiny (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:154). That said, the actor's face is only visible in the right frame. In other words, the left frame is an example of face-ism, because the actor's face has been cropped

out of the frame, which results in the objectification of her body (Cheek 2016:1). Lastly, in terms of textual composition, the two images are very similar and so cannot be attributed meaning at this level according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:224). However, this image does demonstrate new features concerning the principle of ownership on Instagram. The account user's watermark can be seen in the bottom left corner of the image, which, like the inclusion of user tags and the requirements of 'regramming', demonstrates the importance of protecting intellectual property on Instagram.

A textual analysis of the caption reveals some of the common features present in earlier posts. One such feature is the informal and conversational register that is illustrated by the use of slang or unconventional lexical items such as "chick", "shreds", "s***" for the curse word 'shit', and the overuse of emojis and ellipsis. In terms of topic, this caption falls into the category of fitness as hard work or challenging. This hard-core and gritty approach is captured in the metaphor, "when s*** gets serious, we don't play". The use of the words "don't play" conceptualise FITNESS as WORK rather than as a game. This communicates that the author believes fitness is a serious undertaking rather than an activity for fun and enjoyment.

Furthermore, like posts 77 and 89, this post demonstrates unique in-group features specifically with regards to the bodybuilding community. The caption starts with the hashtag "TBT" which is a common and trending hashtag on Instagram that stands for 'throwback Thursday'. This hashtag gives users the opportunity, usually on Thursdays, to post nostalgic pictures of their past. It becomes clearer later in the caption that this post is indeed a throwback because the images are revealed to have been taken for the "Worlds 2016" despite the fact that the post was shared on the 6th of April 2017. The words "figure chick", which is a blend of fitness and bodybuilding where competitors are judged on symmetry, presentation, and other aesthetic qualities such as skin tone, stipulates the bodybuilding category that the user competes in at the "Worlds", a fitness competition (Owen 2015). The word "shreds", an abbreviation for 'shredded' which refers to a low body fat percentage, is another example of in-group markers as it illustrates the kind of jargon typical of the weightlifting community.

Other features that are representative of in-group behaviour include use of the pronoun "we". Like the word "team" in posts 73 and 77, the pronoun "we" refers to the in-group as a unified whole and includes individuals who take weightlifting seriously. In fact, the hashtags "WBFFfigurepro" and "worldno4" reveal the extent to which this user considers this sport a

serious affair. Only those users familiar with weightlifting or bodybuilding will know that "WBFF" stands for 'World Beauty, Fashion and Fitness' and that the "Worlds" is a fitness show which focuses on physical attractiveness. The hashtags in the caption, namely "#alphawomen" and "#femalemodeloftheyear2016", further specify the ideal kind of individual that is included in the in-group. Interestingly, these hashtags are very similar to the hashtags "alpha" and "model" that occur in post 36. As mentioned in the analysis of post 36, the use of the word "alpha" in both of these posts echoes connotations of a dominant animal in a group for example a wolf that leads a pack. In other words, the hashtag "alphawomen", along with the "model" hashtag, works to construct in-group members almost as a 'breed' of human that need to meet certain requirements regarding fitness and physical attractiveness to be accepted in the group.

7.12.   Analysis of post 10

The second post of interest in the female category represents more than one actor in the image and, like post 97, is a collage of multiple images. The top frame represents two female actors in active wear, one showing a thumbs up and the other flexing her arm. The bottom left frame shows the same blonde actor on a weightlifting machine while the frame in the bottom right of the post shows a mixed group of individuals attending a fitness class. In terms of action processes at an ideational level, all the processes represented are examples of non-

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transactional reactions because the gaze or eye lines of the actors are not directed at other actors in the image, but rather into the distance, as shown in the left bottom frame, or at the viewer, as shown in the top frame (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:74). Therefore, at the relational level, the direct gaze at the viewer in the top frame is an example of demand where the actor's gaze into the distance in the bottom left frame is an example of offer (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:154). Furthermore, the arm of the brunette actor and the thumb of the blonde actor in the top frame create vertical vectors that draw the viewer's attention upwards. In terms of text composition, the top image is salient for two reasons. The first is because it is larger than the other two images and the second is because the arms of the actor in the bottom left frame create a vector that points upwards and draws the viewer's attention to the top frame.

However, it is the caption of the image that has warranted its inclusion for in-depth analysis in this chapter. This post demonstrates the conversational and relaxed register typical of the data set by the overuse of emojis, like the clapping hands, and the overuse of punctuation such as exclamation marks and ellipsis. Other markers of a colloquial register include the use of first person "I" as well as the use of slang lexical items such as the workout partner's nickname, "worm", and the phrase "yo bestie" which stands for "your best friend". In terms of subject matter, the caption can be categorised as an example of the topic of fitness for fun and enjoyment. This is exemplified not only by the colloquial register and overuse of emojis, but also by the use of the adjectives "fun" and "fresh and sparkly" to refer to exercise and the new equipment respectively. To this effect, the author seeks to further engage with the reader by asking the rhetorical question "who [k]new lat pull downs could be this fun" and encouraging readers to make exercise a social activity by "training with [their] bestie" rather than alone.

Then again, this post demonstrates another unique feature of the female fitness community on Instagram. Although fitness is constructed as fun and enjoyable in this caption, it is also constructed as especially difficult for novice enthusiasts like this user. An illustration of this is eluded to in the use of verbs that communicate effort for example, the user asks readers to "appreciate how much [she] is concentrating in the bottom right pic". She then goes on to reveal that she "always needs someone to explain things twice to [her]" even though she "[tries] so hard to concentrate". These statements not only construct this user as an inexperienced fitness novice, but also as someone who is unfocused and a bit flighty. The user as a fitness novice is further supported by the verbs "having a go" which conveys both

the idea of a first attempt as well as the idea that fitness should be fun and playful rather than serious work. In other words, this post works to construct the female user as someone who struggles to perform in and take fitness seriously. Lastly, the hashtags of a post can help clarify information that might not have been clear in the image or caption alone. For example, the type of sport engaged in is revealed by the hashtag "crossfit", which is a non-contact individual sport. Then another hashtag, namely "#strongnotskinny", functions much like the hashtags "model" and "fatloss" in post 36, in that it points to a desirable or ideal body type in this community. This idea of a "strong" body type, as opposed to a "skinny" one, is supported by a visual representation of strength in the image, namely the brunette actor's flexing of her arm.

7.13.   Analysis of post 59

Similar to post 36, the image of the above post demonstrates the use of a black and white filter offered by Instagram's photo editing options. The image represents a female actor, dressed in active wear, engaged in aerial arts or aerial yoga, which is an example of an individual and aesthetic sport. Once again, the action process represented is an example of a non-transactional action, because there is only one actor in the image. That said, horizontal and vertical vectors are created by the actor's arms and legs as well as the silk ribbons. These intersecting vectors are erratic and convey a sense of excitement and energy, but also

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nervousness and confusion (Bailey 2010). At an interpersonal level, the post represents several of the previously identified features. Like many of the other posts, it is an example of offer, because the actor's gaze is not directed at the viewer and so leaves the actor's body open to the viewer's scrutiny. This detachment from the viewer is further compounded by the long shot at which the image is taken, which, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:125), works to communicate a far social distance between the actor and the viewer. This shot, coupled with the actor's absence of gaze, is also a form of face-ism, because the actor's face remains concealed from the viewer. As a result, the actor's posing body is the focus of the viewer's attention, which is given further context by the aesthetic nature of the represented sport that focuses on the appearance and movement of the body for an enhanced visual display.

Aerial arts as an aesthetic sport continues the be supported in the caption by the user's comment that she is "loving the lines on this move", which suggests that the focus of the sport is the precision and visual appeal of movement or body posture. A further analysis of the caption highlights some of the features trending throughout the data set. The use of present participles such as "loving", "getting", and "pointing" suggest an on-going process and so serves as evidence for the popular notion in this community that fitness is a process that takes time. As illustrated in post 94, the caption of this post demonstrates this community's focus on self-comparison for the sake of self-improvement as manifested by the use of comparative adjectives such as "better". Moreover, this post shares two similarities with the previous post, post ten. The first similarity is the construction of the user as a fitness novice which is manifested in the phrase "even getting better". As previously mentioned, "getting better" signifies an on-going process of self-improvement. However, use of the adverb "even" suggests that this improvement is surprising or extreme for this user. Interestingly, the aforementioned improvement is in an area, namely the "pointing [of] toes", that even the user seems to suggest is trivial or ludicrous by way of inclusion of a laughing emoticon directly after the statement. In other words, much like the user in post ten, this user constructs herself as an unskilled fitness novice who struggles to make notable improvements in the sport.

