Kylie Jenner and Her Instagram Audience: A Lacanian Cultural Analysis

Kylie Jenner und ihr Publikum auf Instagram: eine Lacanische kulturelle Analyse

by

Viktoria Pekarskaya

A thesis

presented to the University of Waterloo

and the Universitaet Mannheim

in fulfillment of the

thesis requirement for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Intercultural German Studies

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada / Mannheim, Germany, 2019

Author's declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Mannheim, 05.07.2019

Ehrenwörtliche Erklärung

Ich versichere, dass ich die Arbeit selbstständig und ohne Benutzung anderer als der angegebenen Hilfsmittel angefertigt habe. Alle Stellen, die wörtlich oder sinngemäß aus Veröffentlichungen in schriftlicher oder elektronischer Form entnommen sind, habe ich als solche unter Angabe der Quelle kenntlich gemacht. Mir ist bekannt, dass im Falle einer falschen Versicherung die Arbeit mit „nicht ausreichend" bewertet wird. Ich bin ferner damit einverstanden, dass meine Arbeit zum Zwecke eines Plagiatsabgleichs in elektronischer Form versendet und gespeichert werden kann.

Mannheim, den 5. Juli 2019

Abstract

This thesis aims to examine the perception of female gender on Instagram by utilizing a conceptual framework based on the Mirror Stage theory of Jacques Lacan. Taking Kylie Jenner's Instagram profile as an example of virtually-constructed female gender representation, I will describe the Instagram mode of operation and its cultural and social implications for users' identity formation processes. I will analyze four positively and three negatively assessed Instagram posts by Kylie Jenner. Guided by Lacanian terms and concepts, I will investigate the behavioural and emotional patterns of Kylie Jenner and her followers on Instagram, providing insights into the specificities of gender, race, and class performance in the context of new media.

By means of a qualitative analysis of the comments section, I have divided Kylie Jenner's Instagram posts into two categories. The first entails images of Kylie presenting herself in a traditional female role as mother, sister, daughter, or beauty-oriented woman. The second comprises all image deviations from that traditional feminine representation, including Kylie as an entrepreneur, billionaire, and car lover. In the subsequent analysis, I will compare followers' reactions to both categories by studying 500 randomly chosen comments for all seven selected posts. I will calculate the number and proportion of positive, negative, conversational, neutral, international, and Like Back comments in order to place the posts on a gradual scale and trace correlations between the position of the post on the scale, its femininity level, and its function as an object of self-identification.

I will argue that followers tend to show more approval when Kylie presents herself in a traditional female role. The posts in which Kylie occupies gender-unmarked or masculine interests are expected to initiate concern, negative emotions, and fierce debate in the comments section. The posts that conform to the "feminine" domain, on the contrary, are usually better assessed and less

discussed. Moreover, I will aim to prove that Kylie Jenner's negatively assessed content tends to dilute race and gender dichotomies.

Acknowledgements

      My sincere gratitude goes to Alice Kuzniar and Thomas Wortmann for their guidance and patience throughout this project. Thank you for believing in this idea and for helping me see the big picture.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Introduction

Nowadays, the life of every individual is, in one or another way, constructed through images. People have become accustomed to expressing themselves and their lives through photographs, and the main space for viewing and sharing instantly-taken photographs is social media. The emergence of such life-changing social media platforms as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter has marked a new era of virtual social interaction.

Social media, also known as new media, always entails an interactive aspect in any type of virtual activity. No matter whether the subject is engaged with a photograph-sharing application (e.g. Instagram, Snapchat), a news service (e.g. Twitter, Facebook), a dictionary (e.g. Multitran, Linguee, Reverso Context), or an electronic encyclopedia (e.g. Wikipedia), he or she can interact with the provided content by altering and influencing what he or she sees on the screen. Obar and Wilson, in their work *Social Media Definition and the Governance Challenge*, define social media as various applications with service-specific profiles that are connected with each another. The users of such profiles are inclined to generate and share the content (Obar & Wilson 745).

In other words, the new media allows the subject to monitor and manage the flow of information. It is important to note that collectively produced and presented information cannot, and should not always, be true. The rationale is that the information in new media is presented as hypertext content that can be edited, shared, and read by any user (e.g. Wikipedia articles). While the information is replaced by the hypertext content, the communication, for its part, is transformed into interactivity. Rafaeli states that:

> Interactivity is a process-related, variable characteristic of communication settings. Like face-to-face communication, computer-mediated communication has the capacity of enabling high interactivity. One postulated outcome of interactivity is engagement (Rafaeli 114).

In contrast to new media, traditional media turns the subject into a passive receiver who cannot do anything but consume a ready-made product. Consequently, old media represents a closed system that enables a one-way flow of information and does not allow the subject to participate in the collective compilation of the content. Radio, television, newspapers and books are good examples of traditional media. It should be mentioned, however, that the compilation of content in mainstream outlets listed above is generally broader than the so called bubbles or echo chambers of new social media.

In the next chapters, I will confine my research to investigating the new media. Specifically, I will examine the social media platform Instagram as a virtual space for public gender performance. I will illustrate Instagram's cultural implications for female identity representation by analyzing the profile of a famous media personality and Instagram celebrity Kylie Jenner. The endeavour of the current paper is to describe the tendencies and intentions behind Kylie Jenner's Instagram gender performance and her followers' perception of her constructed virtual identity in the terms of Lacanian mirror stage.

Before researching Instagram from cultural and psychoanalytical perspectives, I will refer to a few works that have already attempted to combine either traditional or new media studies with psychoanalysis. In fact, many traditional studies of popular culture have used a psychoanalytic theoretical framework when examining literature, art, cinema, and music. The application of the psychoanalytic approach to popular cultural materials is present in some works of Sigmund Freud. *Totem And Taboo*, *Leonardo da Vinci* and *A Memory of His Childhood*, *Moses and Monotheism* and *Civilization and Its Discontents* are a few examples of works in which Freud uses and develops his psychoanalytic theories as a tool for the cultural critique of sociopolitical scenarios.

Psychoanalysis and cinema studies have, approximately four decades later, become almost inseparable. At the beginning of the 1970s, film scholars started to refer to the psychoanalytic

terminology introduced by Freud and Lacan. As a rule, the scholars were interested in a specific connection between the screen and its viewer. Their theories used psychoanalytic terminology in order to understand and explain the appealing power of films. In Freudian film theory, such notions as castration, the unconscious, the Oedipus complex, and the return of the repressed were employed. The Freudian framework has contributed to the realms of sexuality and the subjectivity of the spectator. Lacanian theoretical film studies approach the explanation of the viewing process through notions of the gaze; the real, imaginary, and symbolic orders; fantasy; and desire.

In comparison to traditional media studies, the relationship between new media studies and Lacanian psychoanalysis leaves much to be desired. Only a limited number of new media studies have a decent insight into Lacanian thought. Among them is Nusselder's work *Interface Fantasy*, in which the author tries to demonstrate the distinction between two kinds of reality: a virtual reality that appears on the screen and a true reality that contrasts with it. She employs the Lacanian concept of fantasy thus:

> Fantasy, I want to show, is exactly the place that interfaces the virtual and the real. The computerized simulated environments resemble the 'intermediary' space of fantasy; they are between the real and the fictional (Nusselder 63).

Nusselder is convinced that the domains of reality and fantasy undergo some alterations in cyberspace. She claims that while the reality domain contracts, the fantasy domain, for its part, expands. Consequently, she compares cyberspace with the Lacanian mirror stage (in short, the process of infant's recognition of him/herself in the mirror) on which new media users act.

Another scholar who described cyberspace from the psychoanalytic perspective is one of the most influential Lacanian philosophers of the 21st century—Slavoj Žižek. In his article *Cyberspace, or The Unbearable Closure of Being*, Žižek claims that the Internet is a product of the real. He suggests distinguishing between the true and the virtual reality domains that shape the Internet

space. He states that there is a high risk of losing contact with true reality. According to Žižek, the subject on the Internet, in Lacanian terms, represents different identifications as a decentered subject. Additionally, Žižek characterizes the subject in cyberspace as being more real than he or she is in the real life. He claims that the subject on the Internet can externalize the repressed content which he or she is not capable of confronting in real life:

> I can do it, act it out, without really doing it, and thus avoid the anxiety connected with the RL activity – I can do it, and since I know I'm not really doing it, the inhibition or shame is suspended. (177)

Although the works mentioned above cover only some general features of small-scale Internet phenomena, they will still serve as an essential basis for conducting research on a specific new medium through the Lacanian gaze. In this paper, I am going to combine the domains of Lacanian psychoanalysis, social media, cultural analysis, and gender studies in order to examine Kylie Jenner's identity formation and her gender performance on the social platform Instagram.

One of the most significant aspects of Instagram for the current research is that Instagram along with other social media applications has become a key ground on which gendered assumptions are expressed, challenged, and, what is more important, reinforced. Instagram is a space where the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable gender performance are regulated. The established Instagram gender normativity affects the way the users structure and perform their gender on the platform.

The theoretical basis of my work, therefore, would not be full without a reference to the concepts and ideas of Judith Butler who was one of the first theorists to introduce gender as something performable. In her work *Imitation and Gender Insubordination*, she examines the construction of heterosexual and homosexual identities. Butler shows the limiting nature of identity categories, explaining it by the fact that identity categories are the products of certain exclusions and

concealments, and consequently are a site of regulation. Considering Butler's idea that identity forms are shaped by repetition and imitation, I will explore the way Kylie Jenner's Instagram followers foster the illusion of gender polarity and sexual continuity.

In my analysis, I will examine two types of Kylie Jenner's Instagram posts: the first one will comprise all photographs which show Kylie as a traditional female representative (a mother, sister, and beauty-oriented woman); the second one will include all post deviations from that traditional female image (a billionaire, car lover, businesswoman, and entrepreneur). In order to compare the followers' reactions to both categories, I will look at five hundred randomly chosen comments for each selected post. I will calculate the number and proportion of the positive and negative comments so that I can place the posts on a scale and analyze correlations between the position of the post on the scale, its function as an object of self-identification and its level of femininity.

Following the above-mentioned approach, the present research aims to:

- trace the way that Kylie Jenner constructs and performs her female identity through the social media platform, Instagram

- understand the triggering factors in Kylie's Instagram pictures, which cause her followers to experience certain types of emotion

- highlight the personal and cultural implications of her active participation on Instagram.

The research is intended to prove the hypothesis that followers tend to show more approval when Kylie presents herself in a traditional female role. The less controversial and provocative the presentation of Kylie's photograph is—in other words, the fewer deviations from an ordinary Instagram woman Kylie Jenner demonstrates—the more positive feedback the photograph receives. The posts in which Kylie Jenner dares to occupy the typical "masculine" niche of interests are expected to initiate concern and fierce debate in the commentary zone, while posts conforming to the "feminine" domain are usually less discussed.

The paper is divided into four main sections. The work begins with the introductory section, followed by two sections devoted to the detailed analysis of positively, and then negatively, assessed photographs of Kylie Jenner. The final section will present the summary of the work.

Chapter 1: The classic feminine side of Kylie Jenner's identity-crafting process

I was born at the end of the twenty-first century, in 1996, and I can thus classify myself as a 'millennial' or a representative of generation Y. An increased engagement with digital technology and virtual communication has become an indispensable feature of my generation. In fact, my personality, attitudes, and social skills developed in the era of messaging, social media platforms, and visual content sharing applications. Due to the technological advances of the twenty-first century, it is difficult to imagine how people's daily interactions can depend on their location. Nowadays, social media platforms have moved spatial markers to the margins and enhanced our communicative reach to such extent that we can interact with anyone, whenever and wherever we desire.

What is more impressive is that virtual communication through social media platforms seemingly enables us to be whoever we want to be. In the age of virtual social reality, we are able to construct our identities from wherever we are and edit them whenever we need an identity transformation. Today, in two clicks on our devices, we can craft and share ideal versions of ourselves. Misleadingly, all new communication tools that comprise identity-crafting opportunities may seem to be liberating. Alas, I consider the benefits harvested from the new technologies as ones that impose the same spacial, social, class, and gender restrictions, but to a greater degree.

Social media platforms have provided a new context; a new environment for the development and comprehension of our identities. Social media compels us to constantly construct and reconstruct virtual identities that are socially manufactured through interaction with the limitless social world. Today, our identity liberation is delusive in the sense that we can be whoever we desire, but our desires are shaped, not by us, or even by people physically surrounding us—they are shaped by the collective mind of millions of Internet users.

Thus far, I have speculated on some abstract social media platforms that recontextualize our social behaviour and social representations of ourselves. At this point, I wish to narrow down my research interest to the platform I am most frequently exposed to. This thesis will investigate Instagram, which provides its users with an opportunity to reconstruct their histories and lived experiences, day by day, and to proclaim their identities through pictures.

The first factor that contributed to the choice of this specific social platform was my personal experience of Instagram, which never seemed neutral. To be precise, I noticed my tendency to be unable to react neutrally to any kind of social commentary on my Instagram pictures and comments. I realized that I could either enjoy immense validation of one of my pictures, or suffer from the low of validation of them. Although I always feel vulnerable when adding another component—a new photograph on my Instagram profile—to my identity, I feel obliged to post new content in order not to be discarded by my followers. The tacit rule of Instagram is as follows: if you do not share pictures for a long period of time, you start losing parts of the identity you have constructed (e.g., if you stop posting group photographs with your friends, you no longer appear to be outgoing or sociable).

The second reason for choosing Instagram comes from the fact that this application is an excellent virtual space for studying web-interaction in relation to class differences. As we all know, due to reality shows, you can become "famous by being famous". Any ordinary person without any remarkable skills and talents can become famous through public exposure or public presentation. With Instagram, you are not only achieving fame, but also commercializing it. If you have enough followers on Instagram (starting from around 400,000), you can easily persuade a sponsor to pay you to promote products on your Instagram account. Cost per click (CPC) and cost per action (CPA) advertising are other ways for newly-created Instagram celebrities to become rich. Bloggers are paid for every click-through. Some Instagram users become millionaires by producing and selling their

own digital or physical products. Instagram bloggers valorize individualism. Their individual entrepreneurship on Instagram is a vivid representation of the transmission of power relations in the era of digital technology and of neoliberalism.

The third, and arguably the most important, reason for researching the Instagram platform, as a virtual environment that has a great influence on our identity recontextualization, was due to my Instagram subscription to Kylie Jenner's profile. She entered *Time*'s list of the twenty-five most influential people on the Internet in 2018. This woman has constructed an extremely ambiguous public image on Instagram that collapses commonly adopted delineations and correlations of race, class, and beauty.

Instagram is therefore the only contemporary identity construction platform that I intend to consider in my research. Through a Lacanian psychoanalytical lens, I aim to conduct a cultural and gender analysis of Kylie Jenner's Instagram account, investigating not only the structure and content of her Instagram profile, but also the reasoning behind the actions and behaviour of her followers.

In this chapter, I will investigate four postings that attracted a large amount of positive feedback: "We are Family", "I am Barbie", "Kylie's vacation with Stormi", and "Stormi's Birthday Party". The chosen photographs address such topics as family values, beauty standards, and motherhood, respectively. I aim to explain the phenomenon of their success in terms of Lacanian identity construction theory.

The current chapter includes the following six sections:

- the history of purchasing one of the most popular identity-crafting social platforms

- the review of Lacanian theory and its application with regard to the Instagram virtual space

- the Kylie Jenner phenomenon: biography and relationship with the public

- the qualitative analysis of the collected data

- the research regarding the four positively assessed photographs

THE HISTORY OF PURCHASING ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR IDENTITY-CRAFTING SOCIAL PLATFORMS

In the year 2012, Facebook purchased a product that cost one billion dollars. Facebook spent a huge amount of money on purchasing a photograph-sharing application—Instagram. Taking into consideration that Facebook was far more popular than Instagram at that time, there were no transparent reasons for buying it. Marc Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, explained his decision in vague terms by saying that he had always wanted to participate in creating a perfect photograph-sharing application. Zuckerberg was sure that Instagram would be successful in the future. His evidence for that certainty was partially based on statistics about the functions that people chose to use on Facebook. According to the statistics, popular features were limited to sharing visual content and responding to it: "Not only do photograph posts get more engagement than links or text-based updates, they actually account for 93% of the most engaging posts on Facebook" (Cooper). According to a HubSpot study (Corliss), photographs receive 53% more likes, 104% more comments and 84% more click-throughs than text-based posts. Self-explanatory photographs are the best way to receive a feedback reaction.

Marc Zuckerberg appears to have been absolutely right about the future success of the photograph-sharing application. Launched in 2010, Instagram reached 1,000,000,000 monthly active users by 2018. It is the third most commonly-used social network in the world (Kallas). In other words, within a short period of time, Instagram has grown into a social network "monster" for users to create and share their preferred online identities—in pictures with minimum textual description.

APPROACHING LACAN

Users' fascination with Instagram pictures as an effective means of identity construction and representation can be explained in terms of one of the most famous of Lacan's theoretical concepts:

the mirror stage. Lacan was deeply interested in an event that occurs in the life of every child: the first time they recognize themselves in a mirror. Lacan calls this moment "the mirror phase" and claims that it can feel extremely unsettling, because the infant's reflection in a mirror does not necessarily match how the infant feels. He describes the mirror stage as follows:

> The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic – and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development. (Lacan, *Ecrits* 4)

According to the French psychoanalyst, we are a formless, continuous stream of consciousness inside; a multisexual, chaotic whole; a continuum of "raw materials." In other words, we are born into the order of the later introduced Real register. Lacan claims that a child's distance from the Real is a way to measure its socio-physical development. On the outside, we appear to be a stable entity with composed and symmetrical parts: "The child sees an image of itself as an organized and integrated totality. The image is positioned in a physical environment … the child's recognition of its own image means that it has adopted the perspective of exteriority on itself". (Grosz 37-38)

When we first see our reflected image, we lose this sense of wholeness: a completeness that is unattainable, except in relation to the mother. The separation suffered has sexual dimension. We lose the multisexual completeness that we once had and are limited to polarized distinctions: biologically we can be either male or female. The absence of the mother in the reflection, the inability to control all body parts, and dependence on others are different types of lack. The infant evolves from an original whole and feels fragmented, physically and socially, after the mirror phase.

The child's dependence on the (m)other is displaced by self-reliance: "The mirror stage is a compensation for the child's acceptance of lack. It provides a promise or anticipation of self-mastery and control the subject lacks, and which the mother provisionally covered over in gratifying the child's needs."

Our existence following acquaintance with self-reflection starts to be dominated by the desire to find a missing complement (Silverman 84) and it is possible that Instagram can be used as a tool to recover those missing components of the whole self. Selfies or photographs with friends and family, for example, can be considered as replacement mirror reflections of our identities. Posting pictures and videos of ourselves evidences a desire to master control over our own identity and perception of others. It is common to claim that negative comments on Instagram are products of jealousy and an inability to accept others' success. In terms of Lacanian theory, the mirror stage both affirms and denies the subject's separateness from the other. The ego sees itself in its relations with others. All jealousy represents a non-differentiation between oneself and the other; it shows a positive inexistence of the individual that becomes confused by the contrast existing between others and him- or herself.

Lacan mentions the notion of the big Other when he refers to society and its role in how we perceive ourselves and others. The big Other can define who we are and what we desire. Desire is a fundamental concept in Lacan's work on identity. Desire determines that our identities consist of many aspects—one of which is a perpetual wanting. By this he means a desire for material possessions and/or particular physical features. This wanting emerges through our engagement with the big Other, so that we appear to want particular things for ourselves. An individual is not able to comprehend fully the object of the big Other's desire: it is impossible to understand, exactly, the reasons why the big Other desires something or to what extent I, as an individual, should be involved. Desire is therefore an endless process of questioning what the big Other already possesses

or desires to possess. As a result, desire comes from the outside and is the complete opposite of an innate drive. According to Lacan, our desires do not belong to us: "Desire full stop is always the desire of the Other. Which basically means that we are always asking the Other what he desires" (Lacan, *My Teaching*, 38). In other words, the realization of what we desire comes only after the understanding of what the big other desires.

This desire is a result of the ego-constructing process. In contrast to the Freudian theory of ego, in Lacanian theory, our psyche is not composed of the ego, id, and superego. It consists of the real (area of the unconscious); the symbolic (area of language), and the imaginary (area of images). The real is inescapable: "The Real cannot be experienced as such: it is capable of representation or conceptualization only through the reconstructive or inferential work of the imaginary and symbolic orders" (Grosz 34).

According to Lacan's symbolic order, the big Other appears to be the area where determined relationships between all signifiers are set in place when the subject enters into language (Lacan, *Book 3: The Psychoses*). Through this means, the subject starts a relationship of dependency on the big Other. It can be demonstrated by users' strong desire to engage in Instagram rituals (entering into language), addiction to validation (dependence on the big Other), and pursuing their obsessive compulsion (to look or be perceived in a certain way). This is where the big Other is present, driving desire.

The imaginary is a static entity and can be represented by an Instagram profile. We construct ourselves through pictures. The posts show how we perceive ourselves and/or how we want to be perceived by our Instagram followers. Lacan claims that our sense of self is divided into the ego and the subject (as cited in Moore) and, connecting this idea to the Instagram world, our ego manifests in the posts we manipulate, while our subject is us in real time, monitoring and deciding which posts might be the most desirable. We do not post pictures that others may not validate or desire to own.

With the help of these three orders, the manifestation of the mirror stage can be seen as the lens of the Instagram camera, the big Other can be imagined as the Instagram community, and desire is our selectivity for the personal embodiment of what we consider worthy of self-identification and subsequent validation.

There is no place for objective reality in Lacanian theory. Fantasy is a term from the Lacanian lexicon that is used to define the constructed, individualized realities that maintain the illusion that we are whole subjects (Hetrick). Our fantasies (Instagram profiles) are then utilized to protect ourselves from the fact that we are not whole in the way we profess (through the embodiment of a Instagram post) (Evans). What we understand as "reality" is formed by our unconscious desires, just as many components of our Instagram participation can be framed as fabrications of truth because we desire our intentionally constructed identities so earnestly.

