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# **Problematising The Self-Representation Of Race And Gender In Vines: Who Has The Last Laugh?**

**Shaikha Nurfarah Mattar**  
MSc in Media and Communications

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# **Problematism The Self-Representation Of Race And Gender In Vines: Who Has The Last Laugh?**

**Shaikha Nurfarah Mattar**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study is concerned with the consequences of self-representation, where the imagination, refashioning and public performance of the self exists in proliferation, in a culture of speed and in a multiplicity of forms. This includes Vines, which are six-second clips of meta-humour created through a mobile application and rampantly circulated through social networks. Mobilising Burn's (2013) kineikonic method of multimodal analysis to examine a sample of 18 Vines, this study questions the extent to which the elusive other may redefine dominant understandings of race and gender through the process of self-representation. The narratives reveal a significant but complex difference in the recognition of race and gender as there is simultaneously a clear reversal of stereotypes, reversal of stereotypes being accompanied with new stereotypes and how one other may represent another other, resulting in varied levels of otherisation. This study also finds patterns in metamodality and humour which resemble memetic features outlined by Shifman (2014), potentially contributing to the conceptualisation of memes in digital culture.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Drawing pertinent links between speed and cultural modernity, Tomlinson (2007) argues that more than ever are societies marked by a changing experience of temporality, both in mechanical and cultural-phenomenological senses. The culture of acceleration has had theoretical precedence often associated with social progress, as seminal works by Marx (1867) propose that shorter turnover time increases profit in the circulation of capital, while Weberian theory suggests that much of rationalisation, tightly connected to modernisation, focused on ways to perform tasks more quickly in bureaucracies. In the present context, Hoofd (2012) refers to society as being speed-elitist and possessing a desire for speed by way of modern technologies. However, a sense of scepticism is attached to the liberal-sounding rhetoric, which she argues, actually serves "an exceedingly mobile and connected cosmopolitan elite which stands to gain the most from the current technological acceleration

and financialisation of the globe to the detriment of the less fortunate slower classes” (p. 124). The ambiguities of the speed-elite society point towards fluctuating power relations, notions of identity, sociality, space and time, which this study recognises as an unmapped territory that requires new forms of understanding.

Within a landscape characterised by the convergence of speed and the rise of modern technologies is a new mobile service allowing the production and sharing of short, looping videos called Vine. There are a number of applications offering similar functions, such as Tout, SocialCam and most recently Instagram, but Vine distinguishes itself with a strict length of six seconds for its videos. Acquired by Twitter in January 2013, the application parallels Twitter’s 140-character limit with time constraint, and it is precisely this constraint which nudges users into finding numerous ways in which multiple frames may be assembled in the shortest possible time. This includes the creative application of stop motion animation, which involves capturing a frame, moving an object and repeating the process. Little or no editing is required as users simply hold a finger to the mobile screen to start recording, remove said finger to stop recording and touch the screen to resume. When these recordings are placed one after the other in succession, the illusion of real movement is created and users are able to “tell a whole story, make people laugh and even leave people speechless – in six seconds or less” (Blog.twitter.com, 2014). The minimal temporal gaps between processes of production, distribution and consumption of Vines also correspond to Tomlinson’s (2007) condition of immediacy, which he associates with the key features of ubiquity, effortlessness and speed.

Opinion leaders in technology and social media marketing, such as Pete Cashmore of Mashable, suggest that global brands are also leveraging on Vines to provide six second snippets of corporate campaigns because micro-content caters effectively to a generation with declining attention spans and increasing demand for instant gratification. Having experienced success on various fronts, the team introduced Vine.co, a website allowing users to view videos through the computer and in several channels ranging from ‘Comedy’ to ‘Art’. Vine.co receives over 4.5 million unique visitors and 21.1 million page views per month, with its actual reach being understated as videos are shared extensively in mirror sites such as BestVines.org, Facebook pages, and YouTube channels which aggregate the best published Vines in specified time periods (Jarboe, 2014).

## **The Timely Problem**

While the popularity, creative and marketing value of Vines are celebrated by experts in the digital industry, it is jarring how the promotion and implications of self-representation through Vines have received little critical reflection despite their distinct selling point as “little windows into the people, settings, ideas and objects that make up your life” (Hofmann, 2013). Academically, there have been theoretical insights on media representation providing symbolic resources which shape how we imagine the other (Hall, 1997; Pickering, 2001; Cottle, 2006), but it is unclear how the increased visibility of the other through Vines reflects the ways in which they imagine themselves, if the implications of their self-representation are necessarily positive, and how the dimension of speed may complicate these implications in unpredictable ways. Metro reporter Julie Kayzerman questions if Vines have emerged as a contemporary form of minstrel theatre, with clips such as *White Moms Vs Black Moms* showing how African Americans use humour to associate their own race with violent behaviour, “voiding 50 years of equality activism in just six seconds” (Kayzerman, 2013).

## **Research Objectives and Potential Contributions of Study**

Taking these concerns into consideration, the objective of this study is three-fold. Firstly, it addresses the implications of Vines beyond the purposes of entertainment, marketing and fostering of vernacular creativity, which Burgess (2007) describes as everyday practices of material and symbolic creativity that are remediated by digital media. Instead, attention is shifted towards the impact of self-representation through Vines, which is examined systematically through the kineikonic method of multimodal analysis. The significance of speed is further addressed by the methodology’s focus on temporality and editing, allowing the cultural imagination of speed as being positively linked to “ideas of reason, progress, order and regulation” (Tomlinson, 2007: 6) to be questioned. Secondly, as elaborated in the theoretical chapter, this study bridges existing theories on self-representation and Internet memes by evaluating Vines as the newest form of meme to have emerged, facilitating self-representation and affecting the recognition of wider discourses, such as race and gender. Lastly, the findings of this study may contribute to recent work by Shifman (2014), amongst others, who recommend that future research could analyse the extent to which Internet memes serve as alternative routes of expression for marginalised groups or remain as a reflection of well-entrenched power structures.

## **THEORETICAL APPROACH**

The previous chapter briefly established how Vines provide possibilities for self-representation while operating in a unique cultural landscape of speed. The following chapter examines literature relevant to self-representation, which broadly oscillates between its potential and limitations in overcoming processes of othering and stereotyping. As this study will illustrate, Vines are also included in the theoretical category of memes, which is associated with forms of humour that seem banal but have significant impacts on the discourses of race and gender. The chapter concludes with the conceptual framework, which consolidates the main theoretical concepts framing this study.

### **Self-Representation in Digital Culture: Motivations, Potential and Limitations**

The contemporary understanding of the self is informed greatly by Hegelian philosophy, where it is first observed that “self-consciousness exists in itself and for itself, in that, and by the fact that it exists for another self-consciousness” (Hegel, 2009: 86). That is to say, it is not only the mutual recognition of the other which makes the conception of the self possible, but it is also the negation of the other which allows the self to confirm its existence. This logic is similarly present in the colonialist construction of the other who is meant to be civilised like his coloniser, but it is only through the projection of difference that the self may construct his privileged, more powerful identity as master of the colonised other (Pickering, 2001). Such is the age-old struggle for recognition which persists in the modern environment and overlaps with the need for self-representation on digital platforms (Lundby, 2008; Thumim, 2012; Couldry, 2008; Burgess, 2006; Thompson; 1995). As Orgad (2012) suggests, the self is being increasingly positioned as the centre of imagination and representation:

Private lives are projected publicly: more and more people are making their selves the objects of scrutiny, and engaging in a work of complex, ongoing introspection that involves naming, expressing, talking about, arguing over, negotiating and justifying their emotions [...] Through its projection on to mediated spaces, such as reality TV, Facebook or video and image-sharing sites, the self becomes a domain subject to public gaze. (p. 158)

The direct inclusion of the private self in the public domain is especially reflected in the emergent digital storytelling movement, where ordinary people take advantage of digital media technologies to share normally unseen images or unheard narratives. While Lundby (2012) succinctly explains that digital stories turn personal photographs into distinctive

expressions of the self in the networked age, Vivienne and Burgess (2013) perceive digital stories as surpassing mere expression and materialising as a form of social and cultural advocacy. In the process, it can be said that the theoretical division of ‘the media’ and ‘the ordinary’ becomes increasingly collapsed as the type of people who are ‘in the media’ is no longer as distinct in kind from the people who are not. Ordinary people, particularly those at risk of social exclusion and cultural marginalisation, are able to engage in self-representation and destabilise the symbolic hierarchy between themselves and the media world in an “act of representative significance” (Couldry, 2000: 159).