The final items of interest are the hashtags included in the caption of this post. In this respect, this post shares another similarity to post ten in that it also includes the hashtag "strongnotskinny". Once again, this hashtag singles out a specific body type or ability that is considered more ideal than others. Other noteworthy hashtags include "girlsthat(who)lift",

"girlswithmuscle", "fitgirl" and "fitchick" all of which are interesting for two reasons. Firstly, by including "fit", "lift" and "muscle", these hashtags single out a specific community of women, namely those interested in fitness and specifically weightlifting, and so are an example of in-group markers. Secondly, the high frequency of the lexical choices "girl" and "chick" provide an interesting point for discussion. The noun "girl" refers to a young woman and has the connotation of innocence, immaturity and physical weakness, whereas "chick" also refers to a young woman. Despite these connotations, the hashtags relating to women in this fitness community almost always include "girl", "chick" or "girls" as opposed to "women", "females" or even "lady" to signify gender, even though all female account holders in the data set were young adults or older.

7.14.   <u>Analysis of post 65</u>

In the image of this post, the female actor is represented in her underwear that reveals her arms, legs and midriff. As this post is a transformation post, it is common for actors to adopt the same pose in both frames, as the actor does in this image, because it encourages the viewer to scrutinise, and thereby notice, even the smallest physical changes. To this end, the actor of this post is even wearing the same underwear in both frames. Moreover, like post 13, this post also demonstrates image editing in the form of decorative borders. As mentioned previously, a transformation post usually includes two images, one that represents the actor's

'before' physique and the other that represents the actor's 'after' physique. In both frames, the actor is engaged in a non-transactional action, because she is the only actor in each frame. At this ideational level, it can also be noted that the actor's arms create horizontal vectors. As seen in several other posts, like posts 9 and 59, the actor is 'offering' herself to the viewer as an object of contemplation by not gazing directly at the viewer. That said, the actor's gaze is not identical in both images. In the 'before' image on the left, the actor has her eyes cast downwards. In contrast, the 'after' image on the right represents the actor gazing straight ahead of her. This shift in gaze, much like the shift in expression of the male actor in post 94, could be illustrative of an increase in confidence because the gaze in the right frame is more assured and assertive.

This increase in confidence is also supported by the meaning attributed to the change in the size of the frame at an interpersonal level. The 'before' frame shows less of the actor's body because it is taken at a medium shot. By contrast, the 'after' frame on the left shows more of the actor's body in a long shot, and she is wearing a fluorescent pink sports bra, which suggests that she is more willing to show off and attract attention to her body. Lastly, as mentioned during the discussion of previous transformation posts, this image follows the typical format in terms of text composition. That is, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:224), elements polarised to the left of the image are considered 'old' or given information whereas elements polarised to the right of the image are considered new information that the viewer should pay special attention to. In this way, the time difference between the two frames is communicated even without labels detailing the change in time period.

Furthermore, the caption of this post demonstrates the informal and conversational register typical of the posts in this community. It is illustrated by the use of first person, slang words like "shocker" and, once again, the overuse of emojis and exclamation marks. Furthermore, like post ten, this post aims to engage with the reader on a personal level, not only by revealing personal information of the user, but also by directly addressing the reader audience as illustrated by the use of "everyone" and the third person "you". In addressing the reader directly, the user is using Instagram as a platform for accountability, which is quite common for some weight loss focused accounts. Additionally, the post demonstrates the common focus of fitness as a process that takes time which is exemplified by temporal words such as "30 day results", "current", "this morning", "waiting", "long time" and "month". Additionally, this post, akin to post 90, exemplifies the typical focus on numbers, and

specifically body statistics, present in this community. The user shares her "awesome numbers" with the reader which include a "6 kg" or "50 cm" weight loss as well as the mention of the number "30" five times throughout the caption.

An additional topic of interest is the focus on self-comparison for the sake of self-improvement, which is common in posts regarding physical transformations. The focus on self-comparison is captured in the use of comparative adjectives like "prouder" whereas more than ten instances of first person singular pronouns, that is "I" and "my", capture the persistent focus on the user's "self" in self-improvement. However, this self-improvement is largely appearance focused as opposed to performance based. In the caption, the user is concerned that the viewers of the image "may be able to see", and therefore judge, her unkempt appearance as she is "covered in bruises" and has "hair […] in desperate need of treatment". She then proceeds to tell readers that she was able to "look past all that" and take her transformation picture. In other words, the user's concern regarding her physical appearance, coupled with her use of two verbs pertaining to sight namely "see" and "look", suggests that the focus of this post is the physical appearance rather than the physical performance of health and fitness. There is also evidence to suggest that this user considers herself unknowledgeable with regards to health and fitness. This evidence takes the form of the statement "clearance from my Doctor" wherein the user has chosen to capitalise "doctor" which only provides further support for the notion of the doctor as an important authority figure who presides over the health of the user.

7.15. Analysis of post 78
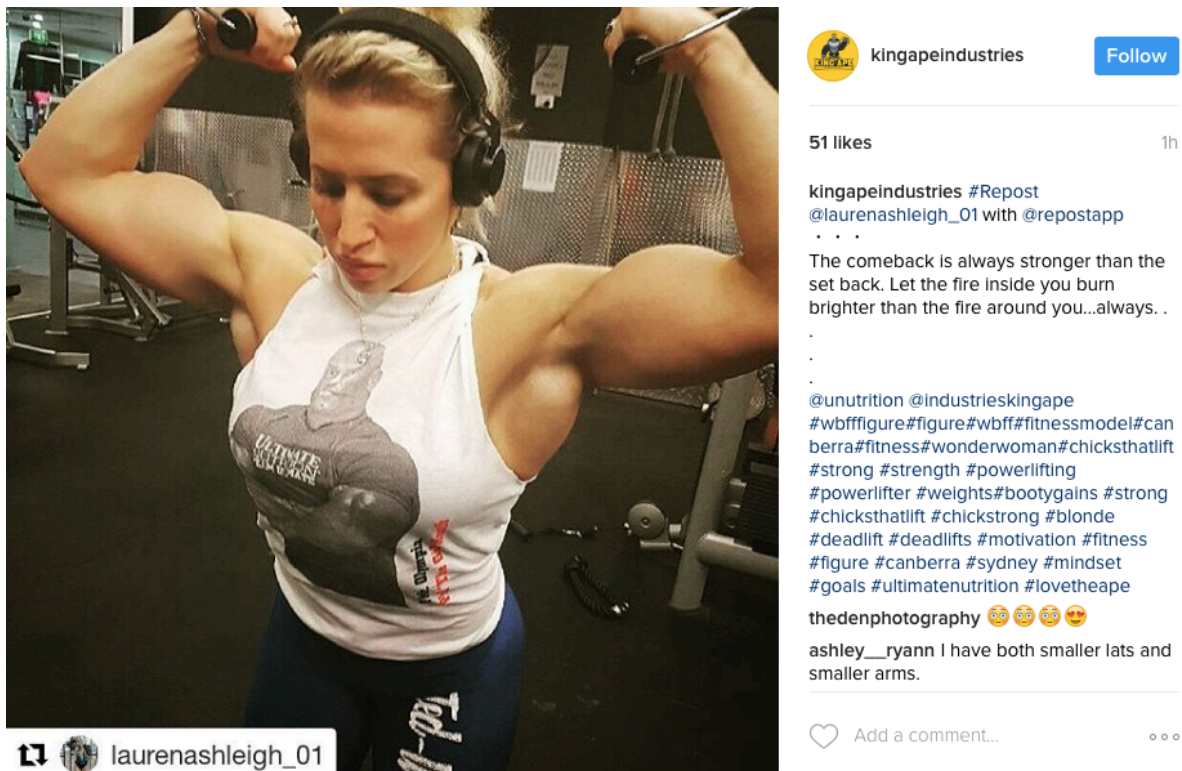
The image of the above post represents a female actor, in active wear, in the gym and wearing headphones like the actors in posts 7, 9 and 36. This actor, like the actor in post 9, is engaged in weightlifting, an individual and non-contact sport, and is represented to be flexing her arms in this image. Furthermore, at an ideational level, the actor is engaged in a non-transactional action, because she is the only actor in the image (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:74). Similar to the actors in post ten, this actor's arms create vectors which draws the viewer's gaze upwards. Once again, the image represents an actor gazing away from the viewer and so is a realisation of offer (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:154). With respect to gaze, the represented actor in this image shares a similarity with the actor in post 65, as both actors are gazing down towards the floor. In terms of camera distance, this image is a medium shot, which according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:154), works to convey a close social distance between the actor and the viewer. Then again, like the actor in post 36, the actor's serious expression, coupled with her absence of gaze at the viewer and wearing of headphones, suggests that she is unapproachable and reserved. Lastly, in terms of textual composition, this post is not particularly valuable in this area, although it does demonstrate the 'regramm' or repost tag in the bottom left hand corner of the image and demonstrate the actor as salient because she is in the foreground and in focus.