THE KYLIE JENNER PHENOMENON: BIOGRAPHY AND RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PUBLIC

Kylie Jenner was born on the 10 August 1997 in Los Angeles, California. She is the daughter of television personality Kris Jenner and medal-winning decathlete Bruce Jenner, now known as Caitlyn Jenner. One of the life-changing shifts in Kylie Jenner's life took place when her mother and a successful entertainment manager (Kris Jenner) launched the reality show *Keeping up with the Kardashians* (Seacrest &Murray) in 2007 on channel E!

The series is supposed to reveal details of the eccentric lifestyles of the family members. The show centres on sisters Kourtney, Kim, and Khloé Kardashian and their half-sisters, Kendall and Kylie Jenner. Since the premier, the series has been receiving mixed reviews. On the one hand, *Keeping up with the Kardashians* is often criticized for appearing to fabricate its storylines. Some critics condemn the show for emphasizing the Kardashians' striving to be "famous for being

famous" and note that the show lacks intelligence. On the other hand, a substantial number of reviews demonstrate critics' endorsement of the reality series, which is often jokingly referred as a "guilty pleasure."

Kylie Jenner has been living on the *Keeping up with the Kardashians* set since she was nine years old. It is thus possible to trace a certain analogy between Kylie Jenner and the main character of the famous Hollywood movie *The Truman Show* (Niccol & Weir), which tells the story of a man adopted by a TV studio whose entire life was manufactured and managed by a director of the show. All Truman's life was organized by the director, who let him experience new feelings and adventures, surrounded by actors who were aware of the falsehood of the constructed reality.

Kylie Jenner's life in her childhood was as illusory as Truman's. Her regular interaction with her parents, siblings, and other relatives was, more often than not, staged by multiple TV show producers who monitored the entertainment level of the show, commanding the adult Kardashians to behave in certain ways in order to trigger spectacular emotions in their children or younger siblings. The conflict between Kylie and her sister Kendall, or the initiation of a touching mother-daughter moment between naughty Kylie and Kris on camera, were hugely influenced by the decisions of the show's producers regarding what topics to discuss during Kardashian family meetings or what family issues to raise in one or another episode of the show. Kylie's reactions as a child to an artificially manipulated reality seemed always natural to me. I cannot imagine how she prevented the actual and the show realities borders not to become blurred. In one of her interviews, Kendall compared her and Kylie's reality show experience in the childhood with the experience of their half-sisters: "They [half-sisters] lived it normally and then once they were already grown up, they went through what we're now going though" (Frey, *People*). In fact, Kim, Khloe, and Kourtney did not become famous until they were in their 20s. Kendall added: "They even say to us: 'If I was in your position, I would not be able to handle it'" (Frey, *People*).

As an adult, Kylie Jenner obviously acknowledges the difference between the TV show's reality and her private life. Although she understands her dramatic role in the partially fabricated storylines of *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, in her private life beyond the show, she is still dependent on the same audience: the viewers in her social networks. Since 2007, she has been constructed by this audience and cannot exist without its validation. There is no doubt that the reason why Kylie is so incomplete without publicity stems from her family's (specifically, her mother's) entrepreneurism.

It is noteworthy that Kris Jenner wrote an autobiographical book about turning her family into a distinctive brand. In *Kris Jenner… And All Things Kardashian* she states:

> I knew we were onto something big, and I liked the business side of all of this. That's what drove me, that's what excited me: the possibility to make this into so much more than a TV show. Every time we renewed for another season, I would think to myself: how can I take these fifteen minutes of fame and turn them into thirty? (270)

Kris Jenner did not think at that point that children should not be exposed to such a high level of publicity in their early years because it might negatively affect their psychological health. Kylie appeared on reality TV when she was nine. In the summer of 2018, she announced that she needed therapy because she had lost part of her identity, was addicted to social media identity formation, and traumatized. Kylie confessed that dramatic changes in her personality were triggered by "haters" feedback. She visited a therapist publicly, leading us to the conclusion that Kylie does not lie: she is indeed addicted to publicity and shares her most private issues on camera.[1]

The importance of the launch of the reality show in the lives of all the Kardashians cannot be overemphasized. Although Bruce Jenner was already famous for his sports career, being an Olympic

---

1 Kylie Jenner's interview regarding her identity issues: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_XCbzpIFj8

golden medalist, and Kris Jenner was a participant in the O.J. Simpson murder trial,[2] it was 2007 when the Kardashians' celebrity status was established.

Since then, Kylie Jenner's media personality has started to prosper due to the overwhelming success of the reality show. She seized all the business opportunities generated by the high rating of *Keeping up with the Kardashians*. In fact, Kylie has had plenty of successful projects in recent years. She launched an extremely successful Topshop fashion line with her sister Kendall Jenner, and was a representative for big advertising brand campaigns (e.g., Puma). In 2015, Kylie Jenner announced her intention to launch her first lipstick line as part of her new company, Kylie Lip Kit, which is now known as the hugely lucrative enterprise Kylie Cosmetics that made her the world's youngest self-made billionaire, according to *Forbes* magazine (Kroll & Dolan).

Another fruit of her active reality show participation is her huge social media following. For instance, Kylie's first Instagram photograph, featuring her baby daughter Stormi, earned the title of the most liked Instagram post in the history of the application.

---

[2] O.J. Simpson (a prominent football player for the University of Southern California and the Buffalo Bills) was accused of murdering Kris Jenner's good friend, Nicole Brown Simpson, and Ron Goldman. The athlete was a best friend of Robert Kardashian, who worked as an attorney in Simpson's defense team. O.J. Simpson used to be a frequent guest at the Kardashians' home. He was considered a family friend, a sort of "Uncle Juice" to Robert's four children. Kris Jenner was invited to many shows to reveal her attitude towards the violent murder of her friend Nicole. In one of the interviews, she admitted to not paying much attention to the issues within the Simpsons' marriage.

> I didn't know that there was abuse until we heard and saw the whole thing unfold [on the news] like everybody else and then heard the 911 tapes that were going to be used in evidence during the trial (Kris Jenner, on *Ellen*)

Figure 1. Kylie's first photograph of Stormi, which received eighteen million likes on Instagram

However, as we all know, nothing lasts forever. The rank of "the most liked photographs on Instagram" was relatively quickly usurped by a photograph of an ordinary egg (see fig. 2).

Figure 2. The egg photograph that beat the world record held by Kylie Jenner's post

Kylie Jenner was the first nine-year-old child in the history of American television to be exposed to publicity within a (frighteningly close to real life) narrative that entails many real-life

aspects, such as the constant presence of her family members on set; no professional actors; and the use of real, existing locations and situations that bridge the show and reality. Having considered this fact, I decided to examine Kylie Jenner's identity as shaped by the reality show and subsequently influenced by the new media products. In order to understand the Kylie Jenner phenomenon, I am going to research her Instagram profile from cultural and psychoanalytic perspectives.

Kylie posts photographs on Instagram every day. Often the number of postings falls in the range of four to six per day. Although she shares her photographs so frequently, we do not see her detailed daily routine; for example, her breakfast, gym routine, view from the window, car drives, shopping, travel, dinners, and so forth. Her postings are limited to professional photographic shots, selfies where only Kylie is visible, photographs with her child Stormi or/and her best and only friend, Jordyn Woods (@jordynwoods). What she most enjoys demonstrating is her business; namely, the make-up palettes and various cosmetic products that she sells. No matter whether she is on vacation with her child or has an important red carpet event, she will definitely find some time to post a Kylie Cosmetics advertisement in her feed or Instagram stories. More often than not, she shares one luxurious aspect of her life that shows how much she earns—her extremely expensive cars. It is noteworthy that Kylie Jenner rarely posts photographs with her family (the Kardashian clan) or boyfriend (rapper Travis Scott). If she shares some professional shots with her sisters Kim Kardashian or Kendall Jenner, one can predict, with substantial certainty, that these photographs will soon be part of a giant advertising campaign for a famous brand.

QAULITATIVE ANALYSIS

In order to examine Kylie's Instagram postings and her followers' perceptions of them, I am going to explain first the meaning of positive, negative, neutral, like back, international, and spam comments, as well as to clarify the logic behind my qualitative analysis.

Positive comments tend to express approval of what is posted. They demonstrate a general fascination with the content, lifestyle, appearance or personal qualities of the Instagram blogger and the people depicted with him or her. In other words, positive comments are compliments of sorts, addressed to everything related to a certain photograph or video. In my paper, I am going to use a capital letter (P) when referring to positive comments.

Negative comments are marked as B (i.e., bad). They tend to denote followers' disapproval of what is posted and focus on what is unacceptable or lacking. On the one hand, it is a way to criticize various aspects of posted photographs or videos concerning the aesthetic, ethical, and moral aspects of the content. On the other hand, negative comments can embody direct personal insults not based on anything related to the post.

Neutral comments (N) are all the notes that are not directly related to the post and are not aimed to promote anything. Namely, they include tagging people, followers' questions about the object of a photograph or video, and followers' remarks about themselves.

Like back comments (LB) is a special way to show complete indifference towards the post by using it as a space where subscribers can garner some extra likes, followers or comments: LBs (like backs), FBs (follow backs), CBs (comment backs), firsts (like the first picture on my profile and receive a like on yours), instants (like my pictures and I will instantly like yours in return), and rows (like a few rows and I will like yours in return). Distributors do not explain why other followers should like their posts; they simply indicate that, if a person issues a like, he or she will receive one back on his or her own post. It is a sort of collaboration of "user-parasites" who take advantage of bloggers' popularity. This cryptic language is used for promoting photographs and is mostly found under the posts of the Kardashian family. The first time Kylie complained about LB misuse of one of her posts was in 2016. She tweeted: "So I'm trying out disabling my comments on Instagram because I'm done w people self promoting & the LBs☺"

International comments (I) are various comments not written in English. They show how famous a blogger is outside his or her home country.

Conversational comments (C) are those comments referring to the public in general. They do not intend to approve or disapprove of bloggers' content, appearance, or life choices, but aim to assess public attitudes toward one or another social issue raised by the blogger's posting.

Spam comments (S) are short advertisements that invite people to follow a link. They provide a brief description of what is going to be on that page and why people should be interested in it. Spam is usually barely related to the topic of the post.

The table below includes a few examples of comments for each category:

Table 1. Types of comments

Type of comments	Abbreviation	Example
Positive comments	P	@elizabethhbarker: "This is literally the most iconic thing I've ever seen" @dhamechanirali: "You aree soooooo very perfect♡♡♡♡♡♡♡♡♡♡♡♡"
Negative comments	B	@simp1y.stella: "How about instead of spending money on another car in your huge collection and donate some money to children dying of

		starvation in Africa?"
		@erikalombardi:
		"looking like a frog 🐸🐸"
Neutral comments	N	@chef_ramos1: "I live near the Forbes house"
		@inaraaziz1: "@bhawanisingh666 read the comments 😄😄"
Like back comments	LB	@jason___benson: "Lbbbb 🖤🖤🖤"
		@ philhughesart: "ROW 🏃🏃 100100 🏃🏃 🖤🖤 🖤🖤"
International comments	I	@guisal88: "Porra mana, eu vi tu menstruando em keep up e agora tu é billhooonaria???? Deposita mil reais pra mim bicha..."(Portuguese)

		Fuck mana, I saw your menstruando in keep up and now she is a billhooonaria ???? Give me a thousand dollars bitch (English)
Conversational comments	C	@ daniela_athy: "This is Kylie...let her spoil Stormy, if your so worried about making a difference...spend your own cash" @ itzalyne: "I don't get why people said what was she wearing on another video I saw of the party, she looks great and there's no problem with what she is wearing"
Spam comments	S	@ matthias_wolfgang "My friend said that i wont reach 250 subscribers by the end of

| | | the week and if i did he would give me $50 help me

plz @yogi.mp4 @haqnii"

@ zaralounge :"sry i'm bothering but someone happens to know who made me famous i need help ♥" |
|---|---|---|

In my analysis, I will especially focus on P, B, C and LB comments. These comments are essential in understanding how one or another post was perceived by the Instagram audience. For instance, if a post received too many LBs and a negligible number of Bs and Ps, it signifies that the content of the post is typical for the blogger and does not raise any questions about the blogger belonging to a certain Instagram niche. Plenty of C comments, as well as opinionated feedback (P/B), on the contrary, indicate the contradictory nature of the post and can involve certain difficulties in defining the blogger's belonging to "feminine" or "masculine" Instagram domains.

WE ARE FAMILY

The first post I am going to examine is a birthday photograph of Kylie Jenner with her mother and four sisters. The Kardashians are depicted on the couch showing their middle fingers to the audience.

Figure 3. We Are Family

Although Kylie Jenner prefers not to post many photographs with her family, I find this photograph to be a perfect representation of my personal impression of Kylie. She is always associated in my head with a large clan of five successful women.

Positive feedback. The full picture of Kylie would not be complete without her continual conflict with Kendall Jenner—a top-model and naturally beautiful sister, who always turns Kylie's followers' heads with her outstanding looks and poses. There are always a number of "kind" followers who will never forget to notice how stunning Kendall is and that Kendall is more beautiful than Kylie, even if the posting is devoted to Kylie's birthday and is not supposed to be about Kendall.

Instead of happy birthday wishes, a lot of Kylie subscribers commented on Kendall's creative pose or her extraordinary beauty (Kendall is in the black dress on the right of Kylie):

@channel_pink: "Kendall always looks great no matter the pose ⬛▦▦♀"

@lake_legend574: "Kendall 😊😊😊😊"

@felizhonica: "Kendall is such a mood"

@lorrasantos: "Kendal bem model"

@fridazalaf: "kendall is just lit💍💍"

@rude_prettygyal: "@kendalljenner is so perf 😻😻"

@alie.gray: "i love how kendall is just there being different hbd ly💖💖"

@hotluera: "Kendall is the only one workin the pic. You go girl🍒🍒 The best pose, hands down🖤"

… and so on. In total, 7% of all positive comments on this post concerned Kendall Jenner. Does Kylie notice that the big Other is focused on her sister? Yes. In one of the interviews for Cosmopolitan magazine, Kendall reveals:

[Kylie's] a Leo so she loves attention, and at certain points when we were younger, it bothered her that I was getting attention in terms of my modelling … I think that's a natural younger sister thing – to be jealous (Mizoguchi, *People*).

Being featured in the same reality show, *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, for more than a decade, the sisters were followed, watched, and read predominantly by the same audience. They shared the same perception of the big Other; they shared the social network. If one of them monopolizes the gaze of the big Other, the other one starts to feel incomplete, lost, and even non-existent. Kendall's identity as a model is perceived by Kylie as the big Other's object of desire. Kendall is fantasized by Kylie as something complete, something that has an "extra characteristic": "modelling abilities".

The sisters constantly compete with each other. Bizarre comparisons can be found in almost all their interviews. For instance, on the premiere episode of *Life of Kylie*, Kylie opened up about her envy of Kendall's natural ability to feel comfortable in the spotlight:

 I see Kendall, Bella (Hadid) and Hailey (Baldwin), they're out here every day, they just put their outfits together, they're made for this. … I just don't know who I'm doing it for. Sometimes I wish I can do what they (Kendall and friends) do. (Waheed, *Mailonline*)

According to Kendall Jenner's confessions to *Zaza World Radio*, she experienced the same feelings of envy while comparing herself to her one-year-younger sibling Kylie in childhood. She shares her memories about her poor social life during the middle and high school years in Calabasas, Los Angeles:

> I was sitting in my room a lot of days crying because Kylie had so many friends, and I didn't know what to do, and it's gonna make me emotional right now […] I really was like, "I'm never gonna have friends, […]" (Kendall Jenner for *Zaza World Radio*, O'Malley, *Elle*)

In the frame of this narrative, we can see that Kendall is almost identical to her sister: they are both females of about the same age, attending the same school, and living in the same place, within the same family. Kendall is aware of all the similarities; it is the difference that bothers her. Kylie has an "extra characteristic" that creates an unbearable difference and causes Kendall's feeling of incompleteness. Kendall is obsessed with the trait she does not possess. The trait in question is relational ease—the ability to make friends.

> One of the most recognizable and in-demand supermodels in the world recalls:
>
> I had nothing to do. I would just sit with my horses and I'd go ride all day. I'm not kidding. I ride from 8 am to 8 pm. I would ride all my trainer horses because I had nothing better to do. (Kendall Jenner for *Zaza World Radio*, O'Malley, *Elle*)

For Kendall, wholeness is possible only if she has more friends than Kylie. When she realized that she could not achieve such a result, Kendall escaped the reality in which she was powerless and not able to recover. She found a remedy in interacting with horses. This shows vivid symptoms of withdrawal and narcissistic suffering that are also closely connected to envy.

The feeling of envy appears when an individual lacks a characteristic, accomplishment, or property of the other, and either desires to gain it or wishes the other to forfeit it (Parrot & Smith). The quality Kylie thinks she lacks is her sister's modelling skill. Regarding Kendall, the "extra

characteristic" she lacks is Kylie's interpersonal skill. In order to explain the psychic origin of siblings' mutual envy, I am going to examine the Lacanian theory of the individual's development from the angle of this single emotion.

Although, over time, Kendall learned how to make connections, the difference between two sisters is still present:

> Kylie and I flipped roles, not that Kylie's not … Kylie is so happy, … I love her, but it's crazy cause I really never thought that I would have more friends than Kylie, not that that's ever a competition or should be anything we'd … I don't want that to come off weird, but again, she's so happy with the life she's living. (Kendall for O'Malley, *Elle*)

Kendall has eliminated the unbearable double by winning an imaginary networking competition. She took that "extra characteristic" away from Kylie, depriving her of her advantage. Kendall achieved wholeness in her mind by making Kylie incomplete.

The Instagram profiles of both sisters demonstrate their intention to show an extreme abundance of what they lack in comparison to one another. Kylie shares noticeably more professional modelling photographs than Kendall does, while Kendall shares more pictures with various friends, compared to Kylie. For instance, Kylie's Instagram photograph collection comprises 140 professional shots and fifteen photographs with a friend or friends (mainly Jordyn Woods). Kendall's Instagram, as opposed to Kylie's, includes fifty-two modelling pictures and twenty-seven group pictures (the sample of photographs is limited to the one-year time period from 20 March 2018 to 20 March 2019). Taking into consideration their different occupations and the fact that Kylie posts twice as many pictures as Kendall does, we can see what sides of their Instagram identities the sisters tend to highlight.

Figure 4. Instagram emphasis

According to Lacan, an individual's envy corresponds to the supremacy of the imaginary dimension on which the subject builds his or her identity. This dimension is deemed to be a remainder of the subject's ego construction process that entails passage through stages involving the other (an alienated image of the subject) and recognition of the big Other. The incipient formation of envy in the life of an adult subject can reflect abortive steps in his or her identity construction process. Thus, envious individuals are engrossed by a phenomenon that usually takes place in the pre-Oedipal phase of their identity development. As Lacan claims, the emotion of envy emerges in very early childhood when an infant witnesses his or her sibling suckling at the maternal breast. This picture of the sibling and mother works as a reminder of the infant's own weaning; of his or her first abrupt separation. The sibling usurps the infant's place in relation to the mother; therefore, the infant experiences an unbearable loss (Lacan, *Book IX. Identification*). The infant perceives his or her sibling as a subject who monopolizes the mother's gaze, and incorporates the loss of that gaze in the development of his or her identity. In particular, the sibling owns the "object-cause of desire", because the mother's precious gaze is directed toward him or her: "What collapses the Envious is

that he does not know anymore what he is in the desire of the Other" (Lacan, *Book IX.*

Identification).

The person taken over by this emotion cannot imagine him- or herself being in any place but in the gaze of the big Other. When that single place is occupied, the envious individual appears to be in a void: he or she feels "transparent", non-existent (Hassoun-Lestienne 13–58). This feeling resembles the post-mirror stage of existence when the person doesn't perceive him- or herself as a whole.

It is interesting to note the narcissistic nature of being envious: an envious person tends to choose an object of envy almost identical to him- or herself, so that the envied person is the "object-cause of desire" that the envious person strives to develop in him- or herself. The difference between the almost-identical envious and envied individuals is caused by a specific characteristic that the envious person considers he or she lacks. The envious person has two ways to resolve the difference issue; namely, to acquire that characteristic or to expel the envied person from the field of the gaze. Consequently, the envied person turns into either a role-model or a rival, sometimes alternately. The envious individual becomes stuck in the imaginary realm that is formed by three agents: the almost-identical other (the envied), the big Other (the owner of the gaze), and the envious individual.

We see that both sisters have a desperate need for recognition on the professional and social levels. Raised by Kris Jenner on the set of *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, the siblings are dependent on fame. This background is propitious to what can be further called "envious episodes".[3] Their mutual envy is nourished by the fact that Kylie and Kendall have a lot of characteristics in common: similar appearance, sex, age, race, nationality, engagement with the beauty industry, and common projects. These aspects make the sisters almost doubles of each other: doubles with some extra characteristics that mark them off from one another. These extra qualities create an unbearable

---

[3] The term is used by Benedicte Vidaillet in *Lacanian theory's contribution to the study of workplace envy* (15)

difference that the sisters strive to extinguish. They try to gain what they lack and to become complete in the gaze of the big Other.

The plastic surgery on her body at twenty-one years old, and her multiple appearances on the covers of fashion magazines, can tell us a lot about Kylie's desire to possess Kendall's extra characteristics. The concept of that extra quality is partially constructed by her followers on Instagram, who demonstrate a fanatical fascination with Kendall's appearance. The followers direct the spotlight and focus their gaze on what Kylie thinks she lacks.

One of the ways for Kylie to minimize her envy is to reduce the postings in which the sisters pose together. Although the siblings represent the same Kylie Cosmetics line (Kylie's company interest), Kylie does not post as many photographs with her sister as Kendall does. The joint photographs of the sisters account for 1.2% of Kylie's Instagram feed and 5.4% of Kendall's (the sample of photographs is limited to the one-year time period from 20 March 2018 to 20 March 2019).

Another woman who continuously influences Kylie's life is her mother. Since the rise of the reality TV show *Keeping up with the Kardashians*, Kris Jenner has earned a reputation that fully characterizes her as the manager of a family with an absolute matriarchal structure. For a long time, she has been successfully managing six children by turning them into a "brand" in public. The nickname "momager" stuck to her and she embraced it to such extent that she filed documents with the trademark "momager". Now she can sue anyone who dares to use "momager" without her permission.