For this reason, self-representation is celebrated for its potential to transcend stereotypes and processes of othering. The idea of ‘fleshing out’ past stereotypes is initially introduced in Cottle’s (2006) study of mediatised conflict, where he suggests that it is equally important to be critical toward the marginalisation of certain social groups as it is not to neglect their symbolic rehabilitation. In itself, the concept of stereotyping is perceived negatively because it involves labelling people in reductive terms and reaffirming symbolic boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Pickering, 2001). Greenwald and Banaji (1995) show that it is not only the use of reductive terms, but also the essentialising of people with these terms, that is a cause for concern. They explain how individuals are categorised into groups based on superficial characteristics of gender and race, and in the attribution of traits to all members of that group, differences between members are effaced. Closely related is the strategy of othering, described by Pickering (2001) as a form of social exorcism to contain the other in its assigned position at the periphery. Othering is also substantially premised on gender and race, where women are conceptualised as objects defined against the male subject and all non-European people are seen as the other of Western nations. This process is partially historicised with evolutionary thought, which involves the projection of the other as primitive and inferior:

Social Darwinism posited a racial ‘descent of man’ and was increasingly invoked in attempts to justify the conquest of Africa and discrimination against blacks in Europe and America [...] Race governed intelligence and inventiveness and the struggle between different races led to the backwardness and eventual elimination of those who were lacking in the capacity to evolve. (Pickering, 2001: 59-60)

Eventually, the other and those who participate in othering occupy unequal positions as the latter group privilege themselves against the former, “who are so designated as different, with this designation reinforcing and prolonging the inequalities involved by seeming to confirm and prove them” (Pickering, 2001: 73). While Pickering (2001) offers a comprehensive explanation of how the process operates and legitimises itself, he may be criticised for examining the complexities of stereotyping on historical and cultural grounds over empirical

methodologies. He also makes a false assumption that those who are othered and those who engage in othering are necessarily separate entities. In contrast, Lau (2009) shows how the work of diasporic South Asian authors has resulted in re-orientalism, that is the perpetration of orientalism not only by the superior Occident but also by Orientals themselves. She argues that while *The Mango Season* shed light on how members of Indian society struggle with strict cultural traditions and expectations, these generalisations are just as or more so problematic. At this juncture, the author as Orient concurrently assumes characteristics of insider and outsider, divergent from Pickering's (2001) view that the other and those who engage in othering are mutually exclusive. It also becomes questionable if the pursuit of self-representation to overcome stereotypes and processes of othering is romanticised:

*The Mango Season* sensationalised the 'defiance', depicted the cultural conventions as insurmountable barriers, and placed the notion of 'Indian culture' at the centre of the conflict, as the reason for the conflict. This implicit insistence on there being such an entity as 'Indian culture', and moreover such a rigid, fixed, definitive one, is exactly the over-dogmatic generality Said wrote of, but nevertheless a fairly common representation of India and Indians as imposed on them by diasporic Indian women writers. (Lau, 2009: 584)

Lau (2009) may be faulted for inflating the concept of re-orientalism having only located it in South Asian writings, but a number of studies suggest that her arguments are applicable to other forms of self-representation. For instance, Cortes (2013) conducted a content analysis of YouTube videos by Asian Americans and found that they inadvertently reinforce prevailing stereotypes of Asian Americans as the "perpetual foreigner" (p. 10) incapable of assimilating to American culture, but were ironically the "model minority" (p. 12) characterised with conscientiousness, academic success and economic drive which other minority races should emulate. Although Cortes (2013) partly resolves the gap in research on the self-representation of Asian Americans, there are other dimensions which could be further examined. This includes the continuities or discontinuities of (1) Media representation as opposed to self-representation of Asian Americans; (2) Representation of Asian Americans through new and traditional media; and (3) Media representation and self-representation of minority groups beyond Asian Americans.

Beyond the politics of race are feminist critiques by Butler (1999) and Magnet (2007), which complicate the implications of self-representation on gender, gendered stereotypes and othering on the basis of gender. For example, Magnet (2007) employs a cyber-feminist framework to examine Suicidegirls.com, a website which features online profiles, nude photographs and videos uploaded by heavily tattooed, punk women. Here, self-representation offers promising sensibilities for feminist research as there is a deliberate



interruption of the male gaze, with women themselves deciding how revealing photos will be, how these photos are framed and eventually circulated online. While these women are actively involved in the production of their cybersexualised images, this newly located sense of empowerment is undercut by self-commodification and how “images of displayed ethnic and racial difference are used in order to bracket them off as exotic and irremediably other” (Magnet, 2007: 590). This finding points toward the limitations of self-representation to redefine dominant ideas of gender, and again cautions against Pickering’s (2001) premature differentiation between those participating in the process of othering and those in the position of the other as both groups can easily overlap.

Butler (1999) chooses to draw from Foucauldian notions of the self, which have endured critical attention since coming to fruition but remain valuable to current discourses surrounding self-representation. She explores the contention that judicial systems of power produce the subjects they subsequently come to represent, and contextualises this in relation to feminist theory. She argues that feminism is self-defeating as judicial notions of power produce the feminist subject who is discursively constituted by the same political system meant to facilitate her emancipation, while assigning gendered subjects with differential capacities for domination. Similarly, Krips (1990) refers to Foucault’s idea of power as a mode of subjection that does not disregard the interests of subjects, but the possibility for subjectivities occur within settings already defined for these subjects. Using the example of a child’s desire to be treated as an adult, he shows that it is both a form of resistance to the designation of childhood and an interest in falling under the very system which creates rigid categories of adult, child, and nothing else. Accounts by Butler (1999) and Krips (1990) therefore reveal how the self may simultaneously possess and lack power, which – in an admittedly abstract connection to self-representation – calls into question its true capacity to evoke a change in the recognition of race and gender. As reiterated at the end of this chapter, this study interrogates if self-representation, like feminist discourse or the child, reinforces the system of subjection in which dominant ideas of race and gender are constructed, while meaning to do otherwise.

### **Memes as an Analytical Tool**

While preceding literature has focused on self-representation that explicitly appeal for a shift in political, cultural or feminist understandings, perhaps most oriented to Vines is the study of self-representation through memes. Biologist Richard Dawkins (1976) first coined the term ‘meme’, which has its etymological roots in the Greek word ‘mimema’ or ‘something imitated’. Likening memes to genes which leap from body to body, he explains that memes

are cultural units of transmission that spread by copying and imitation. To Dawkins (1976), memes may manifest as ideas, symbols or practices ranging from music to ideas, or fashion to architectural styles. Miltner (2011) adds that while certain memes are relatively self-contained, the majority of memes are part of a multifaceted, intertwined, and self-referential body of texts referred to as the memesphere.

Scholars have relied on the elastic concept of memes for the study of cultural artefacts on the Internet, forming a relatively new body of literature in media studies. Shifman (2011) examined YouTube videos that emulate textual traits of other videos, finding that these “derivatives have spawned a wave of meta-memes” (p. 118), while Miltner (2011) investigated the appeal of *LOLCats*, referring to memetic images of cats with misspelled captions which spread rapidly on social networks. Milner (2012) chose to explore the potential for polyvocal participation in meme collectives, while Stryker (2011) was curious about the popularity of memes on 4Chan despite it having been portrayed as “a breeding ground for sociopathic superhackers and cyberterrorists” (p. 1). There has been little or no academic research specific to Vines, but Vines seem to adopt the subsequent memetic features and it is proposed that they too fall under the categorisation of memes. Following Shifman’s (2014) most recent work, memes fundamentally refer to (1) A group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, or stance; (2) Are created with awareness of each other; (3) Are circulated, imitated or transformed via the Internet by many users; and (4) Are presented as written text, images or observable audio-visual content.

Crucially emphasised by these authors is the idea of memes spreading from person to person and gradually emerging as a shared social phenomenon. As Shifman (2014) suggests, the spreading of memes occur on the individual level but its impact is ubiquitous in shaping the mindsets, behaviour and actions of social groups. In their examination of 4Chan, Jenkins, Ford and Green (2013) take a more extreme stand by describing memes as a “self-perpetuating phenomenon beyond human control” (p. 27). The capacity for memes to spread at such an accelerated pace can be broadly attributed to the technical affordances of the Internet as well as the format of memes itself. Jenkins, Ford and Green (2013) explain that spreadability depends on technical and economic structures that facilitate the circulation of media texts, the degree to which attributes of these texts appeal to the act of sharing, as well as the social networks which allow the exchange of texts in a community.

At the same time, it should not be misunderstood that the sharing of memes constitutes a linear, static or unidirectional process. It is propounded that memes undergo constant reworking by Internet users and reflect the rather interchangeable concepts of ‘participatory

culture' (Jenkins, 2006), 'mediated cultural participation' (Milner, 2012) and 'cultural logos of participation' (Shifman, 2011). Shifman (2014) explains that memes are transformed by ways of mimicry and remix, with the former involving the recreation of a specific text by other people and the latter involving technology-based manipulation of an image. Similarly, Milner's (2012) study of memes reveals how remixed images either occur within a single frame or may combine single images into a new grouping of images to make a more complex point, creating a shift from 'single images' to 'stacked images'. He is also hopeful that the appropriation of memes brings about "new iterations" (Milner, 2012, p. 12) of broader ideas, but it is arguable that "new iterations" is in and of itself a paradox. While the phrase suggests that variations are being made, it also implies that variations surround the same, dominant discourses which continue to persist. This paradox is useful insofar as the extent of 'newness' that memes claim to possess is questioned and any imbalance favouring repeated 'iterations' over 'newness' is uncovered, not forgetting that 'mimesis' actually refers to imitation, rather than transformation of original narratives.

### **Humorous Memes, Race and Gender**

It should also be established that while previous research was predicated on memes of various forms, their association with humour was consistently present. The following section therefore discusses some theories of humour and how humorous memes may influence understandings of race and gender.

Firstly, Shifman (2014) explains that memes tend to involve incongruity, where comedy is achieved from an unexpected combination of two modes (such as the mismatched audio and visual components of memes or simply by presenting something bizarre like a rapping mouse). Though not directly linked to the topic of memes, Billig (2005) also provides crucial inquiry into the phenomenology of humour, classifying it as being largely conservative or subversive. The former ridicules weaker segments of society and serves to reinforce social inequality, while the latter indicates a role reversal as minority groups challenge those in power. Sexist humour is considered conservative, often portraying women as illogical, ignorant and irresponsible as opposed to feminist humour being more subversive, targeting men and resisting hegemonic constructions of femininity. Weaver (2011) offers an understanding of humour more specific to racial discourse, characterising it as being embodied, cultural or postmodern. He argues that embodied jokes operate closely with biological racism, "socially including the other through inferiorisation while also excluding the other through expulsion" (Weaver, 2011: 5). A response to the unacceptability of biological racism and anxieties toward the invasion of national territories by the other, is

culturally racist humour fixating on the ambivalent social identity of the other as both alien and neighbour. Finally, he explains that postmodern racist humour carries both racist and non-racist meanings, in which its “critical interpretations remain unfinished and unfinishable” (Weaver, 2011: 152). Due to this demonstrated ambivalence, postmodern racist humour frequently demands a sense of reflexivity from the reader.