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In other words, comparable to all reposts in this data set, this repost has two authors in the caption. The start of the caption illustrates, akin to post 77, conventional reposting practices which typically include the structure of "#Repost" followed by the reposted account user's name, for example "@lauren_ashleigh_01", and the mention of the application used, for example "with @repostapp". All these features are hypertext links which means that other users can visit the pages containing these tags by simply clicking on the link. Furthermore, the metaphor of FITNESS as a JOURNEY or form of travel is present in this post. This is captured in the use of the words "comeback" and "setback" both of which suggest motion or a change in location. Another metaphor in this post is the comparison of FIRE to both DETERMINATION and OBSTACLES. Fire as determination is illustrated in the user's statement to "let the fire inside you" burn brighter than the obstacles or "fire around you". In this way, this post is also an example of the topic of fitness as hard work or challenging, because challenges in the fitness arena are compared to a dangerous and destructive fire.

Another previously identified topic present in this post is the focus on determination and persistence despite the challenges that might be posed by the individual's fitness journey. The double occurrence of "always" in this post illustrates this kind of persistence and unfailing determination that is advocated for by the reposted user. As mentioned in other posts such as 59 and 94, this post exemplifies the topic of self-improvement which is manifested by the use of the comparative adjectives "stronger" and "brighter". Lastly, the hashtags in this post are of interest, because like posts 9 and 59, they too represent in-group markers. For example, this post contains the "WBFF" hashtag like post 9, which would only be understood as 'World Beauty, Fashion and Fitness' by those fitness community members who are in the know. Furthermore, the post demonstrates a focus on physical appearance much like post 9 in the use of appearance related hashtags such as "fitnessmodel", "blonde" and "figure". What is more, the use of hashtags "chicksthatlift" and "chickstrong" provides another example of in-group identifiers, particularly weightlifting females, but also represents the previously mentioned use of "chick" as opposed to the use of another gender noun like "woman". That said, the post does include the hashtag "wonderwoman", as opposed to "wonderchick" or "wondergirl", but this is in reference to the fictional superhero owned by DC comics, namely Wonder Woman.

7.16.   Analysis of post 85

The following post is similar to the final post in the male category, that is post 97, because both posts contain a male and female actor. This post, however, was included in the female category for the same reason that post 97 was included in the male category, because the user of the post is female . Furthermore, the post in question shares similarities with the previous post, post 78, in that both are reposts. The image represents a male and female actor, both in active wear, performing a trapeze partner workout in a gymnasium. This kind of sport is considered an aesthetic sport, because it focuses on the quality of movement rather than endurance or power. There are two represented actors, therefore, the represented process can be termed a transactional action because vectors created by the actors' arms connect them (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:74).

Moreover, vertical vectors are created by the legs of the male actor whereas horizontal vectors are created by the legs of the female actor. As mentioned earlier, vertical vectors suggest stability and potential energy or power whereas horizontal vectors suggest a calm, quiet and relaxed comfort (Bailey 2010). This could be said to reflect the popular notions discussed in chapter to that men are perceived as physically dominant, whereas women are perceived as physically weaker and more passive than men (Bryson 1987:357). It is also clear in this image that the female actor is literally at the mercy of the male actor's strength

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because he is responsible for holding on to the bar as well as her arms. Lastly, although this image does not offer much in terms of text composition other than the inclusion of the repost tag in the bottom left corner, it is another example of offer at an interpersonal level. That is, the actors' absence of gaze at the viewer offers their bodies to the viewer as items of contemplation (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:119).

A textual analysis of the caption reveals several of the key trending features present in the data set. First, it is important to mention, that because this post is another example of a repost or "regramm", it contains two authors as well as the conventional reposting structure discussed in the previous post. The first topic prevalent throughout the caption is that of fitness as a process that takes time. This focus is evident in the high frequency of verbs in continuous tense such as "having" and "hanging" as well as two instances of "trying". A second topic is the focus on fitness as an activity for fun and enjoyment much like the caption of post ten. Evidence of this focus is found in the statements from both authors that they are "always having fun" or "just hanging around" with the latter also serving as an example of word play. Then again, the light-hearted statement "just hanging around" also communicates the male author's, namely "@lukerad_ninja", attitude that this kind of aesthetic sport is easy and requires little to no effort on his part. This nonchalant attitude is further suggested by his statement that he is "trying to look pretty and elegant" and his inclusion of an emoticon with its tongue out, both of which work to communicate that he believes this sport is easy, casual and even somewhat trivial.

By contrast, the female user's, namely "@tiaranalindsay", section of the caption reflects the focus on self-improvement that was identified in post 10 and 59. This focus on self-improvement is illustrated by the user's statement that she "need[s] to work on [her] split" and stay focused on moving on to "new things" or new challenges. Her inclusion of the hashtag "notflexibleenough" is also reflective of self-criticism. This self-criticism is contrasted against the male user's light-hearted approach exemplified by the statement that he is "always having fun" and the lack of critique of his own performance in any way. In fact, the male user's hashtags, namely "monkey", "hangingout" and "ninjawarrior", are also a reflective of this attitude as they are considerably more playful and light-hearted than the female user's hashtag "notflexibleenough".

7.17. Analysis of post 93

The following post is considered rich in emblematic data, not only because it represents several of the key visual and textual features present in the data set, but also because it represents a distinctive category, namely parent and infant, that was identified during the trend analysis. The image of the post represents a female actor, more specifically a mother, holding her infant daughter. The adult female actor is wearing active wear and both actors are located outdoors. This post is also the first example of a selfie in this chapter. At an ideational level, the actors are engaged in a non-transactional reaction, because their eye lines create vectors but not at each other (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:74). Furthermore, akin to the previous post, this post is also an example of the interpersonal realisation of offer, because the infant actor is gazing down away from the viewer, but, at the same time, also realises demand (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:154). As mentioned in the analysis of post ten, the adult actor's direct gaze at the viewer demands that they enter into a relation of social affinity with her (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:154). However, in comparison to the confident and assertive expressions of the actors in post 10 and 73, the gaze of the represented adult actor in this image seems to be more passive and cautious. This meaning is owed to the sideways glance

and the downward tilt of the actor's head that can be contrasted to the head position of the actor in post 90, who, as a result of his raised chin, appears to be sizing up the viewer.

In terms of text composition, the image in question functions as an unpaid advert or a form of brand promotion. This is due to the logo of a gym on the adult actor's shirt. Although the logo is slightly obscured by the infant actor, there are textual composition elements that allow it to successfully draw the viewer's attention. The first is the black colour of the shirt which allows the bright colours of the logo to stand out and make it more salient (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:224). The second are the two vectors created by the infant actor's gaze and hand which further draw the viewer's attention to the logo on the shirt. This promotion is coupled with features in the caption that serve as further promotional strategies for the gym, named F45 Training Sans Souci. The first feature is the location tag under the user's handle which functions as a hypertext link to the gym's page, whereas the second feature is a tag in the caption mentioning the gym's name "@f45_training_sans_souci" which is also a hyperlink that takes the user to the gym's Instagram page.

That said, this post is not focused solely on the promotion of a gym as the caption deals with the user's personal fitness journey as well. The metaphor of FITNESS as a JOURNEY, akin to post 78, is captured in the use of the adverb "back" in the user's statements that she is "excited to be back at [her] pre-pregnancy weight" and has had her "butt kicked back into shape". Here, "back" refers to the return to a certain condition or state and this return is reminiscent of movement or travel from one state to another. Another key feature illustrated in this caption, which pairs with the metaphor of fitness as a journey, is the focus on the passing of time and fitness as a process. Once again, this is exemplified in the frequent use of temporal words and notions for example "first of many 8 week challenges this year" and "in a few weeks time".