Kris Jenner cultivates the clannishness of the Kardashian family. She is the glue that holds together all her envious-of-one-another daughters. They live in the same city; they act as a whole. Why does she unite them? She wants them together because the big Other loves it. The followers want to see a strong female "family gang." Female subscribers and viewers beg to adopt them so

that they can be a part of that powerful "K-union." Although there are a lot of male relatives or boyfriends hanging around the family, the core is represented by the five daughters and their mother (Kim Kardashian, Kylie Jenner, Khloe Kardashian, Kendall Jenner, Kourtney Kardashian, and their "momager", Kris Jenner), excluding the son Rob Kardashian and the father Bruce Jenner, whose names even do not start with a K.

Coming back to Figure 3 the large amount of positive comments (27%, or sixty-two out of 227) are about "the gang" or Kris as its leader:

@randie_bee4: " @lila_lumbrazo123 ugh I wish I was one of them"

@snazzinburg: " The amount of power in this one picture 😊😊"

@nic.mmxii: "kris a legend a icon"

@zeratul76: "Boss squad 😊😊😊😊😊"

@_cajoleraja: "Squad goals 👑👑"

@umakemecoool: "Most iconic sisters"

@dani.dubois: "Girls run this world"

@mariah_by.heart: " Lol middle fingers up tell em boi bye! ❤❤"

@gaviathharlee: " Keeping' it klassy."

The spirit of feminism dominates in this picture. Successful women do not care about boys: they have fun and enjoy each other, standing up for each other no matter what. Such a "squad" is an idol for women dreaming of being independent and successful. Followers can and want to identify themselves with such a powerful female union. Not only random female fans want to be like them, but also some excluded family members. Bruce Jenner is one such family member who tends to identify himself with the Kardashian group thus: "I am from the Kardashian group. We can take anything" (Bruce Jenner, since 2015 Caitlyn Jenner, interview by Sawyer, *ABC NEWS*).

Bruce Jenner stopped actively starring in the reality show *Keeping up with the Kardashians* more than a decade ago. These early episodes show him as "a well–meaning but slightly doddering patriarch who has no life of his own and is subsumed by the women who surround him" (Caitlyn Jenner interview by Sawyer, *ABC NEWS*).

In 2015, Bruce Jenner revealed his transgender identity and changed his name to Caitlyn. The whole female family supported Bruce's choice and posted their positive reactions on Twitter, as follows:

Love is the courage to live the truest, best version of yourself. Bruce is love. I love you Bruce. #ProudDaughter (Kim Kardashian West, 25 April 2015).

Not only was I able to call him my husband for 25 years and father of my children, I am now able to call him my hero (Kris Jenner, 25 April 2015).

Couldn't be a more proud daughter. With courage and bravery, let's change the world. I am honored to stand by Bruce's side and support him (Kourtney Kardashian, 25 April 2015).

Just finished watching the #BruceJennerInterview with the family. Bruzer, I'm soooo proud of you! Dads really are heros (Khloe Kardashian, April 25, 2015).

Understandingly, this has been very hard for me. You will hear what I have to say when I'm ready to but ... (Kylie Jenner, 5:48 AM, 25 April 2015)

..this isn't about me. I'm so proud of you, Dad. You are so brave. My beautiful Hero (Kylie Jenner, 5:49 AM, 25 April 2015).

so very proud of you, my hero (Kendall Jenner, 25 April 2015).

Although Caitlyn received a lot of support from her family, she feels more isolated than before her transition:

I'm a little more distant. I have to admit, I'll sit here and wonder, 'Is it because of my transitioning? Or is it because their life is so busy that they don't call, like, all the time?

"Nobody calls that much," she concluded. "I mostly reach out to them. Obviously, the Jenner side calls more, but they all have their own lives. (Caitlyn Jenner interview by Sawyer, *ABC NEWS*)

The Kardashian family has moved on. They have not mentioned in public anything relating to their transgender relative since 2017 and they do not post anything with her. In other words, Caitlyn, as a transgender person, has been completely excluded from the "female family union" narrative.

My wife Kris will not permit any of this behavior [dressing as a woman] at home, just like my two ex-wives. She doesn't want to see it or deal with it, so we never talk about it (Caitlyn Jenner interview by Sawyer, *ABC NEWS*).

Sometimes I feel so separated, you know? The Kardashians over here, the Jenners over here, little me in the middle. We've got to keep the family going. (Caitlyn Jenner interview by Sawyer, *ABC NEWS*).

Hence, an important question arises: Are the multiple surgeries on the bodies of the female Kardashians (Kris, Kim, Kourtney, Khloe, and Kylie) any different from Caitlyn's gender reassignment surgery? Why is the family eager to embrace Kylie's artificial body transformation, but not Caitlyn's? It seems like women do not face the gender biases, only transwomen do.

Figure 5. Vanity Fair Cover

According to Lacan's mirror stage theory, creation of the essential libidinal connection with the body image is an unstable but universal process that results in the birth of the ego. There is always a possibility that ego's relationship with the body may not be perfect: namely, the reflection in the mirror may not align with the whole body experience. In this case, the feeling of having the wrong body can arise and can be reflected in perceptions of the body as something foreign, unlovable, false gendered, false raced, fat, out of shape, or imperfect.

Consequently, on a Lacanian theoretical basis, I dare to conclude that the desire for having breast implants or liposuction can be equated with a desire for gender reassignment surgery. All individuals who find themselves in disharmony with their bodies (no matter whether the reason is the sex of the body, excess fat, or so forth) can be compared to hostages who are locked inside a prison of flesh and blood with a constant need for liberation. Caitlyn attests to this feeling of imprisonment: "I had The Final Surgery in 2017. The surgery was a success, and I feel not only wonderful but liberated" (Caitlyn Jenner interview by Sawyer, *ABC NEWS*).

The frequent metaphors describing gender dysphoria liken the body to a piece of ill-adjusted clothing that one cannot wait to shed, or to a container that is not suitable for its contents (Gherovici). In her first interview with Sawyer, Caitlyn Jenner reflected on how she was transformed:

God's looking down, making little Bruce, okay? … God looks down and chuckles a little bit and goes, "Hey, let's give him the soul of a female and let's see how he deals with that." You know? So here I am stuck (Caitlyn Jenner interview by Sawyer, *ABC NEWS*).

In her book *Transgender Psychoanalysis: A Lacanian Perspective on Sexual Difference*, Gherovichi gives the example of Angelina Jolie, who underwent a preventative double mastectomy and the removal of her ovaries and Fallopian tubes. After all the surgeries preventing her genetic

mutation disease, she took control of her own body by reconstructing her breasts with implants. Although Jolie lacks reproductive organs and can be placed alongside many transgender women, she embodies the current ideal of female beauty. Sexual identity is no longer related to reproduction. At the end of the twentieth century, we faced a new phenomenon, defined by sociologist Anthony Giddens as "plastic sexuality":

> Plastic sexuality is decentered sexuality, freed from the needs of reproduction. It has its origins in the tendency, initiated somewhere in the late eighteenth century, strictly to limit family size; but it becomes further developed as the result of the spread of modern contraception and new reproductive technologies. (Giddens 97)

The plastic sexuality concept perfectly resonates with Judith Butler's representation of gender as performative. Women demonstrate that "plastic" drive to resist nature, constantly participating in a gender masquerade. It is not a secret that many women artificially diminish their level of androgen in overcome acne or to slow down the growth of pubic hair. The irony here is that most of the processes in the female body that are responsible for reproduction move women away from their beauty ideals. The fewer female functions your body has, the more female you look.

Figure 6. Bruce Jenner with his daughters

The year 2015 was not only a turning point for Bruce Jenner's revelations, but also marked the start of Kylie's confessions about her plastic surgery body modifications. In 2015, she admitted to having lip fillers. She shared a story from her teen years in which a boy refused to kiss Jenner because of her naturally thin lips. Followers commented:

@s_alejo: "Back when….ur family didnt know what plastic surgery"

@baya2014: [to Kylie] "Thin lips loool"

Negative feedback. Coming back to the family photograph (see figure 3), one of the most popular reasons for hating Kylie is her ability to successfully run a billion-dollar business while simultaneously lacking a proper education. Kylie went to a private Sierra Canyon School near Los Angeles. She was a home-schooled student from 2012 onwards. She obtained a high school diploma from Laurel Springs School in Ojai. When people find out that the girl did not even attend a university, but was allowed to study at home as a person of limited means, they usually say something like the following:

Mike Brantley
So no real education
Like · Reply · 👍 2 · 14w

Figure 7. Facebook comment of Mike Brantley

As a result, if Kylie has an orthographic inaccuracy in her photograph caption, she fully pays for it. People correct her in the harshest possible way. The photograph depicting the six Kardashian ladies has such a text underneath: BIRTHDAY BEHAVIOR! WERE ALL TURNING 21!!

@mckenna._grace: "We're*"

@mckenna._grace: "We're"

@mckenna._grace: "We're"

@mckenna._grace: "we're *"

Four comments in a row from one follower (@mckenna) show how angry the person is:

@leslymrodriguez: "*we're get your grammar right! Smh!"

@one_lita: "Wow...see kids @zamnn.kayand @bean3rohman When your rich$ you DON'T have to PASS English class. It's (we're NOT were) so sad" and so on.

In total, 16% of negative comments were devoted to Kylie's spelling mistake.

Another reason for Kardashian family fans' hate is Khloe Kardashian being cut out of the photograph. Kylie uploaded a photograph where you cannot see half of Khloe Kardashian's body. Sisters are not supposed to do such things and such behaviour on Instagram equates to betrayal:

@jozzie.13: "Oh noo @khloekardashianwas cropped out . I think"

@shrkhemir: "How could you crop khloe out"

@tanyagarciaa: "@ronnijackson no one gaf about khloe"

@talsjade: "omg when Khloe doesn't make the cut :'(@georgiepriestley"

@averydearingg: "poor khloe"

@bailsxtinker: "WHY YOU CUT OFF MY GIRL LIKE THAT!"

Criticism concerning the cropping out of Khloe Kardashian amounts to 16% of all hateful comments about this picture.

Another reason why some followers were not impressed by the photograph is its violation of ethical norms. Firstly, raising the middle finger is not a "ladylike" gesture; secondly the Kardashian family's raised middle fingers may appear to be addressed, not to opponents, but to the followers themselves:

@johnmiuller: "HOW RUDE! 😲😲✌▓▓"

@rubeinagroove22: "Nice gesture ladies(?) Very classy, your mother taught you well"

@hindi.lol: "Put that in your pu**sy"

@shaw.julia: " Why are these grown women all giving the finger?"

@plboogie_on: " What has become of the world when you have grandmothers, mothers and sisters taking pictures like this?? What happened to morals?"

@debbie_lmitchell: " They are all saying "F*** you morons for making us rich"" and so on.

The raised middle fingers made 30% of followers angry. The rest of the haters (38%) expressed personal insults towards Kylie, her sisters, and her mother separately, as well as towards the whole family:

@omar_az007: "americas shame"

@marieadams325: "what has Chris Jenner done to her face"

@carter.bryson1206: " You shouldn't be famous"

@mitchell.seivers: " Ur that retarted"

@julfabyan: "Everyone is gorg besides you"

@edwardsananda: "Pornstar family"

@floridagatorchic74: "@kourtneykardash Why do you always look so mean and miserable? Your a gorgeous woman with the world at your desire. Be happy!"

In order to understand the nature of followers' aggressive comments, reference may again be made to Lacan and his "mirror stage" theory. The individual going through the mirror phase experiences two types of libidinal attachments; namely, to his caregiver and to his own ego. The ego's investment in its image can be both positive and negative. It is essential for any individual to have some positive attachments to themselves so that they are eager to protect their own bodies from harm. The positive ego investment contributes to feelings of self-love and self-respect, as well as self-sacrifice in order to maintain a gratifying vision of themselves. This positive ego investment creates the "ideal I" that is easy to cherish and love. The problem is that this "ideal I" is only a concept in individuals' heads that never fully corresponds to the "real I" experience. The mismatch between "ideal I" and its mirror image triggers negative feelings and drives individuals to self-

destruction. The inability to keep up with that "ideal I" turns into envy and even hostility. The ego split is one of the reasons for the all negative feedback Kylie Jenner receives. The hostile behaviour toward Kylie and her family can be explained by followers' inability to correspond to the Kardashians Instagram ideal that they are identifying themselves with. In the age of digitalization, the "ideal I" is not only a standard mirror reflection, but can easily be a famous blogger's Instagram profile. Kylie Jenner functions as a mirror for more than 130,000,000 subjects who strive, but fail, to be like her.

Kylie represents a constant figure of fascination, the embodiment of Lacanian jouissance that the other enjoys. The psychoanalyst defines jouissance as the pleasure enabling the individual to come closer to the sense of whole controlled self through engaging such symbolic mediators as language and fantasy. According to Lacan, individuals strive to take control over the Symbolic order mechanisms, which determine the self and its environment, for the purposes of bridging their psychical split between the conscious and unconscious. In other words, they attempt to ground their identities in the jouissance, emanating from Kylie' fantasy-like Instagram images, by possessing the discourse - expressing their opinions in the comment section.

Kylie's mobile and outlandish desires can never be fulfilled by her fans. She thus perpetuates a deep sense of lack in them, which they try to fill by becoming a part of the Kylie's clan, by addressing her in their comments. The aggression emerging in the feedback to her posts is the followers' response to the fractured image of themselves which they perceive in a failed attempt to identify themselves with Kylie Jenner's Instagram identity. That fracturing is closely related to the sense of the followers' self-image devaluation caused by an inability to match the Instagram fantasy.

Conclusion. Overall, the photograph "We Are Family" (see fig. 3) received 227 positive comments, seventy-six negative ones, 101 neutral comments, sixty-one international ones, twenty-nine like backs, and six instances of spam (see fig. 8).
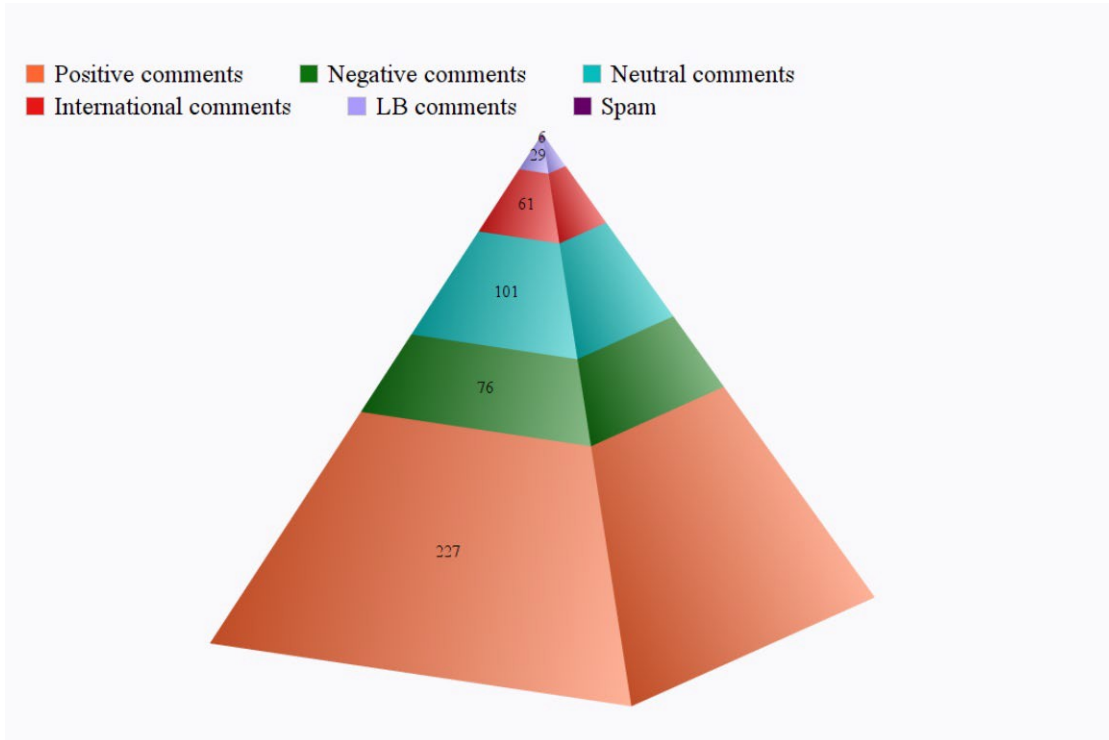
Figure 8. We Are Family chart

We have discussed one of Kylie's posts that shows her in a traditional female role—the role of a sister and daughter. Every average follower can imagine him- or herself being surrounded by such family on his- or her birthday because he or she is already a part of the Kardashian family's intimate sphere. You do not have to achieve anything extraordinary to have this family present in your life: just open your Instagram account and search for one of the Kardashian women. Followers' fascination starts with their ability to identify themselves with the Kardashians, who are beautiful and successful.

I AM BARBIE

The Kardashians look fabulous or, as one of the followers noted under the Figure 3, @thelifeismagic1: "Looking like Barbies😻😻". If @thelifeismagic1 did not finish his or her comment

with a "cat in love" emoji, I would definitely determine this feedback as negative. What does it mean to be a Barbie? For me, a stereotypical Barbie has a perfect white body with unnaturally long legs and thin waist, blond hair, and extremely feminine clothes. But the dark-skinned Armenian girls, with naturally magnificent black hair and large hips, usually decked out in sportswear, can hardly be associated with a white Western beauty standard. One can argue, however, that since the 1960s, Mattel has produced an enormous number of coloured dolls with African-American, Asian, or Hispanic appearances. Over the past fifty years, Barbie has appeared with various types of hair eyes, and lips. Why does the stereotypical image of Barbie not change? Why do we still, in 2019, think of Barbie as a blonde doll with the blue eyes and feminine outfits, knowing that she can adopt any racial or ethnic identity?

Rogers, in her work *Barbie Culture*, answers this question by stating that "Barbie has little credibility as a black woman, an Asian woman, a Native (or indigenous) woman, or a Hispanic woman." (53) Compelling evidence of white domination is manifested in the Barbie doll collecting sphere. As Rogers claims:

> Bluntly put, collectors can cover the entire range of Barbie dolls without ever buying a black, Hispanic, Native American, or other racially or ethnically marked doll. To wit, virtually every Barbie doll outside the Dolls of the World series comes in a white version, which is the racially unmarked and widely taken-for-granted version. (54)

The privileged white skin reveals itself in print media such as Barbie novels, comics and books. Rand proves that Barbie literature depicts the doll exclusively as a white blonde person, surrounded by people of colour who assist her and serve as agents of her success. These texts express the idea that, although not anyone can be Barbie, anyone can be a friend of hers. Rand comes to the conclusion that Mattel includes ethnically diverse characters only when they cannot sideline the white one.

According to Rogers, racially or ethnically marked Barbies are not only treated as exotic species; they are also portrayed unrealistically. For instance, her concerns revolve around African American Barbie hair in particular, which has a completely white texture. Moreover, the majority of the coloured Mattel dolls are "light-skinned". Rogers makes an observation that some of the "black" and "Hispanic" dolls are barely distinct in their skin tone:

> At the Philadelphia Barbie show, for instance, I heard a white doll dealer telling a white customer, "Yes, it is a black Barbie". The dealer went on to set the doll alongside another version and said, "See how this one's skin is lighter than the black one". The lighter skinned doll was Hispanic. Neither it nor the "black" doll, however, had much skin "colour." (63)

All in all, it can reasonably be concluded that a black-skinned Barbie is just a white woman who colours her hair darker and goes to the tanning studio. Kylie Jenner blends well into this black Barbie pattern: she is that "covered in dark-shades of paint" girl. Although she strives to resemble an African American woman, her facial features and hair are congruent with the canonical white standards of beauty: smooth, straight or straightened hair; thin, sharply defined nose; full, but "not in a black way," lips.

The phrase "Looking like Barbies😼😼"" could refer not only to the Kardashians appearance: it also describes their "iconic" nature. Barbie has an iconic place in people's experiences, memories, and fantasies and there is no doubt that Mattel's doll can be reckoned among cultural icons. Being a cultural icon generally includes the capacity of an object or a person to become enmeshed in individuals' small social worlds, and its ability to occupy a central position in peoples' lives and social relations. A cultural icon is not a pure version of a real life idea. It always represents a sensible designatum, in the shape of "an experienced presence, a memorable something or someone threading together parts of one's past while offering a glimpse into one's future" (Rogers 34). In her book, Rogers describes a situation in which she asked one of her interviewees, who was a Barbie

collector, the following question: What does Barbie mean to you? The collector managed to answer it in two words — "memories and friends." (34) Barbie enters people's lives, provides common ground, and adds new connections. Hence, Barbie is a legitimate cultural icon.

What makes me think of Kylie as a newly-formed cultural icon is her impressive footprint in people's daily lives. Here, a compelling example of Kylie's iconic presence, during the big event of Super Bowl 2018, can be given. As probably all American football lovers know, Super Bowl is a final game to determine the champion of the National Football League (NFL). A week before and after that big game, Internet users generally share on their social media platforms an impressive amount of Super Bowl related textual material: jokes, tweets, memes, quizzes and news. What struck me as odd was that, in those texts, the name Kylie Jenner was mentioned with astonishing frequency. Although Kylie Jenner has nothing to do with American football (neither playing it, nor being a fan of it) she received as much attention as the New England Patriots or the Los Angeles Rams. This Kylie Jenner pre- and post-Super Bowl fever can be explained by the fact that the cultural icon in that period of time posted a video showing what all Americans were expecting; namely, her pregnancy, proved by showing her belly. Her personality and "private" life have integrated so firmly into her fans' and haters' social worlds that she has become a part of their lives: they live through all events with her (see fig. 9 and 10).

Figure 9. When Kylie confirmed that she was pregnant in 2018

Figure 10. Kylie's engagement plans 2019

Kylie Jenner's pregnancy in 2018, or potential engagement to Travis Scott (who performed at the halftime show) in 2019, became part of people's memories and impressions relating to the Super Bowl.