Akin to Billig (2005) and Weaver’s (2011) alignment of humour with critical theory and relations of power, Powell and Paton (1988) assert that humour simultaneously functions as a form of resistance and control in society. Applying this logic to memes, ‘put down humour’ such as sarcasm may mock other groups with which the subject of the meme is in a relationship, but at the same time is an internal mechanism regulating the group which the subject of the meme is a part of, shaming any potential transgressors of group boundaries. With these theories of humour in mind, Milner (2012) finds that there are opportunities for negotiated representations of class, race and gender through humorous memes. For instance, the *Successful Black Man* meme posits a black American stereotype in its top clause (e.g. ‘I Don’t Have A Job’), then reverses it in the bottom (‘I Have A Career’):

The name of the macro itself – *Successful Black Man* – creates a racially-presumptuous association. It implies that to be ‘successful’ is worth mentioning for a ‘black man’ [...] If a black man is successful, then he requires a modifier in front of his name to set him apart from a ‘normal’ black man [...] On the other hand, the form and content of the macro could also serve as a warning against stereotyping. The joke comes from lampooning our tendency to unproblematically accept stereotypes. (Milner, 2012: 181-182)

While Milner (2012) shows how memes, and in this case, the specific use of the second clause may inspire audiences to rethink stereotypes and marginalization of certain groups, its effects are not measurable without conducting an analysis of how audiences interpret these memetic texts. He adds that producers of memes introduce new, yet similar problems by being broadly accessible to diverse identities but also exclusive to those possessing subcultural literacies. Subcultural literacy refers to the ability to read and write in the social language of subcultural insiders, and in the context of memes requires the “knowledge about a large number of characters and the socially appropriate ways to use them in order to create an ostensibly simple four-panel comic” (Shifman, 2014: 115). While the structural constraints of meme collectives are beyond the scope of this study, it is helpful in highlighting contradictions in both the representations of race and those participating in these representations.

Finally, Shifman and Lemish’s (2010) content analysis on Internet comics reveals interesting trends in gender-based humour. In addition to the traditional mockery of women, they find

that men are increasingly portrayed as childish Neanderthals who are driven by the trinity of sex, booze, and sports. This is emblematic of post-feminist humour which targets both sexes, and fuses both feminist and anti-feminist ideas. Their primary concern lies in how user-generated content is neither more subversive nor emancipating than mass-media content, but mirroring the limitations of Milner's (2012) work is an inability to confirm this claim without reception-oriented research. While these studies improve understandings of the ways in which humorous memes represent discourses of race and gender, there is room to expand on how self-representation through memes and its frequent embodiment of humour, affects the recognition of race and gender.

### **Operationalisation of Conceptual Framework and Research Question**

As a conceptual framework, this study will use the concept of Internet memes to identify the cultural unit which Vines resemble most (what Vines are) and consider competing views on self-representation in digital culture (what Vines encourage) when examining how and to what degree the process may challenge dominant ideas of race and gender (desired outcome of Vines) that are constantly reproduced through stereotyping and othering, within the culture of speed (context in which Vines operate).

It is acknowledged that the application was not created with the same ethos of activism meant by the digital storytelling movement, for example, but for users to "share spontaneous moments, hilarious jokes, meaningful events and really, their lives" (Blog.twitter.com, 2014). While this has resulted in substantial generation of content by ordinary individuals, this study is especially interested in content produced by individuals who are normally othered on grounds of race and gender. A preliminary viewing of the sample leads to the curious observation that othering of the self often occurs through self-deprecating humour, but this realisation is not new, as already shown in the theoretical discussion on re-orientalism. A different approach to textual analysis could provide more unique findings, justifying the chosen research methodology and how it focuses on locating modes that are used in the limit of six seconds, how modes work together to create semiotic meanings and whether these meanings allude to the effectiveness of self-representation in redefining existing ideas of race and gender.

Interrogating these claims in relation to Vines, the research question conceptualised for this study is therefore: To what extent does self-representation promote a difference in the recognition of race and gender?

## **METHODOLOGY**

The following chapter will outline the criteria for choosing the methodology applied in this study, its strengths and weaknesses, the procedure in which the sample was selected and the proposed design of the research.

### **The Kineikonic Method of Multimodal Analysis**

To investigate the aforementioned research question and its related concerns, the kineikonic method of multimodal analysis is employed. Introduced by Burn and Parker (2001, 2003, 2013) as a multimodal theory of the moving image, 'kineikonic' is fundamentally a portmanteau of the Greek words 'kinein' (to move) and 'eikon' (image). The methodology also borrows social semiotic grammar of Halliday (1978), Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2001, 2010), who are concerned with meaning-making as a complex interplay between the producer of the text, as well as the socio-cultural environments in which the text is created and read. As Curwood and Gibbons (2010) purport, the methodology helped in their identification of modal choices in digital poems, how these modes functioned to explain the subject to those beyond his cultural group, and to resist ideologies that marginalise the subject as an Asian homosexual. They also suggest that Burn and Parker's (2003) work be expanded so as to improve the understanding of modal patterns and social meanings of digital media production, paralleling this study's interest in self-representation through Vines, which are digitally produced moving images that shape broader discourses of race and gender.

The adoption of the methodology is structured around four main criterions. Firstly, the technical elements of Vines and laden meanings of these elements in relation to race and gender, must be unpacked. The kineikonic method addresses both concerns by proposing a detailed examination of various modes and how they conduct 'semiotic import', akin to the Barthesian idea of connotation and meanings being determined by cultural codes to which the interpreter has access (van Leeuwen, 2005). Secondly, the strategic combination of audio, visual and temporal dimensions to maximise the impact of Vines suggests that the researcher must attend not only to individual modes, but also relations across modes. This connects with the methodology's focus on metamodality, which looks at the materialisation of meaning through complementary or contradictory interactions between modes. As Jewitt (2009) explains, "the relationships between modes as they are orchestrated in interactions (and texts) may realise tensions between the aspects of meaning in a text. This kind of tension can itself be meaningful and a means for encouraging reflection and critique" (p. 26). Thirdly, the

study's focus on locating a 'difference' suggests that the researcher must discern patterns not only in modal choices, but also in terms of racial and gendered connotations. These patterns are significant as they may imply a positive or negative 'difference', with the former crudely referring to the overcoming of othering and stereotyping on the basis of race and gender, while the latter refers to perpetuation of these processes through the narratives of Vines. The discussed literature could broadly serve as a basis of comparison to determine whether there is an emergent 'difference', mirroring how the kineikonic method often refers to other sources, such as social theories of gender and masculinities, because it "can only ever be one element of an interdisciplinary equation which must involve relevant theories and histories" (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001: 138).

Finally, the chosen method should outweigh other possible research methods by way of relevance and benefit. While leading theorists in film studies may rightfully argue that an extensive field of semiotics for moving images already exists (Bordwell & Thompson, 1979), there is a tendency to overemphasise processes of filming and editing at the expense of other semiotic modes, these modes are analysed in isolation, and studies are often obscured with psychoanalytical theories of film signification (Burn & Parker, 2001). A methodological alternative could have been visual discourse analysis, which – when situated within a Foucauldian framework – would explore how images and texts construct specific views of the social world (Rose, 2001). However, this methodology would be more concerned with the role of socially powerful institutions in discursive constructions of race and gender, for example, and how they discipline understandings of assumed audiences. As the study focuses on self-representation of ordinary individuals, also with their roles as viewers and producers of Vines often converging, conducting visual discourse analysis would be inappropriate. While this method of elimination hints at the viability of multimodal analysis, it is also in its entirety, too broad. Multimodality examines diverse modes of communication ranging from gestures to touch, and consists of three main perspectives (the social semiotic approach to multimodal analysis, multimodal interactional analysis and a systemic functional grammar approach to multimodal discourse analysis). Yet, the study of moving images in the context of digital culture is considerably neglected, further qualifying Burn and Parker's (2001, 2003, 2013) kineikonic method as a timely and valuable contribution to the multimodal tradition.

Perhaps most relevant to this study's interest in the representation of self, the method "offers a way to read across from text to context, from producers of moving images to those who used to be known as audiences, but who increasingly actively remake moving image texts for themselves" (Burn, 2013: 22). Yet, there is to some extent, a betrayal to this cause as the method is ultimately a form of textual analysis. The study may reveal how the self is

represented through Vines, the modes in which Vines are composed of and how they contribute to discourses of race and gender, but there is no access to producers or viewers as opposed to the use of interviews, surveys and focus groups. However, this problem is quickly resolved since the research question focuses on content of Vines, placing the motivations, decisions and sentiments of producers and viewers beyond the scope of this study.

Lastly, it is acknowledged that the method's emphasis on different modes, their different functions and the ways in which they combine to generate meanings resembles a certain kind of determinism. As Bazalgette and Buckingham (2013) criticise, McLuhan's famous dictum "the medium is the message" may be loosely translated into "the mode is the message" (p. 98). At the same time, the specific role of modes and how they "develop their own contours, contribute their own colouring, yet contribute to an overall coherence" (Burn, 2013: 8) in issues of self-representation, memes, race and gender have not been widely discussed and could provide interesting findings to supplement existing literature.