Furthermore, this caption demonstrates the focus on self-comparison for the sake of self-improvement which is typical of posts in the fitness community. The user's focus on self-betterment is illustrated by her satisfaction with her results as she reveals that she is "happy with" her "improved cardio fitness" even though she has always been "better at strength and resistance training". By the same token, the user of this caption, akin to the users in posts 65 and 90, relies on numbers to provide further evidence of her goals and achievements. For example, she reveals that she has lost "many centimetres and kilos" as well as lost "4% body fat" and gained "2% muscle mass". She further asserts that her training sessions have been

sufficient because she has trained in a heart rate range of "190bpm" and burnt between "400/600 calories" a session.

The user's reliance on body statistics as a measure of her success is further compounded by her reliance on experts and the consequent construction of herself as a fitness novice. For example, like the user concerned with her doctor's orders in post 65, the user of this post has been "told by experts" that her transformation results are "really amazing". In other words, the user is unable to assess or attribute value to her results without the assurance of another person or an 'expert'. Furthermore, the user is placed in the position of fitness novice, as opposed to expert, because she states that, like a student, she must attend her "classes" offered by the "best trainers" in order to achieve these results. Lastly, the caption aims to strike a personal chord with the reader by two means. The first is the informal and conversational register, as illustrated by the interjection "yay", the words "butt", "stoked" and "per sesh", as well as the overuse of emojis and ellipsis. The second is the sharing of the challenges posed by motherhood in which the user affectionately calls her daughter her "little cherub" and says that her daughter "had no choice" but to attend all the fitness classes with her.

7.18. <u>Analysis of post 95</u>

Akin to post 65 and post 94, the above post is a transformation post representing a user's physical transformation before and after lifestyle changes. The actor in the image is wearing casual clothing and is taking a mirror selfie in the left frame. The image shares a similarity with post 94, in that it does not follow the conventional layout of a transformation post. As mentioned, texts are read from left to right and top to bottom, so it is conventional, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:224), for newer information to be polarised to the right of the image. However, the text at the bottom of the left frame, which dates the image to this year and provides the total number of kilograms lost by the actor, reveals that the left image is in fact the 'after' photo of this transformation. Therefore, the text on the image, which also includes the date of the 'after' photo on the right, helps distinguish the meaning of each frame despite this unconventional layout.

Furthermore, like the actors in posts 65 and 94, the actor's gaze and body posture suggests that her confidence has increased as a result of her physical transformation. As identified in previous posts, the actor's absence of gaze at the viewer in the 'before' frame is termed offer by Kress and van Leeuwen (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:154). At the same time her downward gaze suggests that she is preoccupied and would rather maintain a social distance between herself and the viewer. On the other hand, although the 'after' frame also demonstrates offer because the actor is gazing at her reflection in the mirror rather than at the viewer, she is suggested to have more confidence in this frame. This is due to her upward gaze, as opposed to a downward gaze, as well as her body posture which is represented as posing for the photo. Additionally, the 'after' photo is taken by the actor herself, rather than another person, and is also taken at a distance, or medium long shot, that reveals more of her body. In other words, the actor seems more willing to pose for a photo in the 'after' frame and so is argued to be more confidence and assertive than is suggested by her posture in the 'before' frame.

At a textual level, the caption in question focuses largely on fitness as a journey, which, as mentioned, is typical of transformation posts. The common metaphor comparing FITNESS to a JOURNEY is illustrated in this post by the user's statements "how far I've come" and "from here on out", both of which imply movement and distance travelled. Furthermore, this focus on fitness as a journey is compounded by the user's additional focus on fitness as a process that takes time. As in previous posts, the focus on fitness as a process is showcased by the high frequency of present participles in, for example, "giving me", "feeling and looking", "caring", "super draining" and "focusing on". These present participles give the

impression that these actions, and consequently the fitness journey, are on-going. Furthermore, like the user in post 89, this user also reflects on the importance of time in terms of fitness as a responsibility which is illustrated by her statements "perfect timing" and "no spare time".

This caption also shares a similarity with the caption of post 65 in that both demonstrate a concern for appearance. Whereas the user of post 65 seems apologetic for her unkempt appearance, the user of this post shares that she is "feeling [and] looking" "pretty crappy" and that she has resorted to "FT mum style", because she has to care for her "colicy/refluxy newborn" and, as a result, can barely find the time to train or "get out of the house". In this way then, this post is similar to the previous post in that the user is divulging her personal challenges regarding motherhood and reaching out to the reader on a more personal level. The need for support amongst mothers in this fitness community is further demonstrated by the hashtags in this post. As mentioned in the genre analysis of Instagram, hashtags serve to connect like-minded users. In other words, the hashtags of this post, namely "#newmum", "#newborn", and "#colic", can be seen as this user's way of looking for support by reaching out to other mothers and parents in a similar situation.

7.19. Analysis of post 96

Like many of the actors in this data set, the actor of this image is wearing active wear and is located in the gym. She is taking a mirror selfie, as evidenced by her cell phone in her hand, and is posing her body as well as flexing her leg muscles. Also worth mentioning is the appearance of the actor, which can be described as 'pretty' because the actor is wearing make up and has long hair. At an ideational level, that is the representation of actors and processes, the actor is engaged in a transactional reaction, because her eye line is pointed at her cell phone (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:67). This means that the actor is a reactor and the cell phone is the phenomenon of the reactor's gaze. Furthermore, the actor's gaze at her cell phone results in her absence of gaze at the viewer. In this way then, the actor becomes the object of the viewer's gaze much like her cell phone is the object of her own gaze (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:119). The camera shot of the image is a long shot which works, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:154), to create social distance between the actor and the viewer despite the fact that the actor is smiling, albeit at her cell phone and not at the viewer.

With regards to textual composition, the image of this post does not offer much in terms of textual features other than the salience of the actor owing to her foregrounded position and the presence of text on the actor's shirt. However, the text on the shirt is identical to the text of the caption and so will be analysed in this category to avoid repetition. The caption of this post is in fact a quote, as can be deduced from the text on the actor's shirt, but is not included in inverted commas in the caption. The caption is short, consisting of only 9 words but noticeably represents the trending topic of fitness as hard work or a challenge. This is illustrated by the use of the verb "destroy" to refer to challenges, like difficult fitness regimes. In this way then, the use of the verb "destroy" takes a hard-core approach to fitness, and like the use of "fire" in post 78, implies that fitness is destructive and even dangerous. However, a theme often coupled with this hard-core approach is that of motivation and dedication despite the challenges presented by fitness. This persistence is illustrated by the verb "overcame" which suggests that a triumph or victory is achieved by the actor of this sentence.

Furthermore, the caption is interesting because it demonstrates the use of third person to refer to the user of the post. More specifically, the "she" and "her" in this caption refer to the user rather than another individual. This reference is confirmed by the hashtag "Iamher" in which the user draws this connection for the reader. This form of self-reference is called Illeism which, according to Simon (2016), is a stylistic device that is used to protect a public image and may even reflect narcissism. In fact, selfies, which includes mirror selfies like this image,

have also been argued to correlate with the trait of narcissism, especially in men, but this could be a point of departure for future research (Seidman 2010).

As mentioned earlier, hashtags are of importance in this study because they illustrated in-group traits and behaviours. The hashtags of the above post are useful in this regard because they demonstrate the user's belonging to two different groups. The first group is the weightlifting community, as the post exemplifies several hashtags, like "shelifts", "fitchick", "legday" and "latenightgains", that were identified in the trend analysis to be typical of this community. The inclusion of "#alpha" to demonstrate belonging to the weightlifting community mirrors earlier posts, like post 9 and 36, in that it draws reference to a certain dominant type or 'breed' of individual. That said, the user has also included another group identifier, namely hashtags referring to the military, to further distinguish herself, as a soldier, in this community. This belonging is illustrated by hashtags such as "fitsoldier", "armyfreshfitness" and "militarymuscle".