The next question that arises is: Who is more real? Barbie or Kylie Jenner on Instagram? Rogers introduces a special term for Barbie's iconic status—fictive icon and defines it as an icon that "contributes to a culture by letting members act as if something is real or true even while they 'know' it is not" (Rogers 23). In other words, a fictive or fantastic icon is produced by a culture and contributes to it by idealizing what can be real or conceivable in that culture. It triggers as-if fantasies and releases people's imaginations. Rogers claims that Barbie's fictive nature is premised on the fact that Barbie's limits or failings are hidden from us. Barbie is a perfect example of impression management. Although Barbie always looks flawless, with her shapely legs, faultless breasts, and hourglass torso, we never see her exercising and covered in sweat, or see the work behind this enviable body. Moreover, Barbie creates an impression of an extremely rich person. How does she earn money? This information is concealed from us. All we know is that she can acquire different professions: as a doctor, a police officer, an artist, or a businesswoman. She can

wear the suit of a businesswoman, but we never see her spending long hours in the office dealing with contracts and other paperwork. All we are focused on is her appearance while being successful, active, and adventurous. Barbie is a fiction that cultivates our fixation on appearance.

On Instagram, Kylie Jenner presents herself as a Barbie—as a flawless doll. We rarely see Kylie without make-up. She enjoys dressing up and posting her new outfits on her social media platforms. We do not know if she wears make-up at home, in the gym, or in the grocery store. We do not have a clue how she looks when she gets sick or tired. We never see how she fails to be perfect behind the curtains of Instagram. Most of the time she posts selfies or professional shots depicting only images of her taken for multiple advertisement campaigns. She is the main character in her Instagram narration. Other people serve as agents of her overwhelming success. Kylie Jenner is always surrounded by a narrow circle of supporting characters: her sole best friend, her boyfriend, and her daughter. She includes them in her Instagram life when she strives to demonstrate her diverse role repertoire. In particular, she always plays a certain role in the photograph, showing herself as a businesswoman, a friend, a mother, or a girlfriend. I use the word "role" because we can see only the cosmetic, tenuous side of her engagement with one or another activity. For example, she demonstrates how she spends her time with her daughter, Stormi. In one of the posted pictures Kylie is sitting on a sunbed with her baby. The photograph gives the charming, playful impression of a loving mother embracing her child. However, the followers cannot know for sure to what extent Kylie Jenner looks after her child. Probably, she has little time for changing diapers or reading fairy tales before putting her daughter to bed. We can only use our imagination to speculate whether she hands her baby to multiple nannies immediately after taking such motherhood photographs or truly engages with her child. The real Kylie Jenner's life is hidden from the public. Her Instagram encourages people's creativity, imagination, and fantasies. People read Kylie's fictive narrative

through the prism of their own experiences. Every reading is a phantom of the imagination. In this sense, Kylie Jenner on Instagram is as real as a Barbie doll and can be considered a fictive icon.

On 31 October, Kylie Jenner posted a photograph of herself as a Barbie girl (see fig. 11).

Figure 11. I am Barbie.

How did people react to such a representation of Kylie Jenner? My analysis of the Barbie posting (fig. 11) shows that the majority of followers liked the Barbie image; that is, 42% of the randomly-chosen five hundred comments are considered to be positive. Critical comments account for only 4.4% of the total sample. It is noteworthy that LB comments are the second most frequent type of the feedback under this post, amounting to 39.8% (see fig. 12).
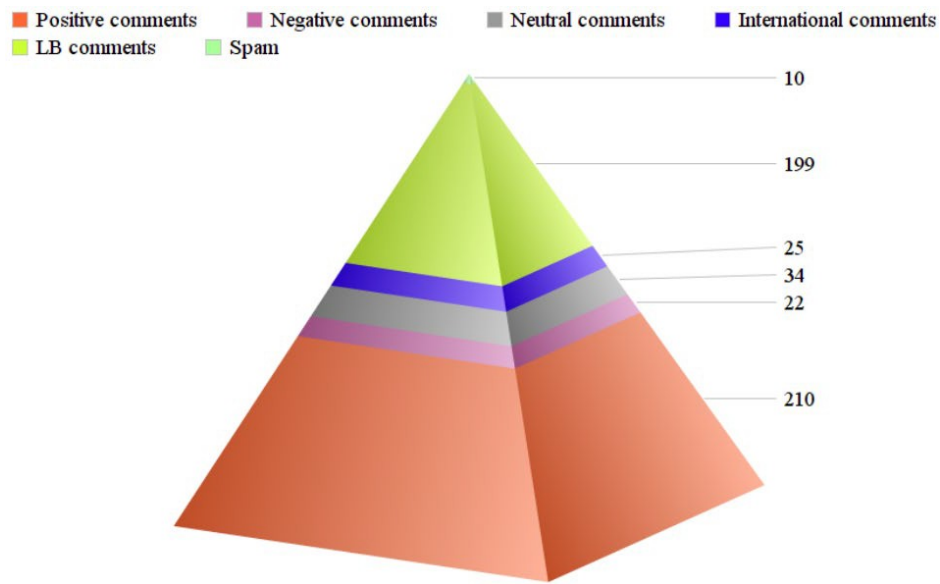
Figure 12. I am Barbie chart

Positive feedback. Carole Spitzack (1990) found a circular interaction between the body goals of dolls and women. In fact, dolls and women symbolize one another. Barbie is made to resemble the culture's idealized woman, while that woman tries to reach the perfect image the doll represents. Kylie makes reference to the idealized body of the doll, while a doll, sooner or later, will be produced that points back to Kylie:

@kyliesluvaa: "@barbie just make her a doll already ☺☺☺☺"

Spitzak is convinced that "desired women are those who appear to be something other than women … The bodies of women are replaced by replicas or 'fictions' of women." Kylie's desire to be flawlessly perfect makes her seem less human, but more loveable.

Fans like the idea that an objectified Kylie that can be perceived as a doll, commodity, or brand:

@arinnvble: "OMG☺☺☺☺♥ I WANT THIS DOLL☺☺☺☺☺☺"

Kylie Jenner, along with her idol—Barbie—are the icons of matrix domination; that is, a set of social hierarchies which reinforce one another and centre on such categories as social class, age, and race. Kylie escapes systematic subordination in all those hierarchies by being born into a wealthy family, being young and already successful, and pretending to be a member of another race, but using her own race as a privilege. Kylie's appeal as a doll may lie in the number of privileges that potential buyers can assume by controlling plastic Kylie and feeling superior to her in the act of purchase. In other words, the reason for people's desire to purchase a Kylie Barbie doll resides in their actual resentment of the privileges she takes for granted.

Followers stimulate Kylie's devotion to plastic surgery by giving the following feedback to the post:

@jeycrin: "You are perfect with all those surgeries I wish I had more money so I could be loved and beautiful"

Lord claims that plastic material is a key to understanding Barbie's essence. She is plastic. There is no other substance that would be able to hold any shape and recreate flawless tiny details. Lord states "what nature can only approximate, plastic makes perfect" (52). As @jeycrin claims, by virtue of Kylie Jenner's social class position, she is wealthy and, therefore, privileged to bring her body to perfection. The comment of @jeycrin and similar ones show that, nowadays, there is a tendency to see bodily characteristics as plastic.

Negative feedback. The few negative comments (eighteen out of 500) revolved mostly around Kylie's passion for plastic surgery and, therefore, her affinity with a plastic Barbie doll, even without a costume. I will recapitulate all the negative comments relating to the plastic nature of Kylie Jenner because they are notable for one regularity:

@wtf.kevin_: "Definitely a plastic doll"

@mikeochoa52: "Both plastic so it makes sense"

@frederic_nine: "Exactly what she is "

@buckscountypat: "Aww. You & Barbie are both made out of the same materials.....plastic";

@davidancer_hs: "Lol she was like "if you can't fight it Just admit it";

@boi0066: "I don't know why she wants to be Barbie for Halloween when @kyliejenner is already plastic 😂😂

@sasha_gun: "Make of plastic, not for just Halloween but all year around haha"

Interestingly, seven out of seven "haters" appeared to be men:
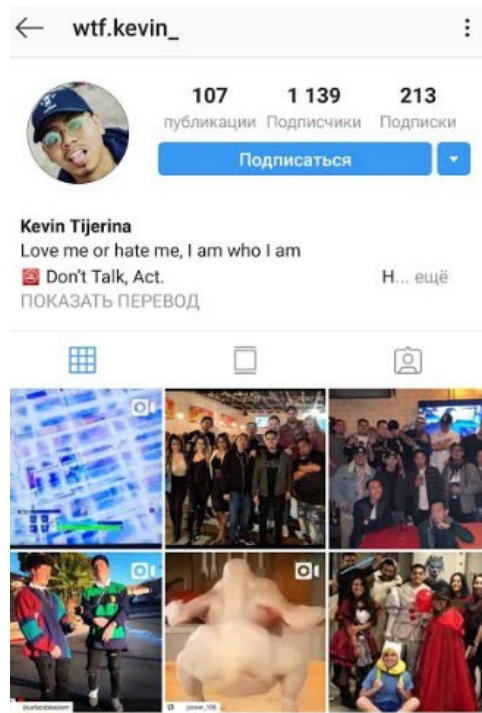
Figure 13. @wtf.kevin_
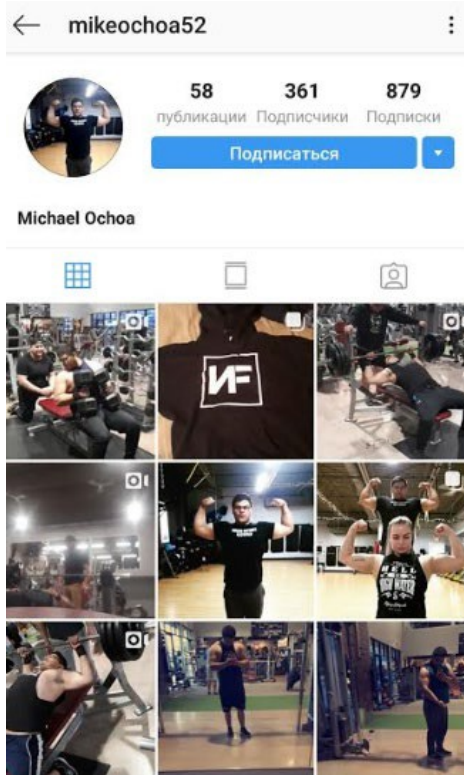
Figure 14. @mikeochoa52

Figure 15. @frederic_nine

Figure 16. @buckscountypat (The owner of the page is a man)

Figure 17. @davidancer_hs

Figure 18. @boi0066

A Barbie doll and Kylie Jenner's Instagram have a lot in common. One of the aspects of this resemblance is their distinct gender-orientation. Typically, Barbie doll players or collectors, and followers of Kylie's Instagram, are women of different ages. They have the same values and the same fantasies of being glamourous, young, and successful. Men pretend that they do not have much experience with Barbie and rarely admit that they follow Kylie's profile, with its enormous amount of lip kit advertisements, because these are "girl things."

If boys nonetheless play with their sister's Barbies, they play aggressively, pulling the doll's head off or roasting her limbs on a grill.[4] If men are active on Kylie Jenner's Instagram page, they are aggressive as well: they criticize her artificial beauty and her similarity to an "odiously" plastic Barbie. The norms of society dictate to men the appropriate behaviour they have to conform to while engaging with strictly feminine objects. It is considered appropriate not to use the object as women do. If a man peacefully plays with his sister's Barbie, he loses his masculinity; if he rips the doll's limbs out, he gains masculinity points.

---

[4] There is no doubt that girls can also be aggressive toward their dolls. The reasons for their hostility, however, differ considerably from boys'.

There was only one refreshing piece of the healthy criticism out of eighteen insulting comments, and it had a conversational style:

@v.s.chic: "So a few years ago we're all pissed bc barbies "make little girls self conscious because it's unrealistic beauty standards" and now we all praising this girl w tons of plastic surgery for being a Barbie doll ""

The presented C comment does not discuss Kylie Jenner and her plastic surgeries, but mostly concerns our attitudes toward the unrealistic Barbie standards that are etched into people's minds. The comment implies that Kylie is just one of the victims of cultural beauty propaganda (see fig. 19).

Figure 19. Portraits of Barbie on the walls of Kylie's apartment.

Conclusion. The parallel between Kylie Jenner's Instagram profile and a Barbie doll demonstrates the artificial character of the concepts of femininity and sexuality. Kylie Jenner on Instagram is a fictive cultural icon created, complemented, and altered by her followers' subjective perceptions. In other words, she is a construct of users' imaginations: a construct that implies a distinct type of exotic, but simultaneously white, femininity. The image of Kylie in a Barbie doll costume can be categorized as a purely feminine way of expressing her personality on Instagram. The post "I am

Barbie" falls within the "female domain" of Instagram content and, I assume, therefore receives a considerable number of LBs, while the number of P/B comments happens to be negligible.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

Besides Barbie stylizations, another role that Kylie Jenner actively applies to herself is the role of being a mother. She does not try to achieve the pure, self-sacrificing angel image that is a part of the Marian motherhood discourse. For example, with her child, she can pose barely covered with clothes, under the shower in bikini:

Figure 20. Kylie taking shower with Stormi and Jordyn

Her Instagram personality and body are not suppressed by the existence of the baby in her life. Julia Kristeva, in *Stabat Matar*, elaborates on images of the virgin mother Mary and discusses the way the culture of motherhood is influenced by religious representations of Mary:

> [Such representations of Mary as a poor, modest, and humble woman, as well as a tender, devoted mother] are tinged with female masochism, it also exhibits a compensating measure of gratification and ecstasy, in that the mother bows her head before her son … She knows that she is destined to that eternity (of spirit or species) of which every mother is

subconsciously aware, and in relation to which the devotion, or even the sacrifice, of motherhood is but a ridiculously small price to pay. (Kristeva 142)

Kylie does not depict herself sitting at home, constantly engaging with her child and becoming an idealized, sexless creature who has fulfilled a traditional female goal. Her body exists beyond the child; it does not function as a screen for their interaction. As opposed to the "virginal body," Kylie has a mother's body: the large breasts and wide child-bearing hips relating to pregnancy and birth are ultra-sexualized.

Of the virginal body we are entitled only to the ear, the tears, and breasts. That the female sexual organ has been transformed into an innocent shell which serves only to receive sound may ultimately contribute to an eroticization of hearing and the voice, not to say of understanding. But by the same token sexuality is reduced to a mere implication. (Kristeva 142)

Kylie does not demonstrate any motherhood-related limitations or restrictions. She has her own goals, not related to the baby or social connections and, more importantly, no dependence on the father of the child either psychologically (out of the fifty latest posts on Instagram, only six feature or mention Travis Scott—18 March 2019) or financially (she is richer than her husband). Kylie represents a type of a mother who embodies the fantasies of feminists in the late 1990s: she is the passionate, glamourous businesswoman, possessing her child as her personality supplement or, more cynically, as an accessory. Motherhood is presented by Kylie Jenner as a bonus to her already fulfilled life.

Instagram's glowing images of Kylie's comfortable and carefree motherhood are true for Kylie's maternal conditions, but can vary considerably from mother to mother depending on religion, race, class, education, and many other factors. Although the growing economic divide in the world does not let the majority of mothers experience the same personal and professional life

balance that Kylie does, the results of the posting analysis show that the majority of followers react positively to her motherhood images. With regard to the neoliberal discourse, motherhood is considered as a productive labour which is extremely beneficial to the society and leads to the consumption of new products.

In my analysis, I consider two photographs of Kylie and her daughter Stormi:

Figure 21. Kylie's vacation with Stormi   Figure 22. Stormi's birthday party
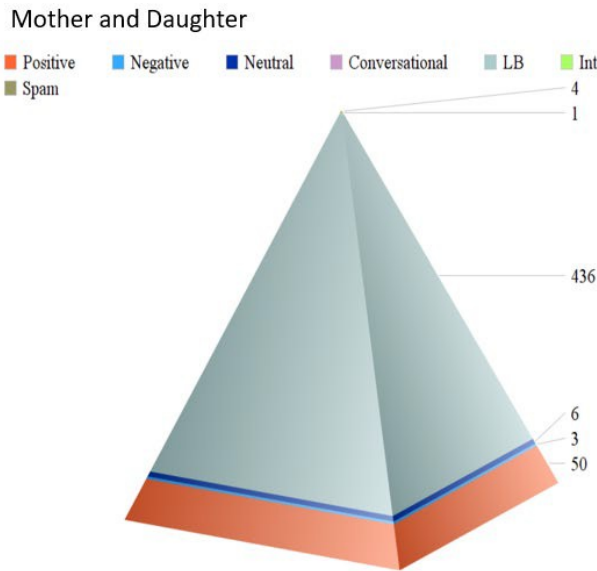
Figure 23. Kylie's vacation with Stormi chart
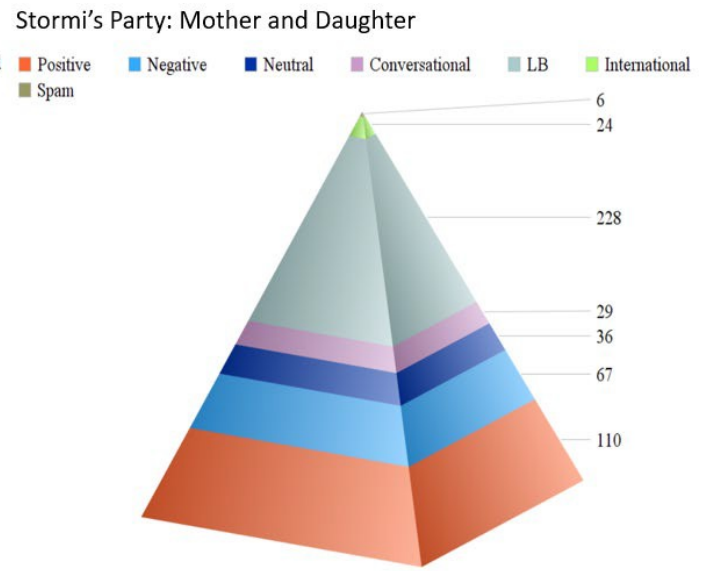
Figure 24. Stormi's birthday party chart

The pyramids demonstrate that "Kylie's vacation with Stormi" gained 10% positive and

0.6% negative comments, while "Stormi's birthday Party" received 22% positive and 13.4%

negative comments. At first sight, the photographs seem to be almost identical: the mother is

holding her child in her arms, looking at her baby with admiration and a "Mona Lisa" smile. Why

do we witness such a big difference in the proportions of positive comments under those two

postings (delta [positive Figure 21 – positive Figure 22] is 12%)? What is the differentiating factor

that influences people's attitude toward the mother and daughter in those two situations? In order to

answer these questions, we need to know the context of the photographs.

Kylie's vacation with Stormi. The first photograph (see fig. 21) was taken during one of Kylie's

beach vacations. She spent one of her weekends in January, somewhere at the seaside, with her

daughter Stormi, best friend Jordyn Woods, and boyfriend Travis Scott. The positive feedback under

the posting (out of five hundred randomly selected comments) is limited to four adjectives ("cute",

"neon", "beautiful", and "nice") and three interjections ("wow", "omg", and "aww"). The number of

LB comments skyrocketed to 87.2%. This lack of positive comments, as well as the overwhelming

majority of aggressive or ignorant LB comments, show that there is no interest in such Instagram content: there is nothing to discuss in an ordinary mother on vacation within her warm circle.

@ sxegirl: "So cute!"

@ thelifeisofvibes : "You are beautiful"

@ timberlandnyc "Wow! Neon vibes" and so on.

Stormi's Birthday Party. The second baby photograph (see fig. 22) was taken at Stormi's epic birthday party. Although the baby was only one-year-old, Kylie Jenner had an entire amusement park built for Stormi. The giant theme park featured a lot of attractions (including swimming in a personal pool in baby shark costumes), food booths, and even souvenir shops.

The entrance of the party space was decorated with a gigantic inflatable head of the birthday girl. The design of that space was inspired by Travis Scott's last album, Astroworld.

Figure 25. Dad's influence

Figure 26. Party decorations

A lot of celebrity guests were invited, including DJ Khalid, who gave Stormi her first Chanel bag.

Figure 27. Travis Scott, Stormi, Kylie Jenner, and DJ Khalid

Negative feedback. Although negative comments amounted to only 13.4%, they played an important role in arousing other types of comments, such as conversational comments accounting for 5.8%. 7.2% of neutral comments suggested how to enhance or expand the event, or how to make more money for charities out of the birthday party. That is why I will start by investigating the negative feedback to show the source and triggers for the further conversations.

The first type of negative comments I have decided to call: "Your money could save Africa, or at least homeless people in LA". Such comments condemn Kylie for wasting a great deal of money on her baby's party, although she will not remember the smallest part of what was happening, while she—the billionaire—could have saved starving children in Africa:

> @rr33ma: "She's not even gonna remember. Instead of throwing her a huge party that's a waste of time you could've donated money to the children of Africa"
>
> @lisablue5: "Help the homeless people in LA"
>
> @jj90009 "Seriously there are people out there struggling, starving, dying of illnesses, freezing, and this is a one year old birthday party? Hope you have to charity

as well... guess I would raise my kids differently if I had a lot of money. Just seems like such a waste when it could be used for good"

@ charlottefsantolli: "If you are going to throw a party like this, at least have the guests make a donation to world hunger instead of bringing a gift."

@ rawlings.mary: "Let's hope they donated to hungry children all over California at least"

Such comments amount to a quarter of all negative feedback under the post. Firstly, we have to understand what image of ideal motherhood stands behind this criticism. What expectations do the followers have? Why are they dissatisfied with Kylie's content? According to 25% of the negative comments, the ideal Instagram mother who concurrently claims to be a billionaire should not spend so much money on her infant. In other words, one of the most powerful influencers presumably should celebrate her baby's one-year birthday at home with her boyfriend, modestly eating a cake from Walmart and posting the results of her charity, targeting the abstract mass of children in Africa.