### **Sampling Strategy**

In an attempt to best address the research question, the selected data must meet the following characteristics in at least one instance: (1) Content should feature self-representation of ordinary individuals, which may include Vine celebrities such as Jeromme Jare and KingBach. Although the terms 'celebrity' and 'ordinary' seem to stand in direct conflict, Vine celebrities are simply users who gain fame through the circulation and reception of their amateur videos. This is in contrast to the traditional valorisation of 'celebrity', associated with Dyer's (1986) work on film stars and star images in the classical Hollywood period of cinema. By extension, this criterion also suggests that content by corporate, professional or marketing sources is excluded; (2) Content should make direct/indirect reference to race through one or more modes; and (3) Content should make direct/indirect reference to gender through one or more modes. The research is designed to recognise both direct/indirect references because "lack, gaps, silences and workarounds" are as important as "richness and replete semiotic structure" (Burn, 2013: 4) in the study of multimodal texts.

A sample (n=18) of Vines was then chosen from the Facebook page 'Best Vines' (<https://www.facebook.com/BestOfVines>) through purposive sampling, a method ensuring that the material being analysed fulfilled the requirements established above, eliminating those which did not meet the inclusion criteria (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Introduced in June 2013, the page compiles popular Vines originating from the mobile application, the



official website Vine.co and posts circulating in the mirror-site Vinescope.com. This page was chosen over other sources of Vines for the following reasons: (1) Over 21 million page likes indicate that it is a popular source of Vines with considerable influence on viewers; (2) There is a ranking of posts within the page itself, made visible through the number of likes and comments for each post. All other criteria held constant, this facilitates the process of choosing certain posts over others to be analysed; (3) Organisation of posts according to the Facebook timeline function, which eases the collection of data in the timeframe defined below; and (4) Problems associated with other sources, including the mobile application's inability to load posts after a certain amount of scrolling and the fact that it only offers pause/play, volume on/off options for users, which makes it difficult to examine content in smaller temporal units.

As briefly mentioned, another consideration is the sampling timeframe. It is ideal for the sample to be as evenly selected as possible, from when the first post was made on the page (June 2013) to the current stage in research (July 2014). Following the explanation of memes in the earlier chapter, Vines tend to be derivatives of preceding Vines and a sample chosen from the same time period may have repeated features or content<sup>1</sup> which are not representative and may result in inaccurate conclusions of a limited 'difference in the recognition of race and gender'. This is comparable to the disadvantages of systematic sampling, where the choosing of every  $k^{\text{th}}$  element in the population may result in the periodicity of a particular trait or trend which creates a bias in the results (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). One unexpected problem was also how the rate of posting was entirely dependent on the owner of the page. With the exception of zero posts in May 2014, all other months had at least one post. Subsequently, 18 Vines were chosen from June 2013, July 2013, August 2013, September 2013, October 2013, November 2013, December 2013, January 2014, February 2014, March 2014, April 2014 and July 2014.

Given more time, the sample size could be increased to improve external validity of the findings while ensuring that attention to textual detail is not substituted for a larger number of texts analysed. The length of study could also be extended to account for the "sleeper effect", where differences in self-representation of race and gender may be "minimal or non-existent in the short run and still prove significant in the end" (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011: 31).

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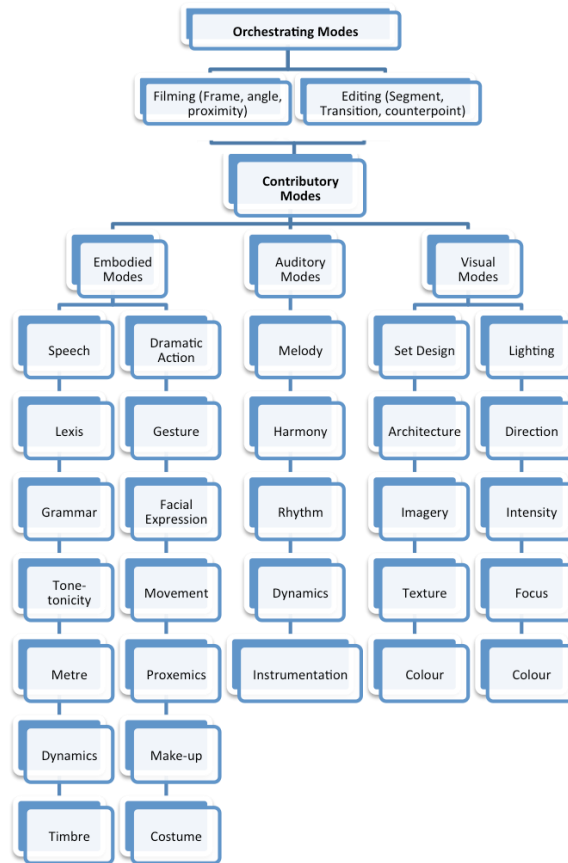
<sup>1</sup> In an analysis of YouTube videos, Shifman (2011) explains that there is a prevalent practice of reconfiguring popular content into derivative formats of parodies, mashups and remixes. Similarly, Vine creators reproduce other trending Vines with some changes but reuse certain modes (e.g. the same soundtrack, catch-phrase and so on).

## **Proposed Design of Research Tools**

Following Burn's (2013) latest development on the kineikonic method, the analysis was framed by an examination of metamodal relations between orchestrating modes (filming and editing) and contributory modes (embodied, auditory and visual modes) in the selected data. He explains that filming produces spatial framing, angle, proximity, camera movement, provisional duration and orchestration of the dramatic modes of action, speech, set and costume; while editing produces temporal framing and the orchestration of other contributory modes, such as sound and graphics. Although these modes may break into more specific signifying systems (see figure 1), it is arguable that not all modes or finer levels of granularity are relevant to the format and analysis of Vines. As a result, only modes related to filming, editing, speech, lexis, grammar, tone, dramatic action, gesture, facial expression, movement, proxemics, make-up, costume, melody, rhythm, instrumentation, set design and imagery were considered.

To address the study's deliberation on speed and temporality, the metamodal analysis was also accompanied by an 'editing timeline' which records the succession of modes and how they connect to make semiotic meanings about self-representation, race and gender within the time limit of six seconds (see figure 2). Looking across the grid, the researcher can determine modal choices in accordance to time, while looking down the grid reveals how different modes operate jointly in a given temporal unit and if modal patterns are present, staying loyal to the prefix 'meta' in metamodality which connotes "beyondness and adjacency – cultural forms and modes within, beyond and next to each other" (Burn, 2013, p. 5). To slow Vines down and review their timelines, the data was downloaded using a free Facebook video downloading service (Fbdown.net) and was transferred into a video editing software (iMovie). This strategy is aligned with Burn's (2003) suggestion to supplement the analysis of moving images with screengrabs, image sequences and/or editing structures.

### **Figure 1: Suggested modes in analysis of metamodality (Burn, 2013)**



**Figure 2: Examining metamodal relations with an ‘editing timeline’**

Vine No. X: Title			
URL:			
Still/Screengrab			
Filming Techniques: Frame/Angle/Proximity/Provisional Duration			
Embodied Modes: Speech/Lexis/Grammar/Tone			
Embodied Modes: Action/Gesture/Facial Expression/Movement/Proxemics/Make-up/Costume			
Auditory Modes: Melody/Rhythm/ Dynamics/Instrumentation			
Visual Modes: Set Design/Imagery			
Editing Timeline: Editing Techniques (Segment, Transition, Counterpoint, Continuity/Discontinuity Editing), Succession of Modes (As recorded above), How Modes May Contribute Semiotic Meanings of Self-Representation/Race/Gender	0-2s:	3-4s:	5-6s:

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

Having adopted the proposed research design and conducted a metamodal analysis of each Vine, the following chapter presents key findings which emerged across the sample. The chapter begins with three ways in which self-representation promotes a significant but complex, multifarious difference in the recognition of race and gender (clear reversal of stereotypes, reversal of stereotypes accompanied with introduction of new stereotypes, self-representation of the other accompanied with representation of other others resulting in varied levels and directions of othering). This is tightly linked to a discussion on modal patterns (minimal employment and complementary interactions between modes, salient modes contributing to processes of stereotyping and othering, role of time and editing) which shows how Vines have common characteristics like memes, while possessing unique features that could revise the concept.

### **Pattern 1 in Self-Representation: Clear Rejection of Stereotypes and Processes of Othering**

Established in the aforementioned literature is the capacity for self-representation to reject dominant representations of race and gender, especially discernible in *If Women Flirted Like Men* and *Never Explain GTA 5 In Public*. The former begins with a medium-long shot panning past two female subjects, who are seen sitting on the staircase in laid-back postures

while intently eyeing the camera. This is accompanied with the Latino female in black cajoling “Aye Papi, you lookin’ good [...] Come here, I want to kiss, come here”. Instead, the slow movement of the camera, lack of other diegetic or non-diegetic sounds and the relatively long take (approximately three seconds, half of the six second limit) prolongs the sense of discomfort that viewers may feel as the filming technique, embodied and auditory modes seem to situate them on the receiving end of the flirting, actually meant for male subjects revealed in the next frame. Following a jump cut, three Latino men are seen cringing, averting eye contact and walking away in a hurry. The Latino male in black says “Oh my god” while being pushed forward by a Latino male in grey who whispers urgently “Run, run!” A reversal in gender roles is reflected through the combination of dramatic action, facial expression and speech of subjects, helping to express how females feel when males objectify them as such. A divergence from Pickering’s (2001) pessimistic argument also materialises as the females transgress prevailing frames of muteness and inhibition in which they are usually recognised, while their “masterful male counterparts” (p. 61) are seen fleeing instead.