7.20.   <u>Analysis of post 100</u>
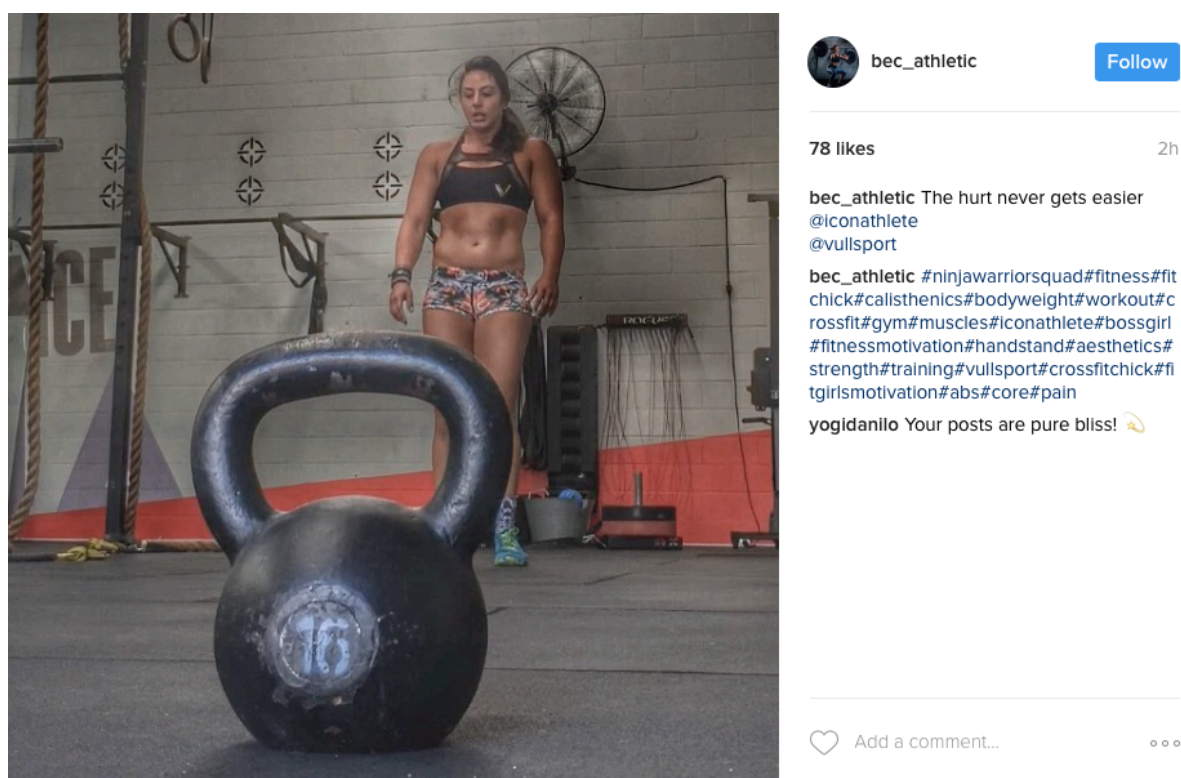
In terms of represented actors and processes, the actor in the final image for analysis is wearing active wear that reveals her midsection, arms and legs, and is located in the gym as evidenced by the gymnasium equipment on the wall. At the level of the ideational metafunction, the represented actor is engaged in a non-transactional action, because her gaze

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is not directed at another object or participant in the image (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:74). With respect to gaze, this actor's gaze is another example of offer, because she is gazing away from the viewer audience and so offering herself to the viewer as an object on display (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:154). However, like the actors in posts 78 and 95, the actor is not only gazing away from the viewer but also gazing downwards and so appears even more reserved and passive than if she were gazing into the distance.

At the same time, the image is taken from a low angle. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:154), a low angle can be attributed the meaning of represented actor power and so works to establish the actor's authority and power in relation to the viewer. However, as exemplified by her absence of eye contact, revealing active wear and downward gaze, the actor is still the subject of the viewer's scrutiny. What is more, the text composition of this image works to communicate the far social distance between the actor and the viewer. The kettlebell, the black 16kg weight, is in the foreground of the image. The actor, by contrast, is in the background of the image which therefore works to construct the kettlebell as salient and even overbearing in this image. As a result, the impersonal relationship between the actor and the viewer is further compounded, and the actor, and the viewer, are left daunted by the kettlebell.

The caption of this last post works to conceptualise fitness as hard work and challenging. Fitness as challenging is illustrated by the phrase "never gets easier" which implies that fitness should be, and will always be, difficult. However, it takes this topic one step further by aligning itself with hard-core fanatics and suggesting that fitness should not only be challenging, but also painful. This notion is captured in the use of the verb "hurt" as well as the hashtag "pain". Like the previous post, the length of this caption is not very long, but is does communicate the idea that fitness is a process. This is demonstrated in the adverb "never" which communicates the idea that fitness is an on-going process that is never-ending. Furthermore, although this post is not technically an advertisement, it does demonstrate the community practices in relation to sponsorship on Instagram by the inclusion of the tags of the two sponsors, namely "@iconathlete" and "@vullsport", that endorse this user.

The final items for consideration in this post are the hashtags. The hashtag "ninjawarriorsquad" functions much like the "team" hashtags in previous posts in that the word "squad" suggests a closed group of individuals. Other markers of in-group belonging are the hashtags "crossfit" and "crossfitchick" which indicate this user's belonging to the

CrossFit community. The hashtag "crossfitchick", as well as the hashtags "fitgirlsmotivation", "bossgirl" and "fitchick", are interesting, because as discussed in post 59 and 78, the use of the gendered noun "girl", as opposed to an alternative like "woman", communicates the connotation of passivity, physical immaturity and innocence.

In conclusion, this chapter has conducted a visual and textual analysis of twenty Instagram posts from the "#strength" community by using the visual analysis tools offered by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and the textual analysis guidelines offered by Fairclough (2003). The focus of this investigation included the identification of key visual and textual signifiers that serve as illustrations of the typical topics, imagery and in-group behaviour patterns of the Instagram community in question. That said, it is not enough to simply describe and assign meaning to the linguistic and visual features of a text, because texts, within CDA, are seen artefacts of the cultural, moral, socio-political and ideological positions within society (van Dijk 2003:96). For this reason, the final chapter of this thesis will seek to demonstrate a relationship between the relevant discourse structures and gender structures by directly relating the findings of this chapter to the research questions and highlighting the main relationships between, and significance of, the findings of this study in the current social landscape.

Chapter 8

Discussion and conclusion

In the dialectical-relational approach, typified by Fairclough's three dimensional approach, the research process is circular and involves consistent movement from theory, to the field of discourse, and back to theory again (Wodak & Meyer 2008:23). As discussed in chapter four, this reexamination of theory comprises the last stage of the three stages of analysis in CDA. In this final stage, the explanation stage, the CDA practitioner aims to critically explain the connections between texts and discourse circulating in the wider social and cultural context, the 'socio-cultural practice' (Hussain *et al.* 2015:243). Therefore, the final chapter of this thesis aims to draw connections between the discourse structures contained in the Instagram texts, and the social structures to which the texts refer. This is done by revisiting the literature and findings contained in the previous chapters.

It is first necessary to revisit the central question of this research before any connections can be drawn. As mentioned in chapters one and four, the central research question of this thesis is as follows:

> What representations of men and women are evident in the Instagram posts with the hashtag 'strength'?

The aim of this investigation was to uncover the key visual and linguistic features that serve as identity markers of members of the '#strength' Instagram community. In doing so, this study aims to show that the hashtag 'strength' is problematic in its representation of both women and men who engage in fitness activities, because it perpetuates reductive male and female gender stereotypes. Furthermore, as the data was organised into different sub-categories, the following sections will adopt a similar approach by first discussing the visual and textual features of the '#strength' community as a whole and then highlighting the in-group features of the significant sub-groups.

8.1. Features of the '#strength' community

There are several features of the representation of the '#strength' community that permeate the gender and sports categories of this study. The first significant feature is the conceptualisation of fitness as a process that takes time. This is evident in the frequent references to time as well as the high frequency of present participles in captions that indicate

fitness as a continuous or on-going process. This process, or weight loss goal, is often conceptualised by users as distance that needs to be travelled or a destination that needs to be returned to or reached. The result is a metaphor that compares FITNESS to TRAVEL or a JOURNEY that is frequent throughout the '#strength' community and is often paired with the conceptualisation of fitness as a process that takes time.

However, within the whole community, there are dominant representations regarding the way in which this fitness journey should be undertaken and conceptualised. The first representation conceptualises fitness as hard work or a challenge. When adopting this representation, it is common for users to conceptualise fitness as difficult, painful, or even dangerous, and consequently encourage readers to disregard any pain or discomfort that they may experience in order to make progress. This approach is often solidified by the use of high effort verbs, all capitalised, excessive exclamation marks and even curse words in the caption. Visually, represented actors are often adopting a stern and serious gaze at the viewer that, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:118), is identified as a demand, and works to construct the actor as superior to the viewer, forcefully urging the viewer to adopt the same mentality to fitness.