From the followers' point of view, Kylie as a mother should be able to commiserate with all children in the world through her mother-daughter connection. Since Stormi's birth, she is able to relate to all mothers, feel their happiness and pain from a distance, and bow her head before all struggling, freezing, starving daughters and sons:

@ alissafar "So terrifying to see how people burn millions of dollars while children Stormi's age around the world are dying of hunger, war and diseases. Truly frustrated by the mankind and the world we are living in☹☹"

Such desirable images of a mother unexpectedly resurrect the Marian discourse raised by Kristeva. Being a mother means full devotion to the child, self-sacrifice, and self-effacement. Such an attitude toward yourself as a mother encapsulates the fact, that from the very birth of your child,

you are expected to struggle in order to make your baby happy. If you are so wealthy that you do not have to sacrifice anything to raise your child decently, but you still want to fit into the image of the ideal mother, you have to donate large sums to struggling others and thus pay a price for being an exemplary mother:

@lucien_nl: "@heels_and_blogging_ I absolutely would... and I would also donate some of it to ensure that other babies get to celebrate their first birthday as well"

If you, being rich, do not care about other one-year old babies, people start becoming angry with you for not having tears in your eyes, not losing anything for the sake of being a good "global" mother, and not experiencing standard maternal feelings of lack:

@michaelagavin: "I mean... happy birthday to your beautiful daughter but fuuuuuuuuck.... people are dying, you can do SO MUCH GOOD IN THIS LIFE. Be better. Use your money for good. Your kids will always be ok, use your money to help the ones who aren't"

Another type of negative comment concerns the way Kylie raises her child and arranges the party. I will call this sort of negative feedback: "This party is only for selfish and inexperienced Kylie".

@ sheetzazzle: "This party was for YOU and to show off to the world and NOT for Stormi!! ☺☺☺☺"

@ rachel_ghaaw : "THIS IS NOT A CHILD FRIENDLY PARTY. Granted, it is filled with images and themes of "Stormi", but little is truly geared FOR stormi. Even I get the creepy, evil and dark vibes through videos, I simply cannot imagine how this is truly appropriate for a one year olds first birthday. Just consider the background music choices, or the entrance hallway sound, or overall game varieties....this to me seems a lot more like a party for adults, but using a child's birthday as an excuse for greater media production and promotion for dark vibes opportunities"

@noukles: "Sorry but the party was way too over the top and in no way reliant to a one yr old, she couldn't take part in hardly anything. Sometimes bigger and over the top isn't better, it looked completely empty 😩😩😩😩"

@liloletiiaa: "Why her [Stormi's] hair never done since you rich"

@saviicangas: "Damn she's going to grow up not knowing what the word humble means"

In total, such comments on Kylie's poor mothering skills account for 43% of all negative feedback under the photograph.

The last type of negative comment I am going to show is unflattering feedback from environmentalists. Some of the followers became concerned about all materials that were used for decorations to construct "Stormi's world":

@alex.neary: "At the expense of the earth. I love how much you love your baby and family but can we take a minute to think about the waste that is created after these parties? How much of these decorations end up in landfills? I'm sorry, but I can't be the only one thinking about this when I see the extravagance".

@jessicafaithstein: "Does everything from the one time party get recycled or is it in our landfill now?"

In turn, the followers cannot forgive Kylie for being rich and not caring about anyone or anything but herself and her popularity. They vent their hatred on Stormi's shaggy hair and dark undertoned birthday decorations.

Positive feedback. However, not all of the followers displayed this censorious attitude and they advocated Kylie's right to be lavish when it concerns her only child's birthday. In order to justify Kylie's "obscene boasting and overspending", as one of the followers phrased it, some of the Instagram users fall back on astrology, namely, zodiac signs. The positive reaction on Kylie's caption under the post (Figure 16) "I had to go all out for my baby #stormiworld" was as follows:

@ shoni___pooh: "I can imagine cuz us Leo's are extra!!!!!"

@ paularican "This is what happens when you have a Leo as your momma😊😊"

@ leonardo_lk2: "we all leos are like that♥"

@ lacubanitaparati "It's a Leo ♌ thing but most of all a mother thing 👑"

By mentioning the Leo zodiac sign, followers created a sense of belonging to a certain group of people with the same behavioural tendencies, weaknesses and strengths. After defining Kylie as a Leo, other members of the Leo pool can easily identify themselves with Kylie. The followers start using such pronouns as "we" and "us". Being a Leo unites people and being a mother adds one more layer to that sense of solidarity. The followers think that they know how she feels about most of the basic life topics, including motherhood, because she was born in the same month and they share the same sun sign.

In the frame of astrology, all weaknesses can be considered as inborn personal traits. Hence, a person is not responsible fully for his or her own zodiac driven actions and the person can blame the stars for him or her being too direct or too emotional. You do not have to justify your behaviour in terms of common sense if you can explain your wasteful spending in terms of a Leo's incredible ability to love and be generous to his or her close circle. I spend my money on the people I love and nobody can love as strongly as Leos do!

> Even if a Leo mom is struggling financially, she will make damn sure her kids have every possible advantage. From schmoozing with the board of the private prep school to getting the best tutor she can find, a Leo mom will go all out to make sure her kids are getting the best. (Gervis, *Elite Daily*)

We can see a familiar phrase in the end of the quoted passage "to go all out" for the baby. For horoscope readers, the image of the self-sacrificing mother is extremely flattering. Born in August, people subconsciously do their best to conform to this Leo characteristic. Apparently, Kylie

has read many such Leo descriptions, so the standard phrases from horoscopes are firmly imprinted on her brain: "I had to go all out for my baby #stormiworld "(@kyliejenner).

Conversational comments. One of the most informative types of feedback is the conversational one. This feedback implies that commentators should refocus their attention from Kylie's personal issues to global problems and direct their opinions towards the entire Instagram community. They engage in conversations with one another, argue, agree, and disagree. The followers who start such conversations do not care whether Kylie Jenner is on board or not. By that, I mean that commentators do not expect Kylie to be a possible active participant in the conversation; Kylie simply becomes an objectified subject of the talk:

> @ mayraamoreno : "she doesn't owe anyone anything , she doesn't have to donate . That's not an obligation. I don't know what makes you think she does? So YOU don't be ignorant, and understand NO one owes anyone anything in this world. You don't owe anyone anything, I don't owe anyone anything and she doesn't owe anyone anything. Point blank period".

> @ heyparts: "Money that could've saved lots of children yadayadayada. Lol are you guys even sure it really fed the poor and didn't end up in someone's pocket and bank accounts for selfishness 😁😁 Yes giving is so good and the amount of people who thinks so in this comment section is quite plenty, if you really wanna save the poor and starving why don't you do it yourselves and not expect others to do it for you, i'm pretty sure you'll help so many by doing what you wanna do instead of just commenting it☺☺"

As we can see, the followers' goal is not to be heard by Kylie, but to be heard by Kylie's whole community. All the comments above are reactions to the negative feedback expressed beforehand. The followers @mayraamoreno and @heyparts discuss the feedback in which people make claims about Kylie's insensitivity toward the social needs of others. They remind the audience

that charity is a fully voluntary activity. Even if a person becomes a billionaire, this voluntary

activity does not turn into mandatory one. Nobody owes anything to anyone. If you want change, do

not shift responsibility onto Kylie or other powerful people; only you can make this change happen.

Conversational comments can be abstractly philosophical, mentioning a general you as an

agent (two comments above) or self-reflectively featuring the personal pronoun I as an agent:

@ theobella54: "remotely - I would much rather have my life. Having an opinion on

someone's obscene boasting and overspending doesn't make me bitter or jealous. I am a very

happy person, just an opinion. Thanks for your feedback though 😄😄"

@ londie73:"I've come to realize there are a lot of miserable people on the internet. I found

myself posting mean things and that's not me. Let this mother enjoy her daughter. She is

sharing and she doesn't have to. It's over the top for people who can't afford it. This is their

reality. She's a billionaire!"

@thecolorednight: "Did her story make anyone else's day worse? Over here working a 16

hour day today and I have $20 in my bank account. Why is life so much better and easier for

some people than it is others? Trying to come to terms with this."

In such self-reflective comments, people analyze their own life attitudes. They criticize themselves

for being too jealous of the billionaire lifestyle, admit that they have some financial issues, search

for excuses to be harsh on Kylie, deny accusations of being envious, and claim that they are happier

than all those billionaires. All in all, by that, they are trying to embrace the class difference in

various ways: to "come to terms with this", where "this" is social and financial inequality.

Conclusion. Having compared two, at first sight similar, photographs of Kylie and her daughter

Stormi, I realized how followers' reactions differ: from a state of indifference while looking at

Figure 15 to becoming incredibly opinionated when looking at Figure 16. What is the main trigger

for the condemnation and envy in Kylie's Instagram community? The answer is the demonstration of money and power by a 21-year-old woman.

SUMMARY

I have examined four different Instagram photographs that relate to such matters as family values, envy, beauty standards, plastic surgery, and motherhood. The chart below demonstrates the numerical distribution of the positive, negative, and LB comments pertaining to the "We Are Family", "I am Barbie", "Kylie's vacation with Stormi", and "Stormi's Birthday Party" posts.
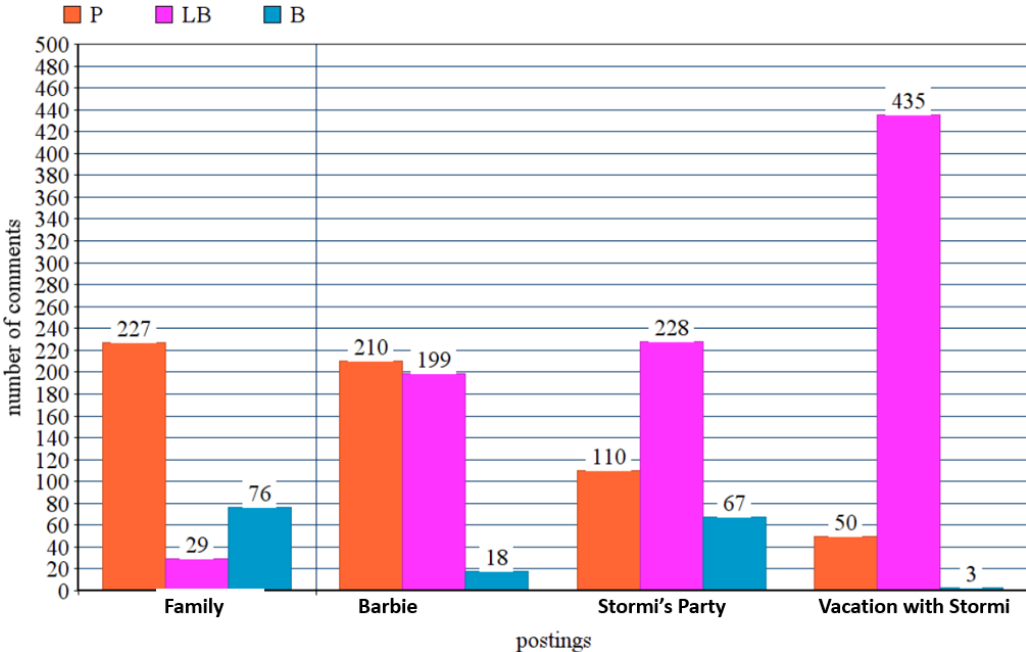
Figure 28. Comparison of four positively assessed posts

It is important to note that the chart shows an inverse relationship between the number of opinionated comments (positive and negative together) and LB comments. In order to see the inverse character of the LB and P/B values, I will present the same data in the following table:

Table 2. Inverse relationship between LBs and P/Bs

Postings	LBs	Opinionated comments: P/B
Family	29	303

Barbie	199	228
Stormi's Party	228	177
Vacation with Stormi	435	53

Table 2 demonstrates the followers' attitudes toward the feminine side of Kylie's Instagram personality. The qualitative analysis shows that, if a post is related to other aspects besides those that praise femininity (beauty, motherhood, etc.), it receives less LBs and respectively more opinionated comments than purely feminine posts do. Chart bellow (see fig.29) provides an understanding of how the posts can be distributed on the scale according to the number of LB comments.
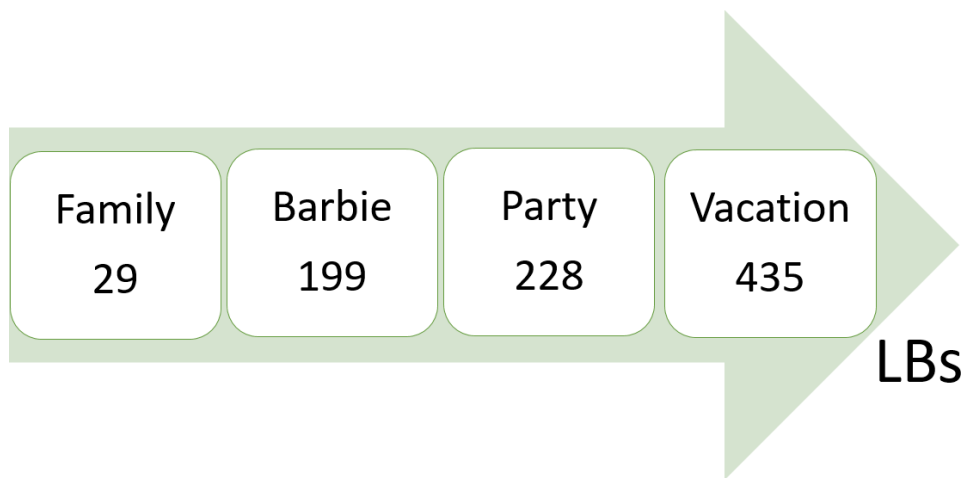
Figure 29. LB scale

The main factor that influences the position of the photograph on the scale is the post's conformity to the gender norms of the Instagram society. The subject of the photograph who strives to perform traditional gender characteristics tends to receive less B comments, but risks receiving too many LBs. If the subject, on the contrary, challenges the traditional boundaries of the polarized gender representations, he or she receives opinionated feedback, including P, B, I and C comments. Kylie Jenner, as a woman, is expected to post photographs depicting the "feminine" aspects of her personality: strong family bonds, her beautiful feminine body, the baby as her top-priority, and

dependence on her male partner. All the photographs examined in the first chapter entail aspects of performed femininity to a certain degree. "We Are Family" represents the Kardashians' strong family bonds, "I am Barbie" praises female beauty standards and, finally, photographs with Stormi support maternal values. Consequently, if Kylie Jenner as a mirror is gender-conforming and relatable, the positive and LB response is expected, but if the image is too distortive from ones our ego ideal strives to find reflection in, it is likely to be rejected.

Among others, the post "We Are Family" has the largest number of deviations from the standard photographs that belong to the "feminine domain" of Instagram content and, therefore, receives the lowest number of LBs. The Kardashian women show their raised middle fingers to the audience, demonstrating the Kardashians arrogance and superiority over the followers. The photograph shows the women's wealth, permissiveness, and self-indulgence. Moreover, this gesture, made by a powerful and exclusively female group, can be interpreted as a message to the male followers, highlighting the Kardashian's independence from men. Another disturbing aspect of the post concerns the cropping out one of the family members (Khloe Kardashian) that makes some followers point to Kylie's individualistic nature and question her equal love for the other Kardashian women—or even the whole family bond.

The photograph "I am Barbie" received more LB comments than "We Are Family". The post belongs to the type of photographs that fit into the "feminine domain" of Instagram content; namely, the posts demonstrating female beauty and sexuality. If you check the hashtag "Barbie" on Instagram, you will find that it is a common practice for women to pose and dress like Barbies. The photographs depicting women in Barbie outfits on Instagram amount to more than six million posts (13 April 2019).

Kylie Jenner presented as a Barbie doll is a part of her usual Instagram content. The followers are accustomed to her professional photographic shots in costumes, so no new storyline is

introduced. Her Barbie post does not stand out from her profile collection and does not cause any gender contradictions. Therefore, there is less opinionated feedback under the "I am Barbie" post in comparison to the "We Are Family" one. The followers use Kylie's typical colourful and eye-catching photograph as a space for self-promotion.

Posing with a baby is a proven way to fit into the category of positively assessed female posts on Instagram. If a post relates to the motherhood discourse, it automatically praises femininity and therefore receives more LBs than an image of a beautiful woman without a child. For example, the photograph "Stormi's birthday party" received as many LBs as "We Are Family" and "I am Barbie" together. However, it still collected a considerable number of opinionated comments because it is surrounded, not only with motherhood discourse, but also by class inequality and social status related discourse. "Stormi's party" collected 207 LB comments less than the photograph focusing only on maternal feelings — "Vacation with Stormi".

If we examine the distribution of the photographs according to the amount of positive feedback received, we notice that the photographs are placed on the scale in reverse order (see fig.30). In the first chapter, all the discussed posts are classified as positively assessed, meaning that, in all posts, the P comments always prevail over the B comments.

| Vacation 50 | Party 110 | Barbie 210 | Family 227 | Ps |
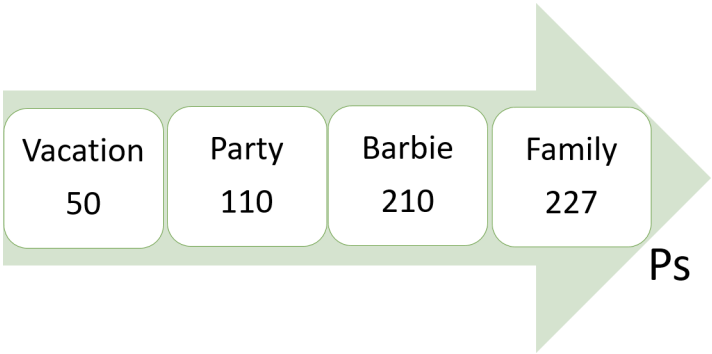
Figure 30. P scale

The position of one or another post on the scale depends on the factor called the "ability to occupy a unique niche". In order to receive more Ps, the Instagram user has to conform to his

developed "personality brand" or, in other words, to the storyline of the created Instagram profile. A successful Instagram blogger posts content that is able to occupy its unique Instagram niche, but aligns with the previously compiled narrative in the profile.

The photographs "Barbie" and "We Are Family" received mostly positive feedback, proving that, if you not only conform to the "femininity" Instagram patterns, but also contribute to an innovative representation of them (e.g., the cultivation of a Barbie image through a Hallowe'en celebration or a glowing display of female family bonds at a birthday party), you will be positively assessed by the Instagram community.

"Kylie's vacation with Stormi" received the least amount of positive feedback, and this can be explained by the fact that the post does not differ from any other post featuring the mother and daughter. Kylie's body parts are partially hidden; the (typical for Kylie) ultra-sexualization of the birth-related body parts does not take place. The photograph is too unremarkable to align with Kylie's Instagram profile. "Stormi's Birthday Party" demonstrates more unique content in the way that it presents Kylie Jenner, not as an ordinary mother, but as an extremely generous parent. That is why the post from the party received more positive feedback than the one from the vacation.

Chart below (see fig. 31), in turn, shows the distribution of the photographs on the scale according to the amount of negative feedback they received.

Vacation	Barbie	Party	Family
3	18	67	76

Bs
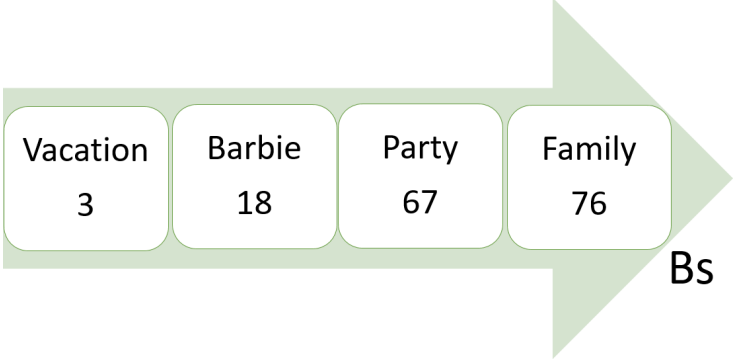
Figure 31. B scale

The positional order of the posts on the B scale is arranged according to the money factor. If Kylie Jenner shows the fruits of her financial triumph, she is more likely to receive negative feedback. "Kylie's vacation with Stormi" and "I am Barbie" almost lack negative comments, indicating that the posts do not raise the topic of Kylie's great fortune. "Stormi's Birthday Party" and "We Are Family", on the contrary, collected substantial negative feedback because of their content's connection to power relations and money.

The followers' attempts to match Kylie's identity of a mother, daughter, or sister in the context of her infinite opulence are inevitably bound to fail. The reason is that the Lacanian phenomena like *true jouissance* and the *comprehension of being* are mutually exclusive. In fact, the true jouissance is generally unattainable for any individuals who are conscious and self-aware of their existence. The followers' mission to gain the wholeness of being through their self-identification with Kylie's Instagram narration is, thus, impossible. What is achievable, however, is to experience a surplus jouissance which can be defined as a pleasure that may be stolen from the other, a pleasure of gaining the symbolic integrity by snatching it from the objectified other. The fantasy objects extracted from the Symbolic and Imaginary orders presented by Kylie Jenner's and her followers' Instagram profiles signify the surplus jouissance of being which is never destined to be manifested. In the current work, I consider the fantasy objects in the Instagram community to be gender, class, and race.

Lacan refers to the fantasy objects as to *objects a* which result from the unequal symbolic transcriptions of the bodies which he divides into two classes: master-signifier bodies and inferior signifier bodies deprived of the symbolic integrity. Master bodies' fantasies and meanings are considered to be inscribed in the inferior bodies. The supreme/inferior signifier body split emerges in the Symbolic order as a consequence of gender disparity, class inequality, and the American slavery past. The fantasy object of gender, for instance, establishes masculinity hierarchically as the

superior form of being by equating it to the master's being. The fantasy object of race, for its turn, binds whiteness with the existential superiority. Female and/or black subjects are "buried under the signifiers of a dominant Symbolic order" (George 426).

According to Lacan, the master identity can dominate the inferior one through depriving it from the fantasy of being or from the surplus jouissance. The manipulations with the fantasy objects can either reinforce the dominant narrative or to disempower it by blending the boundaries between the master signifier and its empty inferior reflections. In other words, alternations in the gender, class, or race affiliations can release the inferior body signifiers from their existential dependence and can provide them with access to the denied surplus jouissance that initiates the negation of the conventional body hierarchy and forces the need to redefine the categories. As a result, manipulation with the body split signification can ruin the superior/inferior body distinctions and lead to the identity crisis for both categories which are defined through each other. Consequently, the lost distinction between master and inferior identities can cause aversion among both supreme and inferior bodies. In the second chapter, I am going to discuss how Kylie Jenner's manipulation of the fantasy objects like gender, class, and race influence the followers' reactions in her comments section.