In *Never Explain GTA 5 In Public*, a straight-on medium shot features a Black male in a toilet, speaking on the phone “No, you press X and square –“ when a White male walks in and overhears him conversing “– and then you get the gun and you kill everybody, okay?” The Black male shouts “No, no! It’s just a game!” but the White male has already left in a panic and is no longer visible in the frame. The editing timeline reveals that the first, second and third frames are shot in one continuous take, also known as plan-séquence (Branigan, 2005), but the frame in which the Black male highlights the use of a gun is longest in duration (3.4 seconds). His speech is also the only auditory element operating at the time, focusing both viewer and the White male on the mistaken intention to kill. Here, the process of self-representation is reminiscent of reversing the first, stereotypical clause in *Successful Black Man* memes as the Black male attempts to explain that colloquial terms from Grand Theft Auto 5 (a violent video game encouraging players to progress in the criminal underground) are being used and he is not actually instructing someone to “get the gun” and “kill everybody”. While running away denies the White subject an accurate understanding of the situation, viewers are able to witness how his dramatic action blindly and unfairly affirms the symbolic boundaries between ‘us’ (civilised White race) and ‘them’ (automatically dangerous by virtue of being Black). Despite the potential for negotiated or oppositional readings of these Vines, it is arguable that they endeavour to challenge the traditional recognition of race and gender.

## **Pattern 2 in Self-Representation: The Other's Simultaneous Rejection and Introduction of New Stereotypes Related to Race and Gender**

Compounding the success in which self-representation permits the other to reject existing understandings of race and gender, it is found that new definitions of themselves also fulfil the criteria of promoting a 'difference' but in rather questionable terms. This argument is best exemplified by *Crazy Girlfriends Are Pretty Much Like Santa Claus* and *Cheating On A Girl Will Only Lead To Her Crazy Friends Coming After You Who Will Help Her Do Crazier Stuff*. The former begins with a straight-on close up of a White male sleeping, when a White female creeps up from behind him, stares menacingly at the camera and sings "She sees you when you are sleeping" to the tune of *Santa Claus is Coming to Town*. Following this, she sneaks up on the White male as he is reading a magazine, glares directly at him and continues with "She knows when you are awake". The last frame provides the point-of-view of the White male using his phone to 'like' an image of an attractive woman, interrupted by a low-angle close up of the White female springing up on him, holding a knife to his neck and shouting "She knows if you've been bad!". The angle and proximity of shots accentuate the facial expressions and body language of a frightened male and intimidating female, while the choice of lyrics reinforces the latter's superior position as a surveillant who 'sees' and 'knows' all. Equally important as the female's audibility is the male's sustained silence, reflecting a "denial of dialogue, interaction and change" (Pickering, 2001, p. 49) usually associated with the female other. Indeed self-representation has particularly rejected the perception of female as passive but her renewed portrayal as the monstrous-feminine who is terrifying, horrific and abject is neither a desirable change (Creed, 1992). As suggested in the Vine title, the female subject is observed to be 'crazy', with inclusion of the knife further signifying a propensity to be violent. This portrayal is significant as it shows how her expected position as the other cannot be completely discarded, now constituting as a form of illicit danger that should be distanced from safe legitimacy. Through self-representation, the female subject is included in all frames while being unwelcomed by the male subject, is everywhere as an omnipresent girlfriend yet nowhere as the displaced other. As Pickering (2001) appropriately describes, the identity of the other becomes "split, broken, dispersed into its abjected images, its alienated representations" (p. 78).

Similarly, *Cheating On A Girl Will Only Lead To Her Crazy Friends Coming After You Who Will Help Her Do Crazier Stuff* features several females who do not conform to the idea of helplessness but represent themselves in aggressive, despotic ways. It starts with a straight-on close up of a female crying "He cheated on me!" followed by six friends responding on the phone in six respective frames. The adoption of jump cuts results in sharp transitions

between frames and reinforces the immediacy at which these friends agree to take action. The first frame shows a female saying “Let’s go” while raising a rifle, and the second shows a female whispering “I’m on my way” while entering a car. The third shows a female who does not speak but fiercely raising a knife and staring at the camera. The fourth female does the same while lighting a bunsen burner, the fifth female says “Who’s driving?” while lifting a chopper and the final female concludes with “I’m ready”. Amongst the diverse characters, varying length of takes and inconsistent use of auditory modes, a continuously present element is a weapon. The weapon symbolises a sense of empowerment yet foreshadows harm upon the unseen and unheard male, who is pending confrontation with these females. The repetition of ‘crazy girlfriend’, ‘crazy friends’ and ‘crazier stuff’ also alludes to the stereotype of ‘crazy eyes’, which is increasingly circulated in popular culture as an indicator of emotional volatility, neediness and possessiveness associated with attractive women. It can be argued that definitions of the female subject, regardless old or new, seem to present the subject as occupying extreme positions in which she is either mentally unstable or victimised. This may be paralleled with the previous discussion on Krips (1990), who suggests that power allows for the realisation of multiple subjectivities but within limits that subjects are confined in, or in this case, a continuum of otherness in which female subjects may shift but find difficulty being disassociated from. Returning to the research question, self-representation results in a substantial, but not necessarily progressive or complete change in the recognition of race and gender.

### **Pattern 3 in Self-Representation: Varied Levels and Directions of Othering**

Another emergent pattern is the tendency for self-representation of the other to be integrated with representation of other others, resulting in several recipients and degrees of othering all at once. This strategy is made most apparent in *Never Judge A Girl From The Back*, *White Moms Vs Black Moms* and *Paranormal Blacktivity*. *Never Judge A Girl From The Back* begins with a low-angle medium close-up of two Black males discussing an attractive Black female in the distance. In a strong ebonics accent, the first male says “Brah, that shawty bad” and his friend responds with “Yyyyeah, what’s goin’ ma?” Following a jump cut, a straight-on long shot of the female’s back zooms into a medium close-up as she turns and addresses the camera with “What’s goin’ ma n\*gga?” The proximity of shot helps reveal strong, masculine facial features while the use of a single auditory mode allows her low-pitched voice to be heard, together implying that the attractive female may not actually be female. It is pertinent that the Black male is then seen fainting while his friend runs away, suggesting how one group of other (Black males) is fearful of another other (Black female with ambiguous sexual

identity). Reflected in their dramatic action is a process of othering they themselves may experience, rejecting what appears incidental from the cultural norm and suppressing any ambivalence posed by the Black female's failure to fit in the binary of man and woman.

There are two important theoretical implications based on these observations. Although (or precisely because) othering has been executed in a comical way, the claim that humour is used to demarcate and maintain group boundaries is supported (Powell & Paton, 1988). It can even be argued that the study of humour itself operates as an "internal regulating mechanism of social control" (Powell & Paton, 1988, p. xviii). This is exemplified by the ways in which sexist, feminist and post-feminist theories of humour examine the portrayal of men, women, or both genders but fail to consider queer gender identities in various frames of comedy. Next, there appears to be a redefinition of the self-other complex, that while the self is normally depicted to be in a series of relationships with the other without ever losing the relative upper hand (Said, 1978), there is a hypocritical form of subordination amongst the others themselves. As emphasised in the theoretical chapter, there is a false dichotomy between those who are othered and those who participate in othering.

*White Moms Vs Black Moms* and *Paranormal Blacktivity* presents a hierarchy of othering that is just as, if not more so, complex. The former begins with a continuous shot-reverse-shot of a child dashing through the supermarket aisle and toppling products off the shelves, to a medium close-up of an anxious female. The female first assumes the role of a helpless White mother who pleads "Ashley, please stop! Ashley please, come on!" This is followed by a jump cut into the next frame, which reinforces an abrupt change in persona as the female now assumes the role of a fierce Black mother. When the same child is seen running away, the female responds uncouthly with "Oh, you want to f\*ck around? You think I'm playin'?" Without hesitation, she grabs a football and throws it in the direction of the child (who cannot be seen, but is presumably hit as she is heard yelling "Ow!"). The frame in which this occurs is longest in duration, again placing most emphasis on the dramatic action (violent), facial expression (fierce) and speech (ill-mannered) of the Black mother. When combined, these modes exaggerate Black parenting and how it is centred around violence, the use of threats and vulgarities. At the same time, it can be argued that there is no longer an impulsive reduction of Black and White parenting into "negative/positive poles" (Pickering, 2001, p. 42). While the manner in which the Black mother disciplines her child appears 'negative', the White mother's inability to control her child also cannot be considered as 'positive' parenting. In this occasion, self-representation does not counter stereotypes of Black parenting but its effects are fairly dampened when juxtaposed against the weaknesses of White parenting, an



outcome fulfilling Tajfel's (1981) appeal to "neutralise pernicious reckonings of the other" (p. 6) by encouraging diversity in social and cultural perspectives.

Varied levels and directions of othering are also found in *Paranormal Blacktivity*, where the Black male depicts himself as a perpetual threat while the blonde female remains a damsel in distress. It begins with a high-angle medium shot of a blonde female stacking dishes in the kitchen, when she unexpectedly finds a Black male staring at her through the kitchen window. He slowly slides his hand down and his facial expression is vacant. In a frenzy, the female runs in the opposite direction only to meet the same Black male in the hallway. As she returns to the kitchen, the Black male is found sitting silently in the sink. The editing timeline notes how the Vine is shot in one continuous take, where its long duration (six seconds) and no cuts in audio (sustained screaming) and dramatic action (non-stop running) fittingly reflects a lack of relief for the female at any given point. She readily conforms to the stereotype of a victimised female, whose facelessness in all frames also reinforces a literal and metaphorical lack of recognition as other. Strikingly, the same modes contribute to a continued othering of the Black male, whose lack of speech (complete muteness) and dramatic action (standing still, yet appearing everywhere) attaches a troubling sense of ghostliness to his identity. Considering the extent to which ghosts are damned in narratives of religion as evil, less than human, or not human at all, the "imaginative demonology" (Said, 1978, p. 26) of the Black male is worsened. It should also be noted that *Paranormal Blacktivity* is a pun on the film title *Paranormal Activity*, but more so significant is the prefix 'paranormal' before 'blacktivity' (a combination of the words 'black' and 'activity') implying that mannerisms of the Black male deviate from the norm, and are therefore paranormal, with an unfair causal attribution to race.