The second dominant representation in the '#strength' community is one that conceptualises fitness as fun or an activity for enjoyment. This approach is illustrated by the frequent use of adjectives and verbs relating to fun or enjoyment as well as the high occurrence of emojis and emoticons. Visually, actors in the images of this camp are almost always smiling while engaging in a fitness activity, often in the company of others. Furthermore, users within this representation take a gentler approach to the idea of fitness as a challenging activity. In this respect, fitness is often framed as an on-going process that requires several attempts or practice rounds before an individual can feel comfortable. Even then, it is argued in this representation that these attempts should always be within the means of the individual and never cause pain or discomfort.

Then again, despite their contrasting approaches to fitness, the Instagram users who perpetuate these representations share a common goal or focus. This focus is on self-comparison for the sake of self-improvement. The importance of self-comparison across sports and gender categories is demonstrated in the data by the frequent use of comparative adjectives and the use of first person to refer to the 'self'. However, users can only judge their achievements as self-improvement if they remain publically accountable for their effort or

lack thereof. This accountability is strongly advocated for in this fitness community and is illustrated in captions by the high frequency of first person, which allows account holders to report on their progress and efforts, and by the use of third person, which serves to single out the reader as an agent who must remain responsible for their journey. In this respect, another feature common to this community is the importance of numbers or body and workout statistics. The persistent focus on these numbers, such as weight, height, heart rate and body fat percentage, is because they serve as further evidence of the user's fitness achievements or goals.

Transformation posts are another means for users to promote and engage in accountability in the '#strength' community. These posts, which typically consist of two images comparing the actor's 'before' and 'after' physique, allow users to post visual evidence of their own, or even another's, fitness efforts and aim to encourage viewers to critique, and thereby compare, the actor's physical appearance. However, by means of text composition, transformation posts also work to construct an ideal body type in this community. As previously mentioned, the placement of certain elements in the image endows them with the specific information value that is attached to that zone (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:177). Conventions of the transformation post stipulate that the 'before' image is usually placed on the left whereas the 'after' image is then usually placed on the right. This text orientation, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:180), means that the actor's 'before' physique is the 'given' in this specific community as it is the information that the viewer is believed to already know and agree upon. Conversely, the actor's 'after' physique on the right is understood as the 'new' information or 'the message' that the viewer must pay specific attention to because it is not yet known or agreed upon (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:180). In other words, the viewer is drawn to the 'after' image as the more salient message, and then asked, by the comparative nature of the post, to scrutinise and judge whether or not the actor's 'after' physique is worthy of praise and acceptance. This is often compounded by the gaze of the actor that changes from a negative or dull expression in the 'before' image to a positive, smiling expression in the 'after' image, which subsequently communicates an increase in self-confidence. In this way, the 'after' physique in a transformation post is constructed as the more desirable physique and as the desired norm in this fitness community.

As mentioned above, the construction of accountability in this community is often achieved by means of personal pronouns. For example, the use of third person pronouns in the statement "you get what you work for" serves this function. However, the use of the third

person also works to regularly depict the reader, or "you", as a fitness novice who needs to face and overcome obstacles by placing the reader in a subordinate position to the producer of the message, or the "I". This depiction of the reader as a fitness novice, however, serves a greater purpose within the realms of this social media platform. As mentioned in chapter four, the genre analysis of Instagram, some posts may function as advertisements for brands and services. This is the case with several posts in this data set that promote training services or fitness programs. With this in mind, the depiction of the reader as a fitness novice creates a target audience for these advertisements as the reader is advised that they will need such training services if they are to be successful in conquering the challenges posed by their fitness journey.

Moreover, the posts that function as advertisements for training services conceptualise fitness and training styles, not as challenging or enjoyable, but rather as 'correct' or 'incorrect' by way of adjectives and adverbs. The categories of 'correct' and 'incorrect' are frequently paired with the categories of 'real' and 'fake' respectively. In other words, users of promotion posts will regularly depict their own trainers, services, and products as 'correct' and 'real', while simultaneously constructing the competition's trainers, services, and products as 'incorrect' or 'fake'. This strategy is also frequently paired with the conceptualisation of fitness as hard work or a challenge. Once again, these textual features serve a greater purpose as marketing strategies that aim to encourage readers to join the training programs because they will require the expert guidance of the user to make the distinction between correct/incorrect or real/fake training services and products.

Lastly, as generic features, the conventions of hashtagging and reposting also cut across gender and sports categories. As mentioned in the previous chapter, hashtags serve as markers of in-group identity and are always written as a single word. This is also the case with certain hashtags in the '#strength' community that work to exclude Instagram users that are not considered fitness enthusiasts. This is best illustrated by hashtags that are fitness related but not sport related, for example "#fitness", "#health", "#motivation" and "#gym" as these hashtags are present in all gender and sports categories. Like hashtags, the conventions surrounding reposting are also non-group specific, which conventionally takes the structure of "#repost @username with @repostapp". This structure is recognised in the '#strength' community as the convectional and appropriate method to credit ownership on this social media platform that is generically geared for the creation and distribution of unique, user-generated content.

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8.2. <u>Features of the male identity</u>

As mentioned in chapter two, gender should be understood as an identity constituted in time by a stylised repetition of acts, and more specifically, through the stylisation of the body (Butler 1988:519). However, gender is not a seamless identity, but rather a compelling illusion or performative accomplishment brought about by the ability of the individual to compel the body to conform to the historical idea of 'woman' or 'man' (Butler 1988:522). With this in mind, this next section seeks to detail the specific visual and textual markers that comprise the performative accomplishment of the 'male' identity in the '#strength' community.

Firstly, as mentioned in the trend analysis (see chapter 6), male actors are not the majority in the data set as only 37 posts represent male actors. However, despite this low frequency, male actors are represented in a wider range of sport types than female actors. Male actors are represented in all six cases where a contact sport, like boxing or karate, is represented. Additionally, male actors are also represented in all four cases where a team sport, such as soccer or cricket, is represented. This representation of male actors in contact and team sports resembles the findings of the study by Hardin *et al*. (2006:438) which looked at the representation of women and men in sports journalism textbooks (see chapter 2). In their study, 94% of references to contact sport involved men, which is supportive of the findings of this study (Hardin *et al*. 2006:438). Furthermore, in this study, male actors are more likely to engage in bizarre fitness practices in extreme locations. In other words, only male actors are represented in outdoor or rooftop locations while engaging in activities which involved parkour, acrobatics or extreme sports like motocross racing or triathlon. This mirrors the findings in the study regarding sports television by Messner *et al*. (2000:389) which identified the need for male athletes to show bravado in the face of danger, especially in extreme sports (see chapter 2).

Aside from belonging to specific sports types, the findings of this study also point to the construction of a desirable male appearance or physique within the '#strength' community. The typical male actor represented in the posts of this data set is defined as lean, tanned, muscular and big or large in size. Other visual markers of the in-group male identity include active wear that reveals enough of the upper torso to make the latter distinction, as well as the presence of facial hair, usually a full beard, and tattoos. The most popular male sport category is weightlifting, in which male actors represent 23 out of 40 posts, and so many of

these male identity markers are also markers of the weightlifting or bodybuilding community. However, these in-group sport markers will be revisited later in this chapter. Male actors are also more frequently represented as unaccompanied in the image, as only four posts represent all male actors in groups which is comparable to the eight posts that represent all female groups.

As mentioned above, the lean, large and muscular body-type is cast as desirable for the ideal male identity in the '#strength' community. This status is achieved by several means throughout the data set. The first is the function of the transformation post, which as discussed above, constructs the male actor's 'after' body as the more acceptable body type in this community. The second mean is the construction of the lean, large and muscular male actor as an intimidating voice of authority in the fitness industry. Visually, these typified actors often have serious expressions that are directed either into the distance or at the viewer and are represented to occupy salience in terms of textual composition. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:118), these visual features create social distance between the male actor and the viewer by placing the actor in a position of power relative to the viewer and consequently constructing the male actor as unapproachable or intimidating. Textually, these male actors, or users, are constructed as voices of authority by means of the hard-core approach to fitness as a challenge, as discussed in the first section, as well as the use of imperatives to command readers to fulfill actions and achieve goals. Male actors or users are also less likely to use emoticons and emojis, illustrated by only 7 posts out of a total of 43 posts that contain emoticons or emojis, which aids in maintaining a commanding position and serious tone in the caption. Furthermore, it is worth noting that all personal trainer accounts in the data set are run by male users. In other words, male actors, once again, hold the position of an authority or expert on fitness in this community.