Chapter 2: Kylie Jenner's Instagram identity-crafting process as an endeavour to dilute the interplay between race and sexuality

Kylie Jenner and her body are constantly being discussed in the press and observed daily by millions of users on the Internet, particularly Instagram. Her body is a complex sign system that alters the established understanding of representational aspects of celebrity culture. The convergence of her class, power, ethnicity, and visibility raises the following two questions: How does Kylie Jenner profit from situating herself both within the realms of privileged whiteness and authentic blackness? And, in what way does Kylie's class belonging modify the public's perception of her raced and sexed body?

In order to address these questions, I will examine three of Kylie's posts, negatively assessed by the Instagram users, concerning the topic of race ambiguity and class inequality: "Blackface," "Self-made billionaire," and "Expensive present." The chapter aims to uncover the correlations between controversial aspects of Kylie's Instagram identity (e.g., dubious character of her racial affiliation or materiality of her love expression in social media) and followers' negative feedback. The chapter is comprised of seven sections, divided further into several subsections.

The first section will discuss the position of Kylie Jenner's identity on the race continuum. In particular, I will examine the phenomenon of Kylie's race mobility by showing the mixed nature of her raced body. In the second section, I will investigate Kylie's trendsetter and entrepreneurial skills in capitalizing on black fashion ideas, which she successfully repackages to new demographics by incorporating black trends via Instagram into her upper-class reality. The third section will be devoted to the Lacanian take on racism in terms of his *Mirror Stage* theory. The fourth section will discuss Kylie's "black skin masquerade," or, in other words, her multiple attempts to enter black culture as a perceived mixed-raced/black woman. In the fifth section, I will research the origins of followers' hatred towards Kylie's financial success. The sixth section will be

dedicated to Kylie's love manifestation and its implications on Instagram. The final section will include preliminary conclusions.

KYLIE JENNER'S IDENTITY POSITION ON THE RACE CONTINUUM

Kylie Jenner is a unique brand. Her public image, shaped both by Kylie herself and the media, is extremely complex in the way that it profits from stereotypical representations of both black and white culture regarding sexuality and femininity. Kylie's self-representation provides her with unconditional accessibility to the privileged realm of whiteness, as well as to the authentic realm of blackness. Due to her clothing and hairstyles, facial shape and reshaping, countless hours of tanning, as well as friendship and romantic relationships with numerous members of the black community, Kylie, being a white woman born into privilege, has created a mixed-race public image. This image shifts her towards racial hybridity, which enables her to extend the scope of her influencer power. Kylie is able to move in between two racial poles through her tendency to ethnicize targeted fragments of her body.

Her hybrid body conforms to a historic racial dichotomy, one that implies the white female body is sinless, pure, and innocent, whereas the black body is seen as overtly sexual and seductive (Negron-Muntaner 1,348). Kylie Jenner has positioned herself as a white woman of Northern European descent who fragments her body into neutral and authentic parts. Neutral components of her body are considered white, which means they are privileged, controlled, manufactured, desexualized, and not profitable (e.g., her nose, hair, arms). Authentic parts are non-white and entail being unprivileged, exposed, real, profitable, and sexualized in character (e.g., her hips, waist, breasts).

There are also components of her body that travel between neutral whiteness and authentic blackness. Kylie Jenner's lips and skin colour are good examples of the body fragments that have

experienced alterations in their racial representations over time. In one of her tweets, Brittany Packnett accused Kylie of exploiting black culture by temporarily acquiring some of the body features that are usually characteristic of the black race, for instance, thick lips:

> And notice now that she's made her fortune? Those lip fillers came out. The fake tan disappeared. Just like Miley Cyrus before her, she'll exploit black culture and black people for as long as its profitable-and then return to the comfort of whiteness. Why? Because it pays. (@MsPackyetti)

Packnett found Kylie's lip modifications offensive, explaining that Kylie acts like an opportunist, profiting from the unprivileged black culture when it is convenient for her but returning to her privileged white culture as soon as a black-raced fragment of her body has fully paid off.

Kylie Jenner is not the only one in her family who is seen as misusing and exploiting black culture. Kim Kardashian's body, which resembles the marginalized bodies of black people, which are constantly facing the unpleasant reality of exclusion, has brought her popularity and financial success. Such unfair public favouritism towards Kim's body causes resentment of the Kardashians by some members of the black community, who are convinced that Kim has revealed an important truth about black culture: the black culture is not attractive until it is appropriated by the white one. In other words, a black body trait needs to be usurped by a white person to be considered attractive.

In 2011, a young black woman, Deena, on the CW show H8R attacked Kim Kardashian with allegations of illegitimate occupation of the territory of black women. Deena referred to Kim Kardashian as a thief and accused her of being fake.

> There a few of us who feel like she's stealing our shine. When the black guys are like, "who's this Kim Kardashian, she's got a fat ass" I'm not gonna lie, I feel a little jealous. She comes out of nowhere—people have been giving me shit for my shape since I was young . . .

When you see Kim and her family benefitting on a grand level, making six million dollars a

year, of course I'm jealous. (H8R, Season 1, Episode 3)

Deena's jealousy is based on the fact that Kim Kardashian is able to profit from her ethnically

marked body without any consequences related to its exotic nature. When considering that Kim

Kardashian's body is not black but ambiguously ethnic (on her father's side, the family has roots in

Armenia), she can benefit from the inherent racial mobility that even light skinned black celebrities

are deprived of.

Moreover, Deena claimed that Kim Kardashian's raced representation originates not only

from her ethnic appearance but also from her frequent romantic relationships with black men. In her

interview for H8R, Deena stated that Kim Kardashian is ". . . all over the media with our men"

(H8R, Season 1, Episode 3). Like her half-sister Kim, Kylie Jenner also surrounds herself with

people of colour. All of her boyfriends except Cody Simpson—Jaden Smith, Michael Ray

Stevenson (TYGA), and Jacques Bermon Webster II (Travis Scott)—and close friends (Jordyn

Woods, Heather Sanders) are black. Her virtual Instagram circle is no different: 44% of the

Instagram accounts she follows are ones of black influencers, another 34.4% is comprised of

Instagram profiles of non-black users, while the remaining 21.6% include Instagram pages owned

by brands or Kylie's fan groups. Consequently, Jenner's Instagram feed predominantly consists of

postings featuring black celebrities.

Through these conscious choices, Kylie, a 100% white woman with no Armenian or other

ethnically marked blood, has placed herself on the race spectrum, preferring to stay closer to the

black pole of exoticness and profit. She is able to make fortune out of her fantasized ethnicity

without any negative connotations formed and shaped by the white supremacy world. Her black-

stylizations are not related to the real black bodies which are traditionally considered to be of non-

phallic, powerless nature. In the next section, I suggest to look at the origin of the black race bias through the lens of Lacanian Mirror Stage theory.

RACISM IS THE ESSENSE OF THE VISUAL

Lacan's articulation of the *Mirror Stage* theory is based on such notions as sight, reflection, distortion, and image, which are utilized for the purposes of explaining the identity construction processes and defining the relationship between the imaginary and symbolic orders. The characteristics and nature of the visual are fundamental for interpreting dynamics of identity formation. According to Lacan, the main outcome of the mirror stage phase should be the infant's ability to recognize their own image and to experience themselves as a whole body.

I suggest focusing on the mirrored image that the infant can see. What kind of object is that unexpectedly static and uncontrollable body? It can be described as a substance wrapped in skin. In other words, it is two-dimensional, flattened matter, the boundaries of which are determined by skin. This image of mass bound by skin establishes specific spatial, personal, and cultural interrelations in the symbolic register and activates a primary understanding of embodiment that facilitates the emergence of racism in the symbolic order.

Referring to the Lacanian real register, Fanon elaborated on the way, in the mirror stage, black male body fragments tend to be "put together again by another self" (109). The reflection of the black infant's body, which is the basis of his future identity, is distorted by the cultural symbolic environment. The black infant strives to conceive of himself as a "whole body" but cannot perceive himself beyond the white racist world he inhabits. Only through comprehension of visibility laws of the phallic field and white mastery can he reconcile the reflection of himself with his chaotic inner world. After such distorted mirrored image recognition, the black infant is considered a functioning and legible subject.

What fragments, modified by our cultural symbolic, does he see when he finally matches himself with his reflection? He sees stereotypical black-race fragments of himself: a hypersexualized body that is hard to control and purportedly contains anger, ignorance, and violence. The owner of the body does not have a voice because his body is considered deaf and dumb (Fanon 120). The black-raced body becomes fully determined and shaped by seeing the world and itself from the location of its eyes inside the symbolism that is its inferiority perspective. In other words, "Blacks in a white society are conditioned from infancy to see in themselves only what others, who despise them, see" (Williams 62).

Nowadays, we live in the world in which the infant's gaze is, in the first place, attracted by the television and then by the mirror, making the cultural symbolic influence frighteningly important. The symbolic accompanies and regulates our identity construction by dictating the social power relations determined by our bodies' characteristics. Considering that all identities are constructed through the signifiers of the big Other, any individual is a slave of the Symbolic order and the pre-existing discourse prevailing in it; the role and place of the subject are inscribed by the discourse, namely, by the white supremacy narrative at the birth. Language is what defines the subject and precedes his/her entrance into the being.

> The function Lacan ascribes to the Symbolic and its signifiers is that of producing the *aphanisis* of the subject, her or his "fading" or "disappearance" under the signifier's agency. Subjectivity not only restricts subject to the big Other's pre-existent universe of meaning; it also deprives the subject of access to those essential components of the self that cannot be circumscribed by signification, the unconscious Real as the barred or stricken portions of the self that constitute the fundamental lack of subjectivity (George 426)

The phallic white supremacist symbolic designates the white race authority and intervenes in the interplay between the infant and his own reflection and sets the laws, according to which some

bodies are deemed powerful and others are not. Consequently, white, male, heterosexual, upper-class bodies are usually coded as privileged ones and, therefore, they carry authority that they tend to exert upon all other "inferior" bodies.

EXPLOITING BLACK CREATIVITY

As I already discussed in the previous sections, Kylie Jenner, along with her sister Kim Kardashian, highlights her exoticized body parts and capitalizes on her ethnic appearance. Interestingly, this is not the only reason why the black community criticizes Kylie. The rumour that she shamelessly steals black designers' work is widespread on the Internet. Kylie is usually condemned when spotted in predominantly black fashion trends, which she then repackaging or coopting them for new demographics. In other words, Kylie steals ideas from mostly black influencers and "appropriates" their aesthetics so that it is accessible and desirable to the new market—in Kylie's case, her social networks followers. Kylie Jenner introduces black fashion trends to her public by incorporating them into her white upper-class daily routine and presenting them as something brand new and innovative.

In 2017, one famous New York black designer, Tizita Balemlay, claimed that Kylie had stolen the whole collection from her PluggedNYC camo set. She posted an Instagram collage of her own design next to Kylie's collection with a following caption:

> When you really Pablo . . . I am the influence *drops mic. Copy & Paste down to the shoes I used on my models 😂😂😂😂 The kardashains [sic] will take your nigga & brand I stamp lmfaooo #WeAreTheCulture (@theplugsdaughterr).

The CEO of PluggedNYC shared the same post on Twitter with the commentary, "The only BRAND to bring back the Camo two piece wave! Unless it is a custom top, PLUGGEDNYC was the first BRAND to push this look!"(@theplugsdaughterr)

Kylie Jenner creates a new culture of white trendy "blackness" by adjusting brands oriented towards the black audience for the larger circle of *Keeping up with the Kardashians* fans and her Instagram followers. The camo sets worn by Kylie herself signal that this collection is suitable even for the upper-class customers. By adopting black trends and repackaging them, Kylie erases the outdated negative connotations related to black fashion (e.g., ghetto, poverty, antisocial elements) and transforms black fashion attributes into fashionable details of style which are directly related to success, wellbeing, authentic self-expression, and prestige.

Kylie's cultural appropriation eliminates the bad connotations issue only when considering white women applying black culture trends to themselves. However, a black woman wearing cornrows or camo sets still will not be considered as trendy and fashionable as an ethnicized white one. Kylie's public Instagram image does not blur the racial dichotomy but, on the contrary, strengthens it by dividing people into two categories: those who utilize the adjusted and modified black culture and those who are excluded from it. Kylie Jenner is able to profit from black culture because she is not black; her identity is fluctuating from the black authentic race domain to the white controlled one constantly. Her black culture presentation includes the possibility to come back to the white culture at any time, making black style appropriation "safe" to try for her followers and consumers. She looks like an ethnically marked person but is able to return to her white roots to enjoy access to the white audience, white market, and white privilege.

BLACK SKIN MASQUERADE

According to the director of the popular Netflix show *Dear White People* (www.netflix.com), Justin Simien, in order to see an actual black skin-themed masquerade in 2017, just attend a Halloween event at any prestigious Ivy League college. The series focuses on the inner lives of black students at Winchester University and starts with a blackface party arranged by, presumably, white students. The students, dressed like Beyoncé, Jay-Z, and other famous black

celebrities, do not intend to offend anyone. Appropriating black culture is the new beauty trend and they, as progressive representatives of the modern time, follow it.

Kylie Jenner is one of the most discussed Instagram influencers with regard to this cultural appropriation debate on social media. She enters into black cultural territory so often that the recent Instagram trend, in which white women modify their appearances to seem more ethnic or exotic, has received the ironic name "the Kylie Jenner effect." This trend obviously has been heavily criticized and deemed racist, given the long history of the objectification and exploitation of black women.

It may feel like it is quite common on Instagram to follow an ethnically marked person for many years and then discover in their childhood photos that the person is white. In other words, this person's racial representation on Instagram is intentionally deceiving. In attempt to look black, white women tend to wear darker makeup, as well as photoshop and filter their photos.

White Swedish model Emma Hallberg is a vivid example of such a person who has successfully ethnicized herself on Instagram. In the photos, which she posts for 282,000 followers, she could easily be taken for black or mixed race (see fig. 32). Due to her popularity on Instagram, Hallberg has become a brand ambassador for clothing company Fashion Nova.
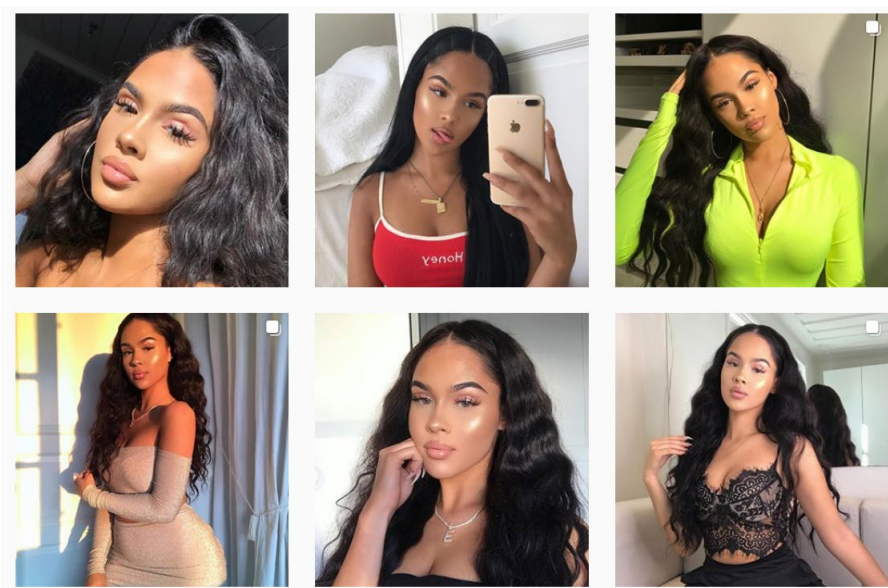
Figure 32. The Instagram profile of Emma Hallberg

Kylie supports and promotes black stylizations and fashion, wearing cornrows and having artificially thick lips and big hips. In this way, she seemingly treats black race traits as if they were part of a fashionable outfit, neglecting the fact that black features are not accessories for white people but belong to the legacy of black culture.

When Kylie Jenner, for instance, shared a photo of her new hairstyle, cornrows, she did not seem to have any idea of the cultural minefield she was entering. The Instagram post of Kylie wearing a typically black hairstyle with the caption "I woke up like disss [sic]" escalated already present racial tensions in the comments section (see fig. 33).

Figure 33. Kylie Jenner with cornrows

The comments revolved mostly around whether anyone owns the cornrow. Many users were convinced that hair is just hair and every woman should be able to wear it as she wants. Others equated wearing cornrows to blackfacing and called Kylie a racist. The latter point of view, found in

representative comments under the picture (fig. 33), is often supported by black people, who relate memories of wearing this particular hairstyle in childhood and being mocked because of it.

Andrea Arterbery, a journalist for the New York Times, wrote an article devoted to the cornrow trend. In her piece, she states that she cannot control her rage towards designers who make their white models work the runway wearing cornrows. She shares:

> Cornrows were a short cut to avoiding the dreadful weekly hair pressings. Pressing hair involved heating a comb . . . on a stove and passing it through the hair from root to tip to straighten it. This arduous, sometimes hours-long process usually culminated in the burning of my scalp or the tips of my ears . . . Cornrows would be my way out, and I looked forward to getting them each summer so that I could jump into pools and run free without worrying about having a hot comb anywhere near my head. But while I loved the look, I didn't love the white girls at school who deemed my hairstyle "weird looking" or "ghetto." (Arterbery, New York Times, "Does Anyone Own the Cornrow")

Arterbery confesses that she often gets annoyed when white women wear cornrows because this hairstyle is being marketed as "new and trendy." As a black woman, she experiences a cultural loss seeing white women wearing cornrows, which are directly related to her painful childhood memories full of marginalization and exclusion. White girls used to mock her for wearing this particular black hairstyle.

Cornrows developed in Africa and were worn mostly by women. Arterbery recalls her grandmother telling her stories about the tradition of braiding cornrows in their family. She explains how from generation to generation, the women in her family used to braid in order to protect their hair while picking cotton in the fields. In other words, Arterbery experiences cornrows as a way to connect "to a lost land." She knows her own culture and, as she states, she does not want to allow white women to steal or beat it out of her.

Arterbery demonstrates the exacerbated fear of forgetting what the victims of slavery experienced as a dehumanized, undergendered, defaced, and captivated community in the past. The slavery past creates the impression of illusionary being, lost state of wholeness that is perceived as something which existed in the pre-slavery period but was snatched from the whole black community. The fantasy of the lost totality helps black individuals to handle with the dominant Symbolic order, with the inherited white supremacy narrative, and the body signifiers split.

> Slavery and racism seek to bring about precisely a traumatic confrontation with lack and an unveiling of the subject's status as signifier. I call this confrontation the trauma of slavery, an assault directed not simply at the slave him-or herself but, more critically, at the very fantasies that sustain subjectivity. Lacan defines "fantasy"as that which employs language and the signifiers of the Symbolic to mask the traumatic lack of the subject and construct the illusions of self, the I-cracies, through which the subject compensates for psychic sense of loss (George 494).

The African Americans tend to continually control the discourse which defines their identities. They struggle more than not- racialized individuals with keeping themselves at the safe distance from the traumatic jouissance of lack which Lacan associates with an excess of pleasure that converts into displeasure or even suffering. George considers slavery and racism to be extremely traumatic because they are likely to inhibit the usual process of subjectification through the fantasy and are prone to confront racialized individuals with the very lack which must be hidden in the Lacanian subjects.

All in all, Kylie Jenner is always found at the forefront of the argument around cultural appropriation. With the help of a qualitative analysis of the next post, "Blackface," I will attempt to answer the question of whether Kylie Jenner's Instagram followers positively react to her black-skin masquerade photos. Referring to race as a fantasy object built around lack for both whites and

African Americans, I will examine how race signifiers localize the lack temporarily and bind it to the subjects. Considering race to be a protective source of identity and, hence, empowering for the black community, I want to determine if the intensity level of users' debates about Kylie's race performance is any different from posts not relating to her race ambiguity. I am going to measure the amplitude of debates tracing the distribution of followers-oriented feedback including the proportion comparison of active discussion initiators—Conversational (C), International-Conversational (I-C) comments and, passive attention-seeking Like-Backs (LB), International-Neutral (I-N), Neutral (N), and Spam (S) comments.

Blackface. In 2015, Kylie Jenner generated conflicting emotions in nearly 20 million followers every other week. Her Instagram posts were constantly trending on Twitter and Facebook. The reason for such Internet user involvement with Kylie's Instagram content was her photographs, featuring Kylie seemingly stylized or dressed as a black woman. The pictures of her wearing cornrows and darker makeup were actively discussed on the Web.
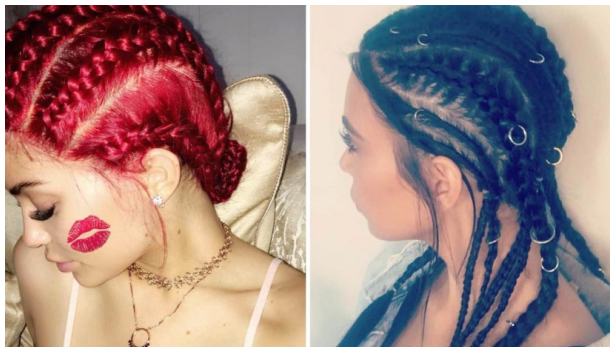
Figure 34. Instagram/@kyliejenner and @kyliesnapchats appearance experiments

The most widely publicized controversy came when Kylie posted one specific series of photographs. The series was remarkable in the way that it depicted Kylie in black and neon lights, which made her face look much darker than usual. The first picture posted in the series was accompanied by an ambiguous caption: "What I wish I looked like all the time" (fig. 35). As a

consequence, the reality TV star was accused of being disrespectful to the black culture, of wearing blackface.