When consolidated, these examples show how the symbolic expulsion of one other by another other is mainly achieved through racist and sexist humour, the use of contrast and role-playing. To begin with, it is difficult to distinguish whether racist or sexist humour is at work when the other others (such as the transgendered Black female, violent Black mother, ghostly Black male) are being targeted on account of both race and gender. Although Modleski (1991) specifically challenges essentialist claims in psychoanalytical theory, her argument that gender intersects with categories of race, ethnicity, sexuality and class is equally neglected in the study of humour. As discussed in the theoretical chapter, Weaver (2011) only examines racist discourses in embodied, cultural and postmodern senses while Billig (2005), Shifman and Lemish (2010) strictly conceptualise gender-based humour in sexist, feminist and post-feminist terms. While the above findings show how systems of race

and gender interlock in the process of othering or stereotyping, they concurrently suggest that dichotomised theories of humour could be more integrated.

There is also a repeated use of contrast and role-playing to project differences between various groups of others (Black males versus transgendered Black female, violent Black mother versus helpless White mother, powerless White female versus ghostly Black male). This may result in the symbolic rehabilitation of one group of others at the expense of other others, but new complications arise. In particular, the continuous polarisation between Black and White culture (White Moms versus Black Moms, White Santa versus Black Santa, Black male who plays GTA 5 versus frightened White male) simultaneously excludes other racial and ethnic groups from the narratives. This mirrors how mainstream media often “refuse the possibility of connection and identification” (Silverstone, 2007, p. 47) with the other who is portrayed to be primitive, mysterious and barbaric, or in this case, invisible. Role-playing (such as the female subject playing both White and Black mother) may also evoke a difference in the recognition of the other (parenting of Black mother not as villainised when compared to parenting of White mother) but the fundamental idea of self-representation, which by definition opposes representation of the self by someone else, is undermined.

### **Pattern 1 in Metamodal Analysis: Minimal Modes and Complementary Interaction Between Modes**

While the previous section considers complex ways in which self-representations negotiate the recognition of race and gender, the contribution of modal choices and patterns to this outcome may be further discussed. Firstly, there appears to be a minimal yet effective employment of modes across most Vines in the sample. For example, *Running in A White Neighbourhood* is composed of only two frames, the first featuring a straight-on medium close-up shot of a Black male saying “I like running through White people’s neighbourhood with my shirt off.” This is followed by a high-angle, hand-held shot of the male running, flailing his arms in the air and shouting “Hahaha, I’m going to steal all your stuff, hahaha!” Only a drastic change in tone and facial expression (from lack of emotion to laughing gleefully) is used, but attained all at once is a portrayal of the Black male as a merry, childlike and unrestrained other (Pickering, 2001), a strengthened association of his ethnicity with crime and the maximisation of comic effect.

It is acknowledged that a small number of Vines do employ multiple modes, but the interactions between these modes are almost always complementary. This is best illustrated by *If Robbers Took Selfies* and *Let Me Take A Selfie*. The former begins with a straight-on

medium close-up of two Black robbers and a White robber who are seen fidgeting by a door while saying “Come on man, let’s go!” when a Black male responds in a serious, low-pitched tone. As he mouths the next sentence, a non-diegetic track suddenly overlays with “But first, let me take a selfie!” in a female voice<sup>2</sup>. As the track plays, there is a succession of six stills, also known as selfies, which are recognisable by the inclusion of stretched-out hands and the use of high-angle framing. The first features the Black male holding a gun to his face and sticking out his tongue, followed by all Black robbers posing alongside the White robber who has his pants lowered to his ankles. In the next still, all robbers are posing in the kitchen with cereal boxes, followed by a Black robber posing on the toilet seat while holding a finger to his lip as though to suggest cheekily that his act be kept secret. The subsequent still shows all robbers making silly faces around the presumed owner of the house, a White female, who is seen sleeping on a bed. In the final still, all robbers happily surround the White female, who is tied up and has a cloth gagged in her mouth.

The occurrence of jump cuts between each still is synchronised with the tempo of the non-diegetic track, while the track itself complements the narrative as it makes an explicit reference to the phenomenon of self-portraits in the digital age. The sequence of stills also reflects the temporal order of the narrative while progressively worsening the extent to which othering of the self takes place. For example, the Black robbers first fulfil the position of other as “spectacle, an exhibit, a source of entertainment” (Pickering, 2001: 49) when mimicking self-indulgent females and acting in childlike ways around the house. By the last and most poignant still of the female being held captive in her own house, these robbers have intentionally transformed into the dangerous other who has invaded a space in which they have no part.

## **Pattern 2 in Metamodal Analysis: Salient Modes Perpetuating Processes of Stereotyping and Othering**

In addition to the employment of minimal modes and ensuring that there are complementary interactions between multiple modes if and when present, it is found that narratives that do perpetuate processes of stereotyping and othering tend to reuse particular modes, signifiers

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<sup>2</sup> As highlighted in the theoretical chapter, humour may be achieved when there appears to be a mismatch between modes (in this case, the unexpected juxtaposition of a masculine, male robber speaking in a female voice). Yet it is the complementary interaction between these modes, through precise editing or timing, which allows the mismatch to be made obvious and therefore funny. This study argues that the incongruity of modes explored by Shifman (2014) should not be mistaken with contradictory relations across modes, which if present, will be addressed by the kineikonic method separately.

and allusions. To ridicule females as irrational, less intelligent and superficial, it is found that embodied modes in *A White Girl's Nightmare* and *Females Risk Their Lives Everyday Taking Selfies* operate in exaggerated forms. This includes male subjects performing as White females with excessively high-pitched voices and overdramatised responses (female in former Vine snaps her neck when taking a selfie and calls it “the most traumatic experience” of her life, while female in latter Vine screams and falls theatrically to her knees after spilling a cup of coffee). Hyperbolic dramatic action is also present in *Never Judge A Girl From The Back*, *Paranormal Blacktivity*, *Never Explain GTA 5 In Public* and *The Dumb Girl In The Movies* where running, fainting and wailing literally and metaphorically reflects fear of the other. These responses are triggered by signifiers that accompany the other, such as various weapons or objects meant to cause harm. This includes the discussed gun in *Never Explain GTA 5 In Public*, actual gun in *If Robbers Took Selfies*, knife in *The Dumb Girl In The Movies* and *Crazy Girlfriends Are Pretty Much Like Santa Claus*, pot of burning oil in *How To Cook With Your Asian Friend* and so on.

There is also a tendency for the other to speak with a similar kind of language, grammar and lexis. Almost all Black and Latino subjects are heard using pejoratives, ghetto slang or broken English where there is the replacement of ‘brother’ with ‘brah’, ‘attractive woman’ with ‘shawty’, ‘how are you’ with ‘what’s goin’ and ‘please do not test my patience’ with ‘you want to f\*ck around?’ Borrowing from the study of sociolinguistics is Bernstein’s (1971) postulation that there are two types of language codes inherent in communication, an elaborated code and a restricted code, which play a significant role in the reproduction of class structure and social relationships. The latter is especially relevant, as its implicit linguistic principles and particularistic orders of meaning suggest that users operate in a restricted sociality, maintained and progressively strengthened through the coding system (Bernstein, 1971). Whether intentionally or unintentionally, these narratives have perpetuated the association of the other with a specific language code, further differentiating than integrating them with the cultural majority.

Lastly, there is a frequent use of allusions that are operationalised through verbal references, a non-diegetic insert from an identifiable media form (song/film/game) or simply through the title of the Vine. As Burn (2013) suggests, “part of the argument of the kineikonic approach is that the moving image has never possessed the kind of formal purity some cineastes would like to assert; rather, it has always been a promiscuous medium, and the cultural frames surrounding it have always been permeable” (p. 22). This contention is supported by *A White Girl's Nightmare* and *Females Risk Their Lives Everyday Taking Selfies* alluding to the iconic ‘White Girl’ in popular culture, *If Robbers Took Selfies* and *Let*

*Me Take A Selfie* alluding to the popularity of self-portraits in mobile culture, *For The Next 12 Hours All Crime is Legal: Asian Edition* alluding to the action horror film *The Purge* and so on (see appendix ‘Elaboration of allusions made in Vines’). While paralleling restricted codes in requiring inter cognitions and insider knowledge for a narrative to be understood, a repeated engagement with allusions also connects to the earlier argument on new iterations (Milner, 2012). ‘Iterations’ that are discursively caused by allusions may dissolve any ‘newness’ in the recognition of race and gender, potentially provided by varying narratives in which the allusions are positioned.

### **Pattern 3 in Metamodal Analysis: Role of Time and Editing**

The previous section has examined how certain modes contribute to the inferiorisation of the other on the basis of race and gender, while the self, whose identity is dependent on the translation of difference onto otherness, achieves a superior sense of definition (Pickering, 2011). To conclude, this section summarises the role of time and editing in organising modal choices that have been discovered in the metamodal analysis and how they combine to create the three main patterns in self-representation. Firstly, the duration of frames seems to correspond with significance of the particular frame to the narrative. For example, the female subject in *Paranormal Blacktivity* spends a full six seconds running in all directions, reinforcing the persistence of the ghostly Black male in pursuing her. In *The Dumb Girl In The Movies*, the female subject spends a significant amount of time (more than a third of six seconds) to pick an escape route, only to make the wrong decision. She chooses to run up the staircase despite being right by an open door, emphasising a lack of intelligence that is meant to be the crux of the narrative.