8.3. <u>Features of the female identity</u>

As mentioned in the previous section, there are two dominant representations or approaches to fitness in the '#strength' community. The first group of users construct fitness as hard work or a challenge, whereas the second group of users construct fitness as a fun activity that should bring enjoyment. Findings of this study suggest that female users are more likely to fall into the second category, with some exceptions, whereas male users are more likely to fall into the first category. In other words, female users are more likely to adopt the 'fitness is fun' approach, which is illustrated by a higher frequency of positive adjectives relating to fun

as well as a more frequent use of emoticons and emojis in captions when compared to male users (see chapter 6). Furthermore, whereas male users or actors are more likely to workout alone, female actors are more likely to workout in groups as demonstrated by fact that the number of posts that show female actors in all female groups is double the number posts that show male actors in all male groups (see chapter 6).

Findings of this study show that male actors are overwhelmingly represented in contact and team sports, such as soccer and karate, which bears similarity to the study by Hardin *et al*. (2006:438). However, with regards to the representation of female actors, Hardin *et al*. (2006:438) report in their study that female actors were often depicted in individual, non-contact sports that involve an aesthetic component for example figure skating (see chapter 2). The same bears true for this study as the findings reveal that female actors are overwhelmingly represented in individual and aesthetic sport types like yoga, pole dance, Pilates and gymnastics. In fact, only female actors are present in the visual representations of pole dance and yoga, both of which are aesthetic, non-contact and individual sports. That said, female actors are also represented in the sport types of weightlifting and CrossFit, but even these sports are classified as individual and non-contact sports. In other words, the findings of this study support the findings of Hardin *et al*. (2006:438), because female actors are solely represented in individual, non-contact sports that usually have an aesthetic component.

The overwhelming representation of female actors in aesthetic sports also has significant implications for the construction of agency in the sports arena. As mentioned several times throughout this study, aesthetic sports focus on the appearance and movement of the body for an enhanced visual display. In other words, the body movements and positions adopted in, for example yoga or pole dancing, are meant to be marvelled at as acts of display. However, these representations, owing to two additional features, are likely to lead to the construction of represented female actors as passive participants or objects. The first visual feature is the presence of face-ism in these representations. Female actors are more likely to be targets of face-ism, that is 11 out of 13 incidences in this data set, which consequently reduces their bodies to objects (Cheek 2016:1). The second visual marker is the interpersonal realisation of offer, which is present in nine out of ten of the purposively selected posts in the female category. As mentioned several times throughout the previous chapter, the interpersonal realisation of offer subjects the actor to the viewer's scrutiny almost like a specimen on display, because, unlike demand, it suggests that there is no interpersonal relationship for the

viewer to enter (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:119). Therefore, the combination of offer and face-ism in the female category, coupled with the overwhelming representation of aesthetic sports, suggest that female actors are not actors at all, but rather objects or specimens for scrutiny in the sports arena.

Then again, when female actors are not reduced to objects for scrutiny, they are more likely than male users to portray themselves as fitness novices who struggle to make notable improvements in sports. This is demonstrated by the tendency of female users to revert to self-criticism when discussing their achievements in their chosen sport as well as the high frequency of present participles that suggest that fitness is an on-going process. What is more, female users, although more likely to construct fitness as fun or enjoyable, are also more likely to construct fitness as difficult rather than hard work. In other words, female users are less likely than male users to construct themselves as victorious in the face of fitness challenges, which is once again evident in their self-criticism and persistent use of present participles. For this reason, female actors are more likely to show reliance on fitness experts and group classes whereas male actors are more likely to be portrayed as fitness experts. This reliance on others is further demonstrated in the need for female comradeship as demonstrated by the higher frequency of female actors in groups (see chapter 6).

To the effect of comradeship, hashtags, as mentioned in the genre analysis of Instagram (see section 5.5), are another way that group members can demonstrate in-group belonging and solidarity. Members of the '#strength' community demonstrate their belonging by hashtagging "strength" along with several other fitness related hashtags like "#fitness", "#gym" and "#muscles" (see chapter 4). However, female users are more likely than male users to include gender markers in these generic hashtags, which suggests the need for comradeship and solidarity specifically among female users. For example, whereas male users are more likely to hashtag "muscles" and "fit", female users are more likely to hashtag "girlswithmuscle" and "fitgirl". It is also worth noting that female users in this data set often resort to the gendered nouns of 'girl' and 'chick', which have the connotations of youth, innocence and physical immaturity, as opposed to other options like 'woman' or 'lady'. The use of 'girl' is especially interesting because it bears similarity to the study by Ponterotto (2014:104), in which she found that the metaphor WOMEN ARE CHILDREN was frequently used to endow female athletes with the traits of immaturity, ignorance, weakness, and irrational emotions. Therefore, akin to the self-doubt and self-criticism present in

captions, the persistent use of 'girl' and 'chick' among female users relegates them to a subordinate and novice position in the fitness arena.

Another, almost separate, community where female users demonstrate the need for solidarity is that of being a mother in the fitness community. Women are unique in that only they can fall pregnant, which results in a distinctive set of challenges regarding adherence to fitness regimes. In this data set, only four posts represent a parent and child wherein all represent a mother and a child. In seeking solidarity, female users often use hashtags to reach out to other female users who are also mothers. In these cases, the gender marker of 'girl' or 'chick' will often be replaced with 'mom' or 'mum' as in for example '#fitmum' as opposed to '#fitgirl'. The reason for this group solidarity is owed to the unique challenges that female users face as child-care and domestic responsibilities are seen as traditionally female roles. Interestingly, it is worth noting here that, female actors are represented in all cases where home workouts are concerned, while, as mentioned earlier, only male actors are represented in extreme rooftop or outdoor locations. In other words, it seems that the traditional domestic and public separation of women and men is manifested in the data set of this study.

8.4. <u>Features of the weightlifter and the 'other' identity</u>

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, the division of the data set into different sport types makes it possible to distil some of the key visual and textual features that serve as identity markers of these sport communities. Although several types of sport have been identified, the weightlifting or bodybuilding community is the most popular overall sport category, with a total of 40 posts, while almost equally representing male and female users in 23 and 16 posts respectively with one post representing a mixed group (see chapter 6 for more). For this reason, the weightlifting community is the ideal site for the comparison of male and female users as this study is concerned with gender structures as power relations rather than the groups of 'female' or 'male' as isolated categories for analysis.

Akin to the '#strength' community as a whole, there are several visual and textual features that cut across gender lines in the weightlifting community. At a visual level, weightlifters are more frequently represented in isolation rather than group situations like users of other sports such as CrossFit or yoga. This isolation is compounded by other visual features which suggest that weightlifting is a solitary sport. The most telling feature is the wearing of headphones or earphones, which occurs in both male and female posts, and works to suggest

that the represented actor is 'in the zone' and does not wish to communicate with the outside world (see sections 7.2 and 7.11). Furthermore, male and female actors in this community are more frequently represented as gazing away from the viewer or into the distance, which once again works to communicate social distance between the viewer and the actor (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:119).

There are also several other visual features that serve as markers of this in-group identity. As discussed in section 8.1, male actors in the weightlifting or bodybuilding community are often represented with facial hair, tattoos and other clothing items, such as, muscle up shirts, dog tags or hats, that help construct them not only as male but also as hard-core weightlifters. Aside from these markers, the ideal weightlifting body type takes the form of the bodybuilder. This body type, which is classified as lean, tanned, muscular and large in size, is constructed as the ideal type in several ways. The first is the visual composition, which, as mentioned earlier, usually involves the placement of the male actor in a position of authority and salience. Secondly, these actors are accepted as ideal when they are used on inspiration pages to act as role models and serve as motivation for other Instagram users (see post 7 in chapter 7). Lastly, this body type is accepted as the ideal in the community when it is judged to be so by professional bodybuilding federations like the WBFF. In other words, hashtags that involve the WBFF or other similar federations serve not only as in-group identity markers but also as symbols of status.