Figure 35. Deleted photograph of Kylie Jenner in blacklight

Kylie's response to followers' criticism on Instagram was to delete the controversial photograph and share a different picture from the shoot with the explanatory caption, "This is a black light and neon lights people lets [sic] all calm down," tagging the photographer, hairstylist, makeup artist, and studio (see fig. 36). In my analysis, I will examine this second photograph (which remains on Instagram) that I have decided to call "Blackface."

Figure 36. Blackface

Before the comments analysis, I would like to point out the similarities between Kylie's "Blackface" Instagram representation and Barbie-style plastic surgery. In both scenarios, Kylie becomes the big Other who can enjoy however she wants, and look however she wishes. The more she changes her affiliations in each photograph, the more unattainable for the followers desire she represents.

Negative Comments. Although the post "Blackface" (see fig. 36) with the explanatory caption and request to calm down obviously received more positive feedback than the deleted one, the negative comments still prevailed. Negative (N) comments, amounting to 89 out of 500 textual reactions, can be divided into five categories. The first includes all feedback mentioning such words and collocations as "racist," "culture appropriation," "mimicking black," "blackface," and their modifications.

@ginger_binger: "*cough * blackface *cough* ☺☺"

@danielvillacull: "😬😬😬😬😬😬😬😬😬😬😬😬"

@itsstormthecat: "@jenisms_rocks it doesn't exactly matter what she looks like, the purpose was for her to mimic a black girl."

@shutupgretchen: "WHY CAN'T SHE UNDERSTAND THAT IT OFFENDS PEOPLE."

@hooper.vibess: "Well ig [Instagram] I can just do my face white & see how many comments I get😂😂😂😂 @lil.goofy "

@erica.schmitz: "Cultural appropriation my ass."

@_ashiee.xx: "Racist."

@zoeankude: "@tricyholly its bc [sic] previously she had the hashtag #/blackface, it's cultural appropriation, she wants the features but she won't appreciate the problems that African ppl have, not yet anyway."

More than 50% of negative comments in this category condemn Kylie for pretending to be a black woman. The users are extremely offended by Kylie's "blackfacing" and call her a racist. An essential part of the negative feedback within the first category is comprised exclusively by blackface emojis (emojis denoted by a dark moon initially), which symbolize a silent protest against such masquerading. The followers usually sent more than five blackface emojis in a row to emphasize their outrage.

It is interesting that the majority of negative comments are addressed not only to Kylie but also to other users. When criticizing Kylie, the followers tend to tag their Instagram peers in order to start a dialogue about the raised issue or to find support for their statements. For example, some black subscribers ironically suggest to their friends that they colour their faces white in order to be as popular on Instagram as Kylie is. As a consequence of such suggestions, people started talking about cultural appropriation and paying compliments to each other for the smart, sarcastic notes they came up with.

@lizkingg: "^ Jennifer, you do rock for that comment."

@jenisms_rocks: "@lizkingg thank u love!"

@folawless: "@bblueyouth I'm glad there's someone here with sense. You are truly woke and knowledgable [sic]."

@bblueyouth: "@folawless thank you 💋💋"

The second category of negative reactions comprises a few comments regarding black women's envy of Kylie Jenner's successful romantic relationships with black men. The female users accuse Kylie Jenner of having a fetish for black man and thus trying to be as black as possible to become attractive to them. Such comments amount to 5.6% of all negative feedback.

@folawless: "@kyliejenner 'Black' lights, let's face it you want to be black with shiny skin, lips, and a black man that you fetish over for his 'big monkey ding dong'."

@halolah03: "@ayelosers yeah but her features still aren't that beautiful or desirable as ones of a real black woman . . . so relax Kylie, you'll never be as sexy as we're, forget bout [sic] our men."

Interestingly, black men do not seem to mind Kylie appropriating their culture by posting such content. Having read the comments above, one male black follower even supported Kylie by admitting that black women tend to be envious of Kylie's popularity among black men:

@rexdino101: "ima black man i love sexy kylie but its i black women gotta problem with it."

The third category consists of the negative reactions related to Kylie's excessive exoticness and make up 12.1% of comments. The followers find Kylie's portrait unnatural, uncanny, and even scary. Some people claim that Kylie's face is more purple than black and that is why this picture reminds them of the monster Randal from the animated movie Monsters Inc. Others compare Kylie to a creature from another planet and even call her an avatar.

@sanayatays: "Looks like that one lizard Randal from monsters inc [sic]."

@iamspiff: "@ikaeye wtf she looks like an alien."

@lydialbrown: "@acidic_jx this is so scary."

@montellocampello: "Very avatar looking" (reference to the move Avatar).

Furthermore, the consequences of Kylie's excessively creative and unnatural representation were that some users found her look unfeminine and concluded that she resembles American actor Zac Efron. One of the followers even stated that Kylie resembles a man because the photographer who shot the pictures used to work with drag queens.

@leila.keegan: "looks like Zac Efron."

@mysageplace: "@leila.keegan dude I see Zac Efron too! maybe coz [sic] the photographer shoots usually drag queens like @missfamenyc in that style."

The fourth category includes negative comments expressing disapproval of Kylie Jenner's perceived desire to change her race. Such negative feedback accounts for slightly over 20% of all B comments.

@harmarok_: "If she was black . . . I may be the only one but I think she's wants to be black so bad."

@darkandflawlesss: "Too bad you're still white after you're done appropriating on camera. Lmfao."

@miss.marie_15: "@amypixiemoira ok😊😊 all I'm saying is Kylie try to hard to be some she's not but I'm done with this conversation 🙅‍♀️🙅‍♀️🙅‍♀️🙅‍♀️🙅‍♀️🙅‍♀️"

@brinklage: "why do you want to be black so bad?"

The last category of negative feedback encompasses comments mentioning Kendall Jenner. Some users, for example, consider the use of blacklight to be a metaphor, comparing the darkness in the picture with the shadow of Kendall's success, in which Kylie constantly finds herself.

@shineelikeastar: "But shes dark enough under Kendalls shadow☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺ @zaiinagram."

@mrcortezc: "Too much for me . . . Fortunately, she is just a trend, Kendall has become part of the model world, she will prevail."

Positive Comments. Surprisingly, the post "Blackface" received almost as many positive comments as negative. The positive feedback accounts for 82 comments, while the negative amounts to 89. Positive (P) comments relating to the photograph "Blackface" differ considerably from the ones found on Kylie's typical feminine posts, such as "Barbie" from the first chapter. The majority of positive feedback is exculpatory in nature. By that I mean that most of the time, Kylie's fans give her a few compliments regarding the post in addition to defending her from the "haters."

@borikenindian: "Looool trying to b black uno!!!! Lol no i think she is been artistic she has no reason to try n be anything she is physically beautiful with dark features and beautiful hair.. i quite like this pic."

@livfetherston: "I think people are blind she isn't even black in this😊😊 like calm down, anyway you look gorgeous as alwaysKylie😸😸😸😸"

@kaykovo: "I'll say it again, she doesn't look black. She looks silver. Live on Alien Queen Kylie!"

@yonibratz: "I don't know why people are getting upset and offended by this, her face doesn't even look black, its more of a blue-ish kind of color, God damn. The makeup work and eyebrows are very beautiful. And the hair is artistic."

The followers are deeply involved in the conversation with each other and are very emotional about haters' negative comments. With regard to the photograph "Blackface," Kylie's fans do not express their obsession with her exotic/ethnically marked beauty as they usually do but feel a strong need to defend her moral stances instead. Such unusual redirected focus of followers' attention triggers the emergence of the enormous number of C comments, which are investigated in the next subsection.

Conversational Comments. Conversational comments are the second-most frequent type of reaction to Kylie Jenner's post "Blackface" after the neutral comments. C feedback is estimated to be 22% of all 500 randomly selected comments related to the photograph. All 110 C comments discuss the following questions:

1) Does Kylie have blackface in the photograph?

2) Who is allowed to judge whether the photograph is offensive or not?

3) Why should black people consider Kylie's Instagram behaviour flattering?

4) What is cultural appropriation? Where should we draw the line?

The main controversy around the post "Blackface" is whether Kylie mimics a black woman or is just experimenting with various futuristic photo effects, such as black and neon lights, which make her skin look a different colour. The majority of users argue for Kylie's absolute non-involvement in cultural appropriation or racism and claim that she has an ultimate right to be creative, artistic, and futuristic on her own Instagram page.

> @average.individual.no.worries: "@karliberam @e.mcdo @faithfrenette @kimberliahxo @ginger_binger @callie_anglpl @_corystreet How exactly is this blackface? If anything that's offensive to black people because no black person looks remotely like this. It is metallic like a robot."

> @rachel.millington: "@xacid_flowersx I get where you're coming from, but seriously, white people can and do have big lips, curly hair etc. and no, they are still desirable on anybody, any colour. All women are beautiful. It shouldn't matter if she altered her face with black light, makeup or plastic."

> @jenisms_rocks: "@itsstormthecat what?! That is the most nonsensical thing I've ever read. She looks nothing like a black girl. She has silvery shimmer skin, blue eyes, and straight red hair. How is that mimicking a black girl?! Its the very opposite of a black girl."

@daisybroa_: "Why are people saying this pictures racist, there's no part of this picture that's racist, her skin isn't black Is it? Just stop hating on her for every little thing she does, she can't even post a picture without people saying she's racist, leave her alone."

Although many users share such defensive opinions about Kylie's face colour, plenty of commentators, as already mentioned, actively accuse Kylie of mimicking black women (89 negative comments out of 500). Therefore, two opposite views regarding the controversial post emerge and initiate a clash of attacking and defending opinions that, in turn, triggers overly emotional statements featuring name calling and even insulting other participants in the discussion. In order to demonstrate the degree of harshness of such C comments, I will provide an example of a short conversation in the comments section. All offensive or insulting words in the following extracts are highlighted in bold.

@folawless: "@kyliejenner 'Black' lights, let's face it you want to be black with shiny skin, lips, and a black man that you fetish over for his 'big monkey ding dong'."

@sameastment: "@folawless folbaahahahahaaaaahaahahahaahaaahahahha."

@sameastment: "Gayyy."

@folawless: "How is that gay or funny what I said, the only joke I see right now is you tbh."

@sameastment: "how can u not see the Silver shimmer makeup, straight red hair, and blue contacts!!? Bitch its like u are colorblind and stupid."

The Instagram users @folawless and @sameastment are representatives of two completely different demographic groups. In particular, @folawless is a black woman, while @sameastment is a white man, which makes their opposite opinions look biased from the race and gender perspectives. In particular, one can argue that @sameastment, as a male representative, tends to objectify women's beauty, especially the appearance of black women, and that is why he supports Kylie's exotic, ethnicized, and oversexualized images. Moreover, one can continue that as a

privileged white person, @sameastment is expected to defend the ethics of Kylie's Instagram content because he does not understand how "Blackface" is offensiveness from his privileged white perspective. Such hypothetical speculations based on race and gender stereotypes lead us to the second point of the Instagram debates concerning the objective nature of all comments. In particular, some followers use their black skin colour as a weapon for excluding their opponents from the discussion, for the reason of their white ignorance and lack of relevance to the black race topic.

> @ughhshayla: "@jenisms_rocks you honestly think you're correct on this matter? this further proves your ignorance. you are obviously, uneducated on the subject. It's either that, or you just don't think much of it because you're white. think about it."

> @itsstormthecat: "@jenisms_rocks The silver you see is the light bouncing off. The skin tone they tried to give her is what is upsetting black people but you won't understand. (You are now blocked, BTW)."

> @thiscircle: "@brookepeterson16 how are you going to have an opinion on something that doesn't effect you at all? You don't face racism and you're not black so you're opinion doesn't really count or matter people have said this is racist so this is racist."

Another topic that was mentioned in the C comments was the flattering nature of Kylie's desire to be black for the black community. Many white followers were convinced that black users should be happy that such a person as Kylie wants to be like them.

> @champagnedelii: "Stop flattering yourselves. Last time I checked black people weren't/aren't silver ☺☺"

> @eliza.187: "@africanaah she looks like a sliver shiny alien not black and if she is trying to be black take it as a compliment."

Abstract "philosophical" debates about notions such as "cultural appropriation" or "racism" take place in the comments section as well. The subscribers actively try to define them while speculating about Kylie's controversial posting.

> @musishen: "@katie.mp LMAO.. So I'm guessing 'white light' is cultural appropriation too? 😂😂"

> @rachel.millington: "I know that but you can't exactly claim a feature that a lot of people have and call it 'cultural appropriation' when a white person enhances their lips @xacid_flowersx."

> @maddisongregoryx: "The definition of racism is the mocking of someone's Race so putting a filter on doesn't make her racist."

Neutral and Like Back Comments. What is especially interesting is that neutral comments are the most common feedback on the photograph "Blackface." They are estimated at 41.6% of all comments to this post. The majority of N comments is nothing more than users' handles, which is one way to share the post with others. There are, however, few LB reactions in the comments section. The fierce discussion of racial issues could possibly be discouraging self-promoting comments and turning some people away from commenting at all.

Conclusions. The post "Blackface" received a lot of attention in 2015 and, what is surprising, still continues to collect various types of feedback, ranging from negative and positive to conversational and neutral. Why are users still so active in the comments section of this post? Some users still interacting with "Blackface" do not know the answer either:

> @sanayatays: "Why is everyone still talking about this."

> @maddblackwoman: "Lmfao are people still stuck on this? 😂😂😂😂 this picture old af y'all need to move on."

Considering Instagram's operation mode, such an old picture will not show up for users automatically in their feed in 2019. Even if Kylie Jenner is the only person they follow, the oldest posts they could see without any effort in searching their feed are pictures of Kylie taken the day before because she shares at least four a day. Therefore, it takes time and motivation to find a post dating back to 2015.

Consequently, the audience commenting on the chosen photograph in 2019 is very specific: it is either the people who are reading articles on cultural appropriation or racism that feature Kylie's "Blackface" post with a link, or fanatic followers who scroll all the way through Kylie's postings, even back to 2012. Such users must have a strong will to find the post and comment on it. Those who actively participate in the discussion initiated by Kylie's blacklight experiment post from 2016–2019, are deeply interested in her personality and life. That is why there are absolutely no LB comments and only one Spam comment out of 500 considered reactions. S and LB feedback signal users' indifference towards Kylie's post, but the photograph of interest is all about passion, engagement, and commitment.

For this reason, as the chart Blackface (see fig. 37) indicates, the majority of comments fall within the categories of neutral and conversational comments, which imply users' interaction and involvement with the material.
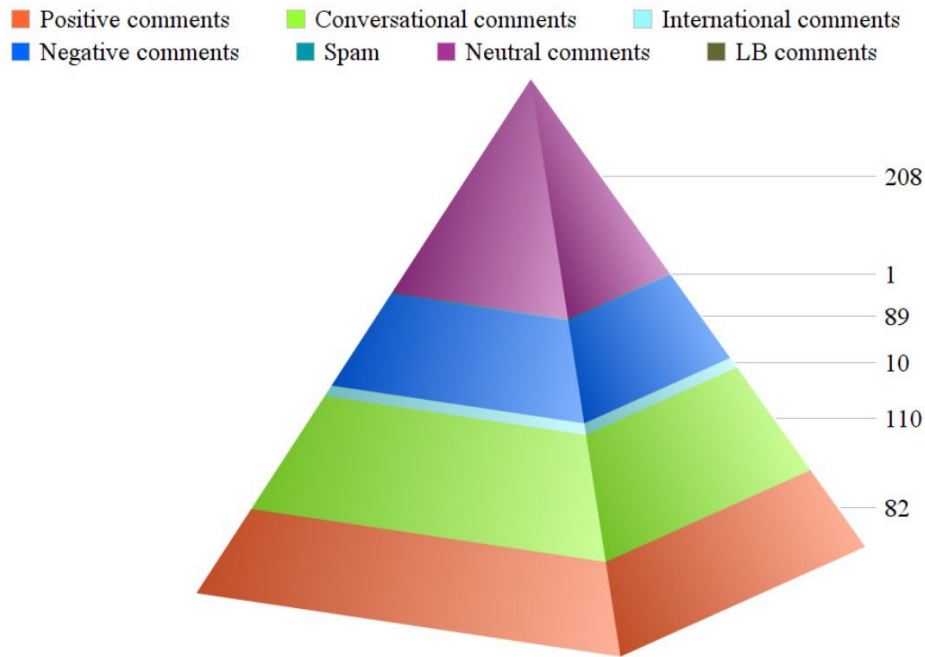
Figure 37. Blackface

According to the chart, neutral comments amount to 41.6% of all comments, while conversational account for 22%. C comments are followed by B ones, which are estimated at 17.8% of all comments. Right behind negative comments are the positive ones, constituting 16.4%.

It is important to highlight the nature of the followers' motivation behind the given positive feedback. In most cases, the first part of any P comment has a conversational character, while the next comprises a brief compliment in addition to a detailed opinion. I will hereafter refer to the second part of the P comment as a compliment tag. Such a tag at the end of the comment signals that the user has taken Kylie's side in the conflict and their text in the comments section is intended to defend her reputation. This compliment tag is also useful in showing the relevance between abstract speculations in the first part of a P comment and Kylie's post. It provides a sort of closure for the racism, art, or human rights questions raised in the first part of the comment and connects abstract ideas about appropriate Instagram representation to the definite image of the influencer, which serves as an illustration of the expressed opinion.

@jab716: [opinion on abstract philosophical topic] "Actually the cradle of civilization began in Mesopotamia which was Babylon, present day Iraq. Soooo you are all wrong. And btw, just Bc someone enhances their lips doesn't mean they want to be black. When a black girl relaxes her hair, does that mean she wants to be white? Um no. So to each their own and stop bringing race into everything. Not really that serious ppl"+ [compliment tag] "Kylie, you go silver girl! Brilliant picture!"

To conclude, Kylie Jenner's post "Blackface," which incited a racial discourse, is treated completely differently than the photographs that praise Kylie's beauty, family, or motherhood. The issues related to cultural appropriation and racism do not invite indifference on either side of the conflict, which is reflected in the comments section of the discussed post. "Blackface" collapses the traditional racial dichotomy and, therefore, initiates significant follower backlash. A white woman pretending to be a black woman, in regards to the Mirror Stage, is perceived threatening and usurping. Kylie Jenner manifests herself as a threat in the way that her "black skin masquerade" contradicts the defined social symbolic order and breaks the visual phallus rule. Kylie does not deprive herself of the white supremacy, on the contrary, she empowers her artificially ethnicized body by transferring her white phallus into a fantasy coloured one. What is important to note that by doing so, she does not empower any other black or mixed-race community member. On the contrary, she expands and strengthens the power of the white race: she demonstrates that visual characteristics of the black or mixed race can be appropriated without losing any authority.

THE ORIGINS OF USERS' HATRED TOWARDS KYLIE JENNER'S FINANCIAL SUCCESS

The financial topic is especially debatable because it is less divisive as in it, there are more people less rich than Kylie than there are who are of a different race. Therefore, it is more exciting,

and offers millions of users the chance to criticize a lucrative business worth $1 billion and owned by a 21-year-old woman from the Kardashian family.

Even though *Forbes* officially labelled Kylie Jenner as the youngest self-made billionaire, this denomination and Kylie's wealth appears to be problematic to many. Kylie Jenner, as a successful 21-year-old cosmetic entrepreneur, has received a plethora of hatred and criticism on social media. Some Internet users argue that Kylie does not deserve the title, which used to be assigned to Mark Zuckerberg. This phenomenon of exceptional hatred towards Kylie's entrepreneurial rise is, therefore, an interesting point to examine.

There are many questions related to her business success: Can we characterize Kylie Jenner as self-made? Has her family inheritance and the Kardashians' wealth and fame played a role in her success? Why is it so hard to comprehend and embrace the fact that a 21-year-old woman is making money so fast? Will the hatred towards Kylie's overnight business stardom lessen if users admit to themselves that, at the root of this hatred, is their own envy of her achievements? In order to find answers to these questions, I will conduct a thorough qualitative analysis of the comments section of the posted Instagram photograph "Self-made billionaire," featuring Kylie on the cover of *Forbes*. *Self-Made Billionaire*. The state of being a billionaire usually aligns with a binary rule: you either are a billionaire or you are not. Being a billionaire can be compared to being pregnant. You cannot be almost pregnant, half-pregnant, or quarter-pregnant. The binary rule worked perfectly for me when thinking about "billionairism" until *Forbes*, in cooperation with Kylie Jenner, unexpectedly undermined this fixed fact.

Almost a year ago, *Forbes* ran an article entitled "America's Richest Self-made Women" (Kroll & Dolan). Kylie Jenner was designated as the cover model for the July issue and was crowned by the respected publication as the youngest-ever self-made billionaire. The cover also presents a primmer side of Kylie's public image: she is wearing an entrepreneur-style, modest suit

with her hair tied back. The focus is shifted from her sexuality to her financial accomplishments (see fig. 38).

Figure 38. Self-made billionaire

On the *Forbes* cover, Kylie is portrayed with much less of her usual femininity for the purpose of her visibility, as a person possessing power. Kylie's pose seems to purposefully hide her breasts. Her long hair—one of her main markers of femininity—is also concealed. Analyzing the *Forbes* cover, within the Lacanian context, the marking of the bodies possessing power or lacking it is closely connected to the characteristics of having/not having the physical representation of the phallus. This demonstrates the way the phallus structures polarity of sexes.

Being feminine, or being without the penile phallus, implies constant fluctuation between invisibility, or "the horror of nothing to see" (Irigaray 26), and hypervisibility—being a "trophy," a beautiful object on display for exchange. Looking feminine here, then, equates to being completely powerless and what seems to be striving to do in this image is gain the phallus by reflecting its image. She stands with her arms crossed over the chest in a fairly masculine pose. The boxy suit

jacket covers all her feminine curves. Kylie Jenner does not want to be perceived as a "trophy," a beautiful object that is seen but is deprived of its voice. She does not want to be dependent on the superior phallic gaze of value which has to be directed at her in order to make her visible. That is why she pretends to have a physical phallus by imitating masculinity. She inhabiting a space that generally belongs to men (e.g. recognition of business success). Kylie Jenner's masculine representation on the *Forbes* cover lends some legitimacy to her success. As Gwen Bergner states, "[v]ision is instrumental in producing both racial and sexual difference" (79). Hence, masquerade is an essential visual register in which sexuality, race and wealth are enacted.