Secondly, time constraint seems to result in diverse topics being embedded in similar narrative structures of action-reaction (such as the Black male speaking of GTA 5 and White male fleeing, Latina females flirting and Latina males scurrying) as well contrasting subjects who are given the same circumstances (such as White mother’s passiveness as opposed to Black mother’s aggressiveness, White Santa Claus’ cautiousness when entering the house as opposed to Black Santa Claus break-dancing outlandishly, decisive boys as opposed to greedy girls when shopping). These structures are also accompanied by simple editing or no editing at all, as frames are separated by jump cuts or made continuous through a long take. In cinematic studies, jump cuts are depicted as a method which violates conventions of spatial, temporal and graphic continuity, and often disorients the spectator (Bordwell & Thompson, 1976). Notwithstanding that there is no other cutting option offered by the application, it is valuable in making contrasts and their intended effects more apparent. Jump cuts are also

effective in creating temporal ellipses and adding a quicker pace to a sequence of events, since the six-second format cannot accommodate lapses in narrative days, months or years. It is therefore arguable that the simple packaging of content through these structures and editing techniques are motivated by the time limit, forming a distinctive meme genre defined by Shifman (2014) as “socially recognised types of communicative action” which “share not only structures and stylistic features but also themes, topics and intended audiences” (p. 99).

## **CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Organising this conclusion around the conceptual framework, the key insights obtained from operationalisation of the kineikonic method are measured against the theoretical characterisation of Vines as memes, the outcome of self-representation through Vines and the context of speed in which Vines function.

Firstly, the three patterns in metamodality suggest that a common form is being employed by several users, who create narratives that are fairly original or clearly derivative. This mirrors Shifman’s (2011) description of memes containing a “cluster of textual traits identified here as catalysts for imitation by others” (p. 199), which logically, fulfils her other criterion that memes are created with awareness of each other. Shifman (2014) also argues that memes may either be textual, still images or audio-visual, all of which are modes being combined in Vines. Collectively, these findings urge for the contemporary notion of memes to be expanded and to include Vines. Secondly, the three patterns in self-representation make a direct address to the research question and suggest that a significant difference in the recognition of race and gender is materialised, though in rather convoluted terms. For example, the process of self-representation may reject certain stereotypes but new stereotypes are also introduced through the use of humour, role-playing and allusions.

Finally, connections between Vines and the culture of acceleration are made most explicit by the section on time and editing. More than being a cause for abstract debate, speed is systematised and embodied in applications like Vine, its specific modes and the organisation of racial and gendered narratives around the short time limit. The findings suggest that there is a “technologically sped-up repetition” (Hoofd, 2012: 14) of difference in the recognition of race and gender, but this difference is not equivalent to an epochal transcendence of all stereotypes and othering, for the reasons explained earlier. Connolly (2002) is more optimistic in drawing from Nietzschean philosophy and hypothesises that experimental, improvisatory attitudes may develop when speed is embraced and shocks are finally

accustomed to. He maintains that the speed-elite society is “morally more agile, quicker on our feet and so, perhaps more generous in our regard for the challenging worlding of the cultural other” (Tomlinson, 2007: 156), but this remains a contentious subject for further research.

Assessing theoretical, methodological and analytical procedures implemented in this study, the following shortcomings are also identified: Considering the methodology’s roots in social semiotics, this study has shown how socio-cultural contexts of speed or existing trends (taking selfies, identifying females with ‘crazy eyes’, etc.) are linked to semiotic meanings produced by Vines. However, little attention is paid to socio-cultural characteristics of the researcher herself, whose race as non-western and gender as female could privilege certain ways of analysing the sample. As Rose (2001) argues, the social sciences are just as discursive as other forms of knowledge production and the researcher inevitably participates in discursive formation that may not be fully objective. This is a problem which could possibly be averted with mechanisms necessitated in quantitative methodologies but not practiced with the kineikonic method, such as the checking for intercoder reliability. The sample could also have drawn from a wider range of sources, upon realising that ‘Best Vines’ aggregates content from several platforms but the content is predominantly created by Americans. To achieve a more holistic understanding of whether self-representation promotes a difference in the recognition of race and gender, content from a more global group of users could be analysed and added to the current findings. The level of cultural liberalism or conservatism in each country may influence ideas of race and gender, a potentially interesting variable which future research could account for.

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## APPENDICES

### Glossary Of Terms Related To Kineikonic Method Of Multimodal Analysis

**Kineikonic:** Burn and Parker (2001, 2003, 2013) refer to the 'kineikonic mode' as the mode of the moving image. Their framework integrates concepts from multimodality, Metz's (1974) cinematic terms, as well as Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) visual grammar, which is structured around the Hallidayan idea of metafunctions (representation of the world, orientation of text to the audience and organisation of elements in the text)

**Social Semiotics:** Social semiotics is a concept first introduced by Hodge and Kress (1988). It attempts to link 'the text, the realisation of meaning, to the specific social conditions and specific material forms and agencies through which meanings are reproduced' (Koga-Browes, 2009, p.4). This opposes the practices of traditional semiotics, where a text is studied out of its context and cultural background

**Multimodal Analysis:** Multimodality or multimodal analysis is posited in Hallidayan social semiotics, dealing with the use of several modes to create a semiotic product or event (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Jewitt (2009) explains that 'the starting point for multimodality is to extend the social interpretation of language and its meanings to the whole range of representational and communicational modes or semiotic resources for meaning making that are employed in a culture – such as image, writing, gesture, gaze, speech, posture' (p.1)

**Mode:** Although there are varying conceptions of modes or modalities, they may be referred to as different resources being used in the communication of messages, ranging from sound to movement. Jewitt (2009) explains that a mode and its organising principles are understood in social semiotics as the outcome of cultural shaping and social interactions of people

**Metamodality:** In Burn's (2013) latest work on the kineikonic approach to multimodal analysis, he emphasises on the 'interplay of all the modes which contribute to the moving image' (p.4) and the study of metamodal relations between the orchestrating modes and contributory modes

**Orchestrating Modes:** Orchestrating modes are filming and editing processes of moving images, where filming produces spatial framing, angle, proximity, camera movement and provisional duration; while editing produces temporal framing and the orchestration of other contributory modes. Orchestrating modes are not mutually exclusive as filming may anticipate and produce many editing functions, or there could be no use of filming at all. This is best exemplified by the assemblage of digital animations through extended editing of 3D animations and virtual camera positions instead (Burn, 2013)



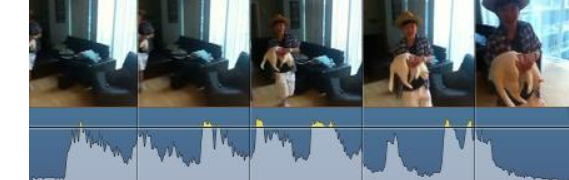
**Contributory Modes:** Contributory modes may be classified into embodied modes (primarily examining dramatic action and speech), auditory modes (music) and visual modes (primarily concerned with lighting and set design). These modes may be broken down into further analysable elements, but Burn (2013) argues that 'it is not simply a matter of decomposing larger semiotic modes into progressively smaller elements, though this may be a valuable analytical route for some researchers; and all analysts need to decide at what level of granularity they want to work' (p.8)

**Diegetic Sound:** Diegetic sound is a sound that has a source in the narrative (visible on screen or implied to be present by some kind of action). This includes words being spoken by characters, sounds made by objects that are seen in the narrative and music coming from instruments in the narrative space (Bordwell & Thompson, 1979)

**Non-diegetic Sound:** Non-diegetic sound is represented as coming from a source outside the narrative. This includes the commentary of a narrator, sound effects that are added for dramatic effect and mood music (Bordwell & Thompson, 1979)

**Non-diegetic Insert:** A non-diegetic insert occurs when the filmmaker cuts from the scene to a metaphorical or symbolic shot that is not part of the space and time of the narrative itself (Bordwell & Thompson, 1979)