Female actors in this community follow a similar trend to that of male actors. In fact, there are several features that are identical such as the use of earphones and the presence of tattoos (see section 7.11). Furthermore, like male actors, female actors in the weightlifting community are typically more muscular than female actors in other sport communities like yoga or pole dancing. The ideal body type for weightlifting female actors is once again defined as lean, tanned and muscular although not as large as male actors and is indicated by the use of in-group terms and hashtags like "WBFF", "girlswithmuscle", "girlswholift" and "alphafemale". Furthermore, these hashtags, along with hashtags from other fitness communities like yoga ("yogagirl") and crossfit ("crossfitchick"), demonstrate that female users are more likely than male users to use gender markers in hashtags across all sport types. In some ways then, the visual markers for the ideal body type in the weightlifting community is almost identical for male and female actors. That said, although both male and female actors are competing in the same sport, the professional standards are not identical.

As mentioned in the in-depth analysis, the female actors represented as professional bodybuilders, and thus the ideal body type in the data set, compete in the category of "figure chick" (see section 7.11). This category is a blend of fitness and bodybuilding where competitors are judged on symmetry, presentation, and other aesthetic qualities such as skin tone (Owen 2015). Bodybuilding at the competitive level is judged primarily by the competitor's mass, definition, proportion, symmetry, stage presence and posing routine among other things (Owen 2015). However, as mentioned in chapter two, bodybuilding competitions have different definitions or standards of muscularity for female bodybuilders that are restricted to an agreed upon definition of "feminine" traits (Bryson 1987:356). In other words, female bodybuilders compete to obtain all of the ingredients of a mainstream male bodybuilder except in the area of muscle mass and level of body fat percentage supposedly owing to their lower levels of testosterone.

This formal separation of male and female bodybuilders into separate categories at a professional level, coupled with the tendency of female users, and not male users, to gender mark their hashtags, suggests that females in weightlifting, and even fitness in general, are viewed as the deviation from the norm or as the 'other'. That is to say, females who wish to be accepted in the weightlifting community, a sport that is traditionally dominated by males and standards of masculinity, are expected to constantly highlight their deviance by gender marking their hashtags and subsequently work to create a sub-group of female weightlifters within the mainstream, masculine sphere of weightlifting.

8.5. Conclusion: Linking discourse and social structures

The above discussion of men and women in sports, and particularly men and women in weightlifting, provides evidence for Bryson's (1987:351) argument that sport is largely defined as an activity in which men and children, particularly boys, engage in. That is, sport is still an arena that relies on a male-orientated definition of sports as reflected in the single-sex groupings and sport divisions present in the data set of this study (Hardin *et al.* 2006: 438). The findings of this study show, as did the findings of Hardin *et al.* (2006: 438), that there is still a clear division between sports that are deemed appropriate for men, which tend to be high-contact team sports, and sports that are deemed appropriate for women, which tend to be individual, non-contact and aesthetic sports. Furthermore, Bryson's (1987:350) argument that the negative evaluations of women's capacities as implicit in the masculine

hegemony in which sport is embedded is also supported in the findings of this study as evidenced by female users' tendencies towards self-doubt and self-criticism.

This thesis adopted a postmodern feminist lens and is particularly interested in the implication of sports in the construction of womanhood and manhood by investigating the ways in which gender relations have been built, reproduced and contested in the sports arena. This leads to the recognition that the problem of male power and domination in sports is fundamental, but also that sports do not produce a straightforward system of domination of men over women (Hargreaves 1994:3). In understanding the body as a semiotic mode that becomes gendered through a stylised repetition of acts and aiming to delve deeper into gender as a category for analysis, this thesis argues that gender oppression in sports means oppression of both women and men.

In other words, while sports is still plagued by male domination, the findings of this study show that the '#strength' community does not only discriminate against women, but also men by providing its members with a very narrow portrait of masculinity and femininity. Akin to the findings of Messner *et al.* (2000:391), the male portrait takes the form of the bodybuilder as the 'real man' who has a lean, muscular, tanned and big physique paired with a tough, assertive, and intimidating personality that often results in his solitary status at the gym. As Messner *et al.* (2000:391) point out, this hegemonic masculinity works to exclude those sections of the male population, never mind the female population, that do not live up to this ideal of the 'real man'. With this in mind, if sport is defined according to the most extreme versions of the male body, which even excludes some men, then it stands that women remain at a decided disadvantage (Messner 1988:206).

Unlike men, female users in the '#strength' community demonstrate the tendency to create separate spaces on Instagram where their 'femaleness' can be fully lived out. This is evidenced by the tendency of female users to gender mark their hashtags in all sport types. Male users, however, do not demonstrate the need for gender marking, because, as Cooky *et al.* (2013:203) argue, sport is male and sport media continues to be for, by, and about, men. Furthermore, female users in the '#strength' community are faced with the challenge of choosing between being an athlete, as represented by a strong, muscular and powerful woman, or being feminine, as traditionally represented by passivity, weakness, helplessness and dependency (Messner 1988:203). In other words, female users in this data set are either represented to have abided by what Vertinsky (1994:14) calls the anticompetitive "feminine

philosophy of sport" and remained in their 'appropriate' sport types, such as yoga or pole dance, or they are represented to have left these boundaries and joined other more 'masculine' sport types, like weightlifting and CrossFit, whilst putting themselves at risk of unfavourable gender assessment (West and Zimmerman 1987:137).

The risk of negative gender assessment might explain the choice of some female users to represent themselves as fitness novices rather than experts in the '#strength' community. According to Knight and Giuliano (2001:219), traditional media claims to emphasise the 'femaleness' or traditional female role of female athletes who are believed to be in violation of their gender schemas in order to protect them from public rejection. To this effect, Knight and Giuliano (2001:225) also maintain that the media does not only reflect public opinion, but also actively shapes it (see section 3.6). However, Instagram is different to the broadcast media studied by Knight and Giuliano (2001:219) in that users are generally also the producers of images and texts and so are responsible for these depictions of themselves. Therefore, the tendency of female users to depict themselves as fitness novices, by downgrading or self-criticising their achievements in fitness, can be interpreted as a self-protective mechanism in the sport arena which is still constructed as male territory.

That said, even when women and men do compete in the same sport, as in the case of weightlifting or bodybuilding, they are still forced to live up to the normative conceptions of masculinity and femininity or risk discrediting their other activities and ideas (West & Zimmerman 1987:136). This is evidenced in the separate categories and standards for men and women in bodybuilding competitions, where female bodybuilders are encouraged to maintain smaller sized physiques in order to still appear 'feminine' (Bryson 1987:356). For this reason, it is argued that, although sports is often viewed as a progressive movement which reflects the general enfranchisement of wider and wider sections of the population, men and women are still confined to sport types and standards that are believed to involve biological or innate physical skills and capacities of the sexes and so sport continues to present these ideological images of men and women as if they were "natural" (Hargreaves 1994:9; Clarke and Clarke 1982:63).

It is clear that the representations of male and female users in the '#strength' community are still littered with ideological and stereotypical gender representations. In this Instagram community, sport is constructed as a masculine domain in which male users are confined to the 'real man' identity that aims to achieve or maintain the desired muscular, lean, and large

physique in order to earn a status worthy of respect and praise from fellow community members. However, this construction of the male user as the authority or expert in the fitness arena consequently relegates female users to sport types and skills that are constructed as less valuable or as 'other' in the community. As a result, the female identity in the '#strength' community is under tension and contestation. It seems that female users in this fitness community are caught in a catch twenty-two. They can choose to stay in the boundaries of conventional power relations as objects for admiration in aesthetic sports, or they can choose to risk unfavourable gender assessment as the 'other' in traditionally male sport types. It seems that women's quest for self-definition and control of their own bodies is not without ambiguities or contradictions.

Ultimately, this thesis aimed to establish the use of Instagram as a site of research for linguistic and visual disciplines. As a site of research, Instagram displays several advantages for researchers who wish to conduct research on this platform. Although the data set of this study is perhaps small in size, it has proven to be rich in visual and textual markers of the '#strength' community. Future research on Instagram could focus on the distillation of the key visual and textual features of other Instagram communities, for example veganism, as well as conducting additional investigations into the practices of hashtagging and geotagging. As mentioned several times throughout this study, social media platforms are rapidly changing with Instagram as one of the most expansive and expressive platforms to date. Therefore, it is likely that future linguistic research into this text type will reveal interesting insights into the representation of contemporary social practices.

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