## Sample Analysis – *How To Cook With Your Asian Friend*

Vine No. 3: How To Cook With Your Asian Friend			
URL: <a href="https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=559689354091046">https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=559689354091046</a>			
Still/Screengrab			
Filming Techniques: Frame/Angle/Proximity/Provisional Duration	Straight-on angle, medium close-up of White male and Asian friend	Long shot of White male	Long shot progresses into medium close-up of Asian friend with cat
Embodied Modes: Speech/Lexis/Grammar/Tone	White male: 'Cooking with your Asian friend –' Asian friend, with heavy accent: 'Oh hello!'	White male: 'First you get your pot, you add your oil'	Asian friend shouts excitedly, with heavy accent: 'Then you get your cat!' White male, sounding shocked: 'No man, what the f*ck!'
Embodied Modes: Action/Gesture/Facial Expression/Movement/Proxemics/Make-up/Costume	White male speaks directly to camera, introduces Asian friend. Asian friend waves to camera, smiling. He is wearing a straw hat, a signifier usually associated with tourists (Re: Stereotype of Asians as 'perpetual foreigner' hailing from the far East)	Asian friend is no longer seen in frame. White male narrates steps in which cooking process is carried out, while holding onto pot and pouring oil into it	Asian friend runs towards camera with cat, implying that the next step in the cooking process is using the cat as meat
Auditory Modes: Melody/Rhythm/ Dynamics/Instrumentation	No accompanying music, only diegetic sounds of voices as both males speak to the camera	No accompanying music, only diegetic sounds of White male's voice as explains cooking steps	No accompanying music, only diegetic sounds of Asian's voice as he carries cat and response of White friend who is not seen in this frame
Visual Modes: Set Design/Imagery	Kitchen in house	Kitchen in house	Living area of house
Editing Timeline: Editing Techniques (Segment, Transition, Counterpoint, Continuity/Discontinuity Editing), Succession of Modes (As recorded above), How Modes May Contribute Semiotic Meanings of Self-Representation/Race/Gender	0-1.7s: Short take with short dialogue (brief introduction of what is happening, with whom).  Identification of friend's nationality/race (in this case as 'Asian') combined with heavy accent of the Asian himself act as precursors to cultural difference. Distinctions between two subjects already made clear within first frame	1.8-3.9s: Jump cut from first shot to second shot, which is similarly a short take	4.0-6.0s: Sudden jump cut from second shot to third shot, accompanied with yelling reinforces sense of shock towards Asian friend's proposition to cook cat  Behaviour of Asian friend conforms to stereotype of 'perpetual foreigner' (Cortes, 2013, p.10). In presenting the outrageous desire to cook a domestic animal, unaccepted in the West as an illogical and cruel act, he appears at the same time 'bewildered with Western values and customs, and thus, regarded as inherently incapable of assimilating to American culture' (Cortes, 2013, p.10). Rejection by the White male (who says 'No man, what the f*ck!' to cooking a cat) also reinforces the symbolic expulsion of the other as barbaric while the White subject confirms his position as civilised, modern and morally superior

## Sample Analysis – *Never Judge A Girl From The Back*

Vine No. 5: Never Judge A Girl From The Back			
URL: <a href="http://vinescope.com/never-judge-a-girl-from-the-back-549.html">http://vinescope.com/never-judge-a-girl-from-the-back-549.html</a>			
Still/Screengrab			
Filming Techniques: Frame/Angle/Proximity/Provisional Duration	Low angle, medium close-up shot	Straight-on long shot, zooms into medium close-up shot	Long shot
Embodied Modes: Speech/Lexis/Grammar/Tone	Black male in background, with ebonics accent: 'Brah, that shawty bad' Black male in foreground, with ebonics accent: 'Yyyeah' (Note use of ghetto slang: 'brah' instead of 'brother' and 'shawty' instead of 'attractive woman')	Black male (can't tell which), with ebonics accent: 'What's goin' ma?' Black female, with ebonics accent: 'What's goin' ma n*gga?' (Note use of ghetto slang: 'what's goin' instead of 'how are you' and 'ma n*gga' which is a derogatory way to address African Americans, but used by African Americans themselves. Implications?)	No speech
Embodied Modes: Action/Gesture/Facial Expression/Movement/Proxemics/Make-up/Costume	Both males have normal conversation with each other while looking into the distance at what is discussed to be a good-looking female	Only the back of Black female is at first seen. Black female stops walking, turns slowly to face the camera/Black males and responds politely to them. Black female has heavy make-up, masculine facial features and speaks in a low-pitched voice, suggesting that she might actually be transgendered/a man	Black male (in foreground earlier) falls backwards and faints on the ground, while Black male (in background earlier) runs away from his friend in a frenzy
Auditory Modes: Melody/Rhythm/ Dynamics/Instrumentation	No accompanying music, only diegetic sounds of male voices	No accompanying music, only diegetic sounds of males and female's voices	No accompanying music, only diegetic sound of first male hitting the ground in his fall and footsteps of other male as he flees in the opposite direction
Visual Modes: Set Design/Imagery	Only trees visible behind males	Typical street in neighbourhood	Typical street in neighbourhood
Editing Timeline: Editing Techniques (Segment, Transition, Counterpoint, Continuity/Discontinuity Editing), Succession of Modes (As recorded above), How Modes May Contribute Semiotic Meanings of Self-Representation/Race/Gender	0-1.7s: Filming angle (viewers look up to males as shot in filmed from low angle) and distance of shot (viewers feel very near to males because of medium-close up) work in tandem to place males, what they are saying and looking at (embodied modes) in focus, contributing to curiosity of viewers about the 'shawty' they speak of but is yet to be seen	1.8-3.7s: Jump cut from first frame to second frame of woman's back/who they were ogling over (viewers given point-of-view of what would be considered an ordinary situation of males flirting with females, through the use of filming, editing, embodied, auditory modes)  Medium-close up of female's face/facial expression (allowing viewers to realise that she has masculine features) and use of only one auditory mode (allowing viewers to hear that she has a low-sounding voice like a man) also work together to reveal how the attractive female is not actually a female and as a result, viewers should feel as shocked as Black males	3.8s-6.0s: Jump cut from second frame to third frame, with camera tilting from fainting Black male to running Black male and back to fainting Black male who is now laying flat on the ground. Quick shift from second to third frame dramatizes cause (female as not really female) and effect (fainting/running)  But what is being implied with males' extreme response to Black female? E.g. Black male running away literally and symbolically reflects complex power relations, as one other is just as fearful of another other (Black female with ambiguous sexual identity). Here, the Black male is participating in the process of othering that he may experience himself, explained by Pickering (2001) as a strategy to distance what is incidental from the cultural norm and to control ambivalence (in this occasion, refers to status of Black female as neither man or woman). Processes of self-representation may perpetuate problems of media representation, where there is a tendency to marginalise 'queer' communities

## Elaboration Of Allusions Made In Vines

Sample(s)	Allusion To	Elaboration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A White Girl's Nightmare</li> <li>○ Females Risk Their Lives Everyday Taking Selfies</li> </ul>	'White Girl'	The stereotypical 'White Girl' is teased for being overly attached to popularised brands/products and is explicit about having purchased these kitsch brands/products through social media. Urban Dictionary informally defines the 'White Girl' as 'A creature who often posts pictures of Starbucks on Instagram, Tumblr, or Facebook. Often wears leggings and Ugg Boots and posts about how Nutella is very good when everybody knows it is. You will always see a White Girl with her Ugg Boots on, Leggings on, and iPhone at Starbucks'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If Robbers Took Selfies</li> <li>○ Let Me Take A Selfie</li> <li>○ Females Risk Their Lives Everyday Taking Selfies</li> </ul>	Selfie	A selfie is a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically with a smartphone or webcam, then shared via social media (Oxforddictionaries.com, 2014). While it is often associated with vanity and self-promotion, it also refers to a broader cultural phenomenon which the ordinary public, politicians and celebrities participate in. It was made especially famous by the electronic song <i>#Selfie</i> , released in January 2014 by <i>The Chainsmokers</i> . The lyrics provide first-hand narration of a narcissistic, young female who criticises the outfits of other females in a club, the lack of attention paid to her by a person named Jason, and inflates the burden of decision-making when uploading pictures onto Instagram. At the end of each spoken verse, she pauses before saying the now iconic phrase 'But first, let me take a selfie'. Oliver Lockett, CEO of social media marketing firm <i>TheAudience</i> , describes the song as being 'a shi*t-white-girls-say-meets-a-club-remix' (Rindfuss, 2014)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ For The Next 12 Hours All Crime Is Legal: Asian Edition</li> </ul>	The Purge	<i>The Purge</i> is a 2013 action horror film written and directed by James DeMonaco, featuring an event which occurs every year from 1900hrs on June 20 <sup>th</sup> to 1900hrs on June 21 <sup>st</sup> in America. During the purge, any known crime becomes legal and all emergency services (police, fire department, hospitals) are suspended. The event is meant to provide catharsis for citizens but acts a form of population control against poorer and homeless people, who are unable to afford the necessary items to protect themselves
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Paranormal Blacktivity</li> </ul>	Paranormal Activity	<i>Paranormal Activity</i> is a 2007 supernatural horror film written and directed by Oren Peli. The film is centred around a young couple, Kati and Micah, who are haunted by a supernatural presence in their home
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Never Explain GTA 5 In Public</li> </ul>	Grand Theft Auto	<i>Grand Theft Auto</i> is an action-adventure video game series, with the term <i>Grand Theft Auto</i> referring to motor vehicle theft. It originally encourages players to rise through the ranks of organised crime, often with the use of assassination, taxi-driving, fire-fighting, street racing, etc. In the latest version, <i>Grand Theft Auto V</i> , 'the ambition is not only to tell a story but also to create a fully functioning social universe within a faithful depiction of a contemporary city. In addition to the core story, the player has the freedom to do whatever he or she wants, from taking part in a virtual triathlon to visiting a strip club to stealing cars. In this kind of video game, often described as an 'open world' game, there is a difference between action that is required by the game in the course of the narrative and the action that is merely possible within the bounds the game' (Parkin, 2013)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Crazy Girlfriends Are Pretty Much Like Santa Claus</li> <li>○ Cheating On A Girl Will Only Lead To Her Crazy Friends Coming After You Who Will Help Her Do Crazier Stuff</li> </ul>	'Crazy Eyes'	'Crazy Eyes' is a term increasingly used in popular culture to describe women who are emotionally volatile and extremely needy. It was popularised by the American comedy series <i>How I Met Your Mother</i> as an 'indicator of future mental instability' where 'Marshall introduces Chloe to Ted and Barney at the bar and they tell him that she has the 'Crazy Eyes'. Both Ted and Barney give Marshall examples of their experiences with this malady; Barney's crazy-eyed date wanted a threesome with a teddy bear; Ted's crazy-eyed date, Jenene, picked up a long metal rod and repeatedly hit a car that nearly hit them as they were about to cross the street' (Wikia, 2014)



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