Returning to the cover itself, there were two confusing aspects of that *Forbes* issue. The first concerns the speculative and hasty character of the *Forbes* title. At the time the story was released, Kylie Jenner had a $900-million empire and was only estimated to reach the billion-mark the following year. Why publish the article about Kylie's impending billionaire status a year before the actual achievement? If it will unquestionably happen in 2019, why not to let Mark Zuckerberg keep his title of youngest billionaire for one more year? Another aspect is closely connected to the phrasing of the headline: the magazine calls Kylie "self-made" with no mention of her famous family. The second point raises even bigger questions about our general perceptions of how billionaires make their money, how we value rich women and the Kardashians, in particular, and whether Kylie Jenner's success is justly deserved.

Needless to say, on the same day as the *Forbes* article was published, Kylie shared the magazine cover with her Instagram audience (see fig. 38). In the following qualitative analysis, I will research how these two aspects of the *Forbes* cover story influenced the way Kylie's Instagram followers perceive the success of the young businesswoman.

Negative Comments. The post "Self-made billionaire" received almost twice as many negative comments as positive ones. The prevailing B comments amount to 167 out of 500 reactions, while

there are only 89 P comments. The negative feedback can be thematically divided into five categories. The first comprises users' negative thoughts about Kylie Jenner's unearned and undeserved success. Many Instagram users are convinced that her lucrative cosmetics company is not the result of being self-made but, on the contrary, a logical extension of the already successful empire founded by her family. Followers argue that without her famous last name and Kim Kardashian's infamous sex tape, her entrepreneurial career would not have been so meteoric. Some even link Kylie's success to Kim's close working relationship and friendship with Paris Hilton.

@kittikatlinglong: "I am one hundred percent sure if her last name was not famously known then her products will still be in bboxes [sic], her mother knew exactly what she wanted from life and that's not being poor, dating and marrying well profiled men helped in conquering her Empire."

@charlie.idekk: "You're only at where you're at because a video of your sister getting piped is online."

@missmorganrenae: "Shame on you @forbes for not putting a woman on your cover that actually started from the bottom and worked her way up to the top. Someone who didn't have mommy and daddy throwing money at her since the beginning."

@alyzzamary: "credit: @parishilton"

The family's fame is, indeed, integral to all of the Kardashians' business projects. Fans crave a piece of the sisters who have dominated social networks and pop culture since 2007. Big corporations and famous brands strive to mobilize and utilize the family's immense audience, which comprises millions of users on various social media platforms. Kylie Cosmetics accomplishes these two goals at once: leveraging her fan base and providing the fans with her own creation that is an inseparable part of her public identity.

The idea of exclusively calling out Kylie Jenner for being born into privilege and, therefore, undeservedly holding the title of "self-made" is quite unfair, since she is not the only billionaire in the world who comes from a rich or famous family. There are plenty of widely recognized "self-made" millionaires and billionaires who were raised in privileged conditions (e.g., Jason Ford) that provided them with many inherent advantages. Kylie is just a representative of those lucky people who can use their upper-class opportunities to start and promote their business. An extremely negative attitude towards Kylie's wealth is contrasted with praising other tycoons who used their privilege no less than Jenner (e.g. Charles G. Koch and David H. Koch). What makes Kylie's fortune so controversial? Are users' negative emotions motivated mostly by Kylie's kinship with the Kardashians? I am convinced that the major part of the criticism of Kylie is related to her female family members and society's sexist attitude, towards the Kardashians and successful women, in general.

The Kardashian-Jenner female clan is constantly facing backlash. One of the popular statements in the press and on social media is that the sisters are miraculously famous for their sexual relationships or doing absolutely nothing. Moreover, it is a common view that their popularity reflects the decadence of American society. Calling the Kardashians "America's shame" is one of the most common negative reactions on Kylie's profile. Such feedback can be found in relation to any post, whether it is about the women's beauty or excessive wealth. The post "Self-made billionaire" received many comments accusing Kylie and her female relatives of American society's downfall.

@cara.liina: "@youaham 'she worked hard'? Asking her (already famous family) to promote her products . . . is working hard? . . . look what this society has turned into 😂😂"

@omar_az007: "🧍🧍 😄😄 americas [sic] shame."

@froshtown: "America!! The world's most dumbest nation in the world . . . Thank God I'm not American."

@ninakhaalid: "welcome to the era of stupidity."

This mindset is incapable of recognizing the Kardashians' success; it does not matter what they have or will accomplish, women with hair extensions and fake eyelashes will be always perceived as empty-minded, shallow, and incompetent. All their success will be explained by pure luck or society's downfall. However, let us admit, if the Kardashian-Jenner clan consisted of only stupid women, as commonly touted in the press or on social media, then these women taking advantage of unavoidable sexism and cashing in on their image as stereotypical female stupidity could be even more impressive, more genius. The critics fail to credit the Kardashians' skills and shrewdness in capitalizing on the main product of the new media: fame. The Kardashian empire has created its own innovative way of advertising in new media so that traditional beauty industry companies cannot keep up.

If the reason for people's ire towards Kylie's success is their sexist views, then the following question arises: Are there any self-made female billionaires with the same privilege who are widely respected and recognized? I suggest looking through the list of the 60 richest self-made women, according to Forbes in 2018 (Kroll & Dolan). On the list we will easily find Judith Faulkner, who is currently the CEO and founder of the company Epic Systems. The healthcare software corporation turned into a lucrative business thanks to a $6,000 investment from Faulkner's parents. Although that sum seems quantitatively not comparable to what the Kardashian-Jenner clan could have sank into Kylie's business, this fact makes it harder to admit that Falkner is a fully self-made billionaire. Why is Faulkner not facing the same criticism as Kylie Jenner? First, her business domain, healthcare, is perhaps considered more noble or worthwhile than the beauty industry. Second, her business domain is not gender-marked: her target customers are both men and women. She has

become successful following the stereotypical rule that competence always implies lack of femininity. As opposed to Kylie Jenner, Faulkner neglects her feminine image in her public representation and refocuses public attention from her feminine exterior to her professional, competent personality, which has a vividly masculine character. Faulkner is always seen wearing suits and no makeup; she is not present on popular social media sites, such as Instagram or Snapchat. There is a limited number of photographs of Faulkner on the Internet, and almost all articles about her personality, including *Wikipedia*, lack images of her. Faulkner is downplaying her femininity in the way that she does not remind the public of her sex affiliation and appearance traits.

Kylie Jenner, excepting the situation on the Forbes cover, stays spectacularly feminine and, what is more, makes femininity profitable. The world is inherently not set up for female success, and that is why it might be hard to believe that a feminine woman can make a billion dollars without leaving the female domain. The critics of Kylie, therefore, do not want to take her family clan seriously because the Kardashians are too feminine. They demonstrate their hyper-femininity and oversexualized ethnicized bodies in order to promote their business. They challenge society with new methods of starting and promoting big companies by utilizing their social media influence. The strategy works but simultaneously triggers a new kind of sexism—sexism directed exclusively at the Kardashian female members. The unwillingness of the public to admit the success of the Kardashians and, therefore, Kylie Jenner, triggers the public's defensive mechanisms, such as ridiculing and mocking the clan's undeniable business accomplishments. The critics' tendency to ridicule the Kardashians' success, and thus not recognize, ignore, or undermine it, leads us to the second category of negative comments on the post "Self-made billionaire." B comments, including such keywords and interjections as "joke," "funny," "haha," "lol," "lmao," "gagging," "kidding," and their modifications, are estimated to be 32% of all negative feedback.

@rachelsaienni: "This is a joke lol."

@grxce.s3002: "ICANT STOP GAGGING."

@daniellemarjorie_12: "@kyliejenner a billionaire please be kidding..."

@helenalenci: "@kyliejenneronebillionhahahahahaha stupido!"

@cx7114: "@kylieditx LMAOOO."

@thetorrentialtaurus: "😂😂😂😂"

Laughing at Kylie Jenner's entrepreneurial success is a manifestation of followers' fear to recognize the potential of the new media as a business platform, as well as a sign of their envy towards influencers' "easily" earned money. Ridiculing is one of the ways to disvalue her financial accomplishments and claim them to be invalid or unreal.

The third category of B comments comprises negative feedback on Kylie's cover look. Some Instagram users criticized the lack of sexuality, beauty, and youth in the picture.

@erikalombardi: "looking like a frog 🐸🐸"

@zenmasterzoe: "You look like a Middle Aged woman."

Others mention Kylie's plastic surgeries even when it does not fit the context:

@shawronofficial: "I got a question, if you didn't get plastic surgery, would you be in the same position you are in now."

@cassandra_donuts: "Plastic fantastic."

Having examined five posts of Kylie Jenner already, it should come as no surprise that among all the negative comments, there will be a few concerning Kylie Jenner's illiteracy. Such feedback represents the fourth category of B comments.

@rachael_christina: "@mckennamike@letitiasmith90 @miriamirwin A billionaire that doesn't know when to use a capital letter...Lord above!"

@isabelp16: "You need grammar lessons 🙂🙂"

The last category includes comparisons of people in need struggling with poverty and Kylie Jenner. Both sides are collecting donations to enhance their quality of life. The Instagram public often accuses Kylie of spending her money selfishly and has encouraged her to share some of her fortune with charities. When Kylie did not prevent her fans from creating a charity account where people could donate money in order to make her a billionaire, the encouraging character of those Instagram comments turned into pure hatred.

@jordog4118: "So as people die because of poverty, die to make your country a free place to live, work until they are entirely covered in sweat, work late into the night and barely get to see their family. You get to make millions of dollars from doing nothing but sitting around. There are the billionaires who earn their money by doing stuff and there are people like you who do nothing and get paid anyways."

@cx7114: "omg are you kidding me PEOPLE ARE FREAKING STARVING IN THIS WORLD AND YOU WANT TO MAKE HER EVEN MORE FAMOUS THAN SHE IS What is wrong with this world she's making millions with her lipstick and now this?"

@hopefully_trying: "All this money but you can't help the needy. If you were actually doing something good in the world most people would be looking up to you. Instead you want people to raise money for you. I don't see hardwork [sic] Oprah started from zero and you? If it weren't for your folks you'd be nothing. But it's good your successful but keeping to yourself is just selfish. If only I was you I'd be out there trying to make the world better rather than posing for a stupid magazine just to get a title. People are dumb asf these days."

To sum up, the presented five categories of negative comments demonstrate five different ways of disvaluing the evident entrepreneurial success of Kylie Jenner. The first type of comments denies Kylie's accomplishments by pointing at her inherited privilege and family connections, while the second demonstrates followers' refusal to take Kylie's achievements seriously because of their

sexist bias. The third, fourth, and fifth types of comments illustrate how followers neglect her professional success by focusing on something superficial or not directly relevant to the photograph, for example, aspects of her image on the *Forbes* cover, her plastic surgeries, her illiteracy, or her lack of participation in charities.

Conversational Comments. Many Instagram users convince others not to spend their time talking about the Kardashians, claiming that such discussions only make the famous family even richer. Such comments, which aim to prevent followers from commenting on Kylie's post, account for 9% of all C comments.

> @3rd.gen.bobby: "Yo stop hating her, just unfollow bitch coz her power rests on our attention."

> @spamspamspamspamspamspam13: "@kyliejenneronebillion ARE YOU EVEN SERIOUS RIGHT NOW???EVEN TALKING ABOUT THIS WOMAN NOW YOU WILL MAKE THIS RICH BITCH RICHER I MEAN WHAT THE HELL."

The *Forbes* cover story depicted in the post "Self-made billionaire" is just one of the examples of the long-term Instagram debates about the Kylie Jenner phenomenon. The users' thoughts about Kylie and the Kardashians reveal more about the followers than about Kylie per se. The followers who propose strategies for how to discontinue Kylie's process of getting rich are, presumably, envious of her success. Since envy is an unpleasant, sometimes destructive feeling, envious users are trying to free themselves, or forgive themselves, of this negative emotion. As discussed in the first chapter, there are only three ways to dismiss envy: to withdraw yourself from the toxic environment and find a new one where you do not feel envious, to gain the quality you lack so that you do not experience envy anymore, or to deprive an envied of the trait you lack.

The first method can be fulfilled by unfollowing Kylie. If you do not see Kylie's posts in your Instagram feed, you are not envious of her accomplishments. Moreover, according to

@3rd.gen.bobby, unfollowing Kylie can combine both withdrawal and depriving strategies. The users will not only get rid of the environment that makes them envious but will also stop Kylie from being successful and powerful. With regard to the gaining method, Instagram critics understand that they are not able to achieve the same heights or level of richness and success as Kylie. Their envy will never be resolved by gaining the lacking trait that the object of envy (Kylie) possesses. In Kylie's case, the desired trait is being outstandingly wealthy and thus featured on the cover of *Forbes*. That is most likely why envious Instagram commentators propose various ideas for disrupting her success, such as not talking about Kylie anymore and ignoring her, in order to protect themselves from being used.

Another type of conversational comment consists of warning messages to the modern generation, society, and even the whole of humanity. Such C comments encourage people to reconsider the way they treat personalities like Kylie and prioritize aspects of their lives. The key phrases in the examples below are highlighted in bold.

@pr_miki: "People donating you money yet they can't donate money to the people who actually need it **this generation dumb asf false legends**."

@jaz7376: "@misss_kat Not jealous! I wish, young people who help their community and homeless people, would get half of the recognition the kardahians [sic] get. But as long as we have **this dumb generation,** who admires people with no talent and likes every stupid selfie . . . it will stay like that . . . very sad."

@nazanyno: "This is the funniest thing I've ever seen. People are dying for a slice of bread and for a sip of water and you are supporting Kylie to get her 1 billion although she has more than anything a human needs??? **Our humantiy** [sic] **is so weak**."

@cara.liina: "@youaham 'she worked hard'? Asking her (already famous family) to promote her products . . . is working hard? . . . **look what this society has turned into** 😂😂"

Positive Comments. The majority of positive comments include congratulations, followers' love confessions, and various wishes for future success. Kylie Jenner has become a role model, an idol for many girls who believe in her "self-made" narrative.

@andre.i_mgmt: "Congrats Kylie. Good Job!"

@fionbabez: "My role model 😊😊😊😊"

@elaine_n_rah: "I am proud of you legend 😁😁😁😁😁😁 love you."

@mslovely_cindy: "Bless you hunny [sic] and many more years to come with your great ideas and beauty 💯💯🖤😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊"

Some followers, however, focus only on the superficial trappings of the cover photograph. Their attention is centred around Kylie's appearance: their compliments mention only Jenner's beauty and justified passion for surgeries.

@majaelisetokle: "Beautiful ⚕"

@abbelaofficial: "Cool photo!"

@_girlmelanee: "@chaiedeline well and all of that to say what she's done, surgery and all, takes tremendous energy just to do that…"

There were a few comments addressing Kylie as a mother. Presumably, the commentators aim to show that the biggest accomplishment for any woman is motherhood while business and money are less important.

@_.luanaaaa_._ : "😊😊😊😊😄😄 quenny momy"

@katetlove: "I wanted to add you have charming personality and you are a good mother. Just keep on going towards even further goals."

@i_am_bebooo: "Its [sic] all for Stormi."

Conclusions. The chart bellow shows the distribution of positive, negative, neutral, conversational, spam, International, and LB comments.

Figure 39. "Self-made billionaire" comments

Both opinionated and self-promoting commentary categories are represented by a considerable

amount of feedback: P, B, C, and I comments are estimated at 64.4% of all feedback, while N, LB,

and S comprise 35.6 % of reactions. Negative comments prevail over other types of feedback,

emphasizing followers' dissatisfaction with the content and the main message of the post.

Many Instagram users are not able to identify with the image presented of Kylie in the post

"Self-made billionaire." Therefore, envious of her success, they try to find a way out of this

upsetting feeling by negating, ridiculing, or ignoring Kylie's undeniable business success. The

critics seem to be especially rankled by her fortune because the $1-billion company contributes to

the fame, power, and wealth of the whole Kardashian-Jenner clan. It is a common trend to implicitly

despise the popular family for being famous for "doing nothing." The public tends to underestimate

or disavow their entrepreneurial success.

Biased attitudes towards the Kardashians are rooted in their hyper-feminine self-

representation. The Kardashians have invented their own way of advertising their products. The fact

that Kylie uses only her Instagram profile to promote her cosmetic brand proves it. Oversexualized

and excessively heteronormative presentation of their bodies, as well as specialization in selling typical female products, such as cosmetics, perfumes, and clothing, are factors that associate the Kardashians with a lack of serious and large-scale business intentions. Kylie, along with her female family, is usually taken too lightly by the public. However, when she breaks a new record in sales, wealth, or popularity rankings, it flabbergasts the public and triggers anxious backlash.

Kylie Jenner's attempt to look masculine on the Forbes cover shows that Kylie is playing herself into the sexist notions. She places herself not only on the race spectrum but also on the gender one. Forbes issue is an example of her being able to move between realms of feminine and masculine success (such as her perceived ability to move between races). Her gender, race, and class mobility is something that is impossible to achieve. She is the big Other who represents to us what we desire to attain. The more outlandish and exceptional her representation gets, the more she functions as the big Other.

EXPENSIVE PRESENT

In one of his seminars, Lacan stated that we are not capable of articulating our love. According to the French psychoanalyst, we can express our love only in a superficial and trivial way, yet all our efforts to speak about love alienate us from the real feeling. Lacan wrote about love and speech as if they are two parallel lines that cannot overlap. He speculated about the fundamental tension between these two phenomena belonging to the different registers: love belongs to the real order while speech to the symbolic one (Lacan *Seminar XIX*). Lacan admitted, however, that the same tension is not present between love and a love letter. This idea may seem contradictory, as writing, along with speaking, is part of the symbolic order. Lacan explained his line of thought by introducing a story called "The Purloined Letter," in which a love letter is passed from one character to another and causes much drama and romantic tension even though it is never read. Lacan was convinced that the act of writing resulting in a letter, which can take on "strange shapes," conveys

the power of materiality that speech lacks. He claimed that although speech implies a subject of language, the act and product of writing explicitly demonstrates how someone can be subject to it (Lacan, Seminar XIX, "The Knowledge of the Psychoanalyst").

Having looked through Kylie Jenner's Instagram gallery, I got the feeling that Kylie, in some ways, consciously or not, shares the Lacanian point of view with regard to expressing love. Kylie rarely posts pictures featuring her with the people she values and loves. Instead, her Instagram gallery mainly consists of her selfies, professional photoshoots, and images from her advertising campaigns. In her Instagram profile, it is hard to find anything that communicates her love towards her mother, sisters, or even her daughter Stormi explicitly. The Instagram captions she adds rarely include such phrases as "I love X." Based on the materials available for public view, there are only two ways of demonstrating her deep and true feelings on the Web and these are her only ways of expressing affection in public. The first includes giving an excessively expensive present to her love object and documenting the process on camera. The second way involves organizing an epic and lavishly decorated party in honour of her love object.

Materiality is the base of her love articulation, as well as the key to understanding Kylie Jenner's Instagram identity. In the first chapter, we discussed the excessive birthday party she held for her one-year-old daughter, Stormi, which is one of the examples of how important it is for Kylie to demonstrate her love through money and time investment. Kylie filmed all the decorations for the extremely expensive party and posted a picture featuring herself holding her daughter with the caption: "i had to go all out for my baby. #StormiWorld" (@kyliejenner).

In the current section, I will investigate another post, "Expensive present," which expresses Kylie Jenner's deep love and thankfulness to her mother Kris Jenner through material means (see fig. 39).

Figure 40. "Expensive present" post

The video depicts Kylie gifting her mother (Kris Jenner) a luxury sports car as a surprise for her 63rd birthday. Kylie Jenner begins filming from the moment she sets out for Kris's home. Kylie's video is accompanied with her narration of what is happening in the clip. She says, "Alright, so I'm on my way to my mom's house to surprise her with her birthday gift. I've had this for the last month and I'm so excited to finally be giving [it] to her. It's a little dark outside, so I hope that she can see it good" (@kyliejenner). Her mother soon arrives with her boyfriend, Corey Gamble. The car, a new red 488 Gran Turismo Ferrari, which costs around $250,000, is parked in Kris's driveway. Kylie screams, "Happy birthday!" Her mother looks surprised and confused, exclaiming, "What is that?! Are you kidding me!" Kris becomes extremely emotional; she hugs Kylie with tears in her eyes. Kylie confesses that she could not wait until her mother's actual birthday and decided to give her the surprise a week early. Kylie finishes the video with the phrase "My mom's dream car."

The qualitative analysis of the commentary zone of this video, published to Instagram in October 2018, will investigate why Kylie Jenner's investment in her mother's birthday present was more criticized by Instagram users than her excessive spending on Stormi's birthday party. *Negative Comments*. The post "Expensive present" received a considerable amount of negative feedback, 18% of all 500 comments. The negative comments can be divided into five categories. The first class of B comments includes negative reactions towards Kylie's phrase "My mom's dream car." The Instagram critics express their doubt about the fact that Kris can have dream objects. The users define a dream car as an object that a person cannot afford, something unreachable, an object of fantasy that will always remain a fantasy. Some followers recall Kris Jenner's large car collection in order to show that Kris belongs to a class where she lacks the ability to have unfulfilled material wishes.

> @thenameislaura: "@trippieblxx I thought the same thing. Only because you hear Kylie say in the video, that this is her moms dream car . . . Idk how it's her moms dream car when she has a Rolls Royce, almost every Benz model, Range Rovers etc etc. Usually when you say that's my dream car—that means, a car you would die for . . . A car you can't afford. That's why its a 'dream car'."

> @trippieblxx: "@thenameislaura exactly how I feel. A dream car is a car you could only dream of having, yet the amount of money she has spent on cars, she could buy 2–3 of this same car."

> @keagcn: "How is it possible for ur [sic] mom to have a dream car when she can have any car she wants."

> @cole_ortner: "No shot she didn't have the money to buy this herself."

The second category includes comments concerning Kylie's self-serving and attention-seeking nature, which apparently manifests in her endeavouring to give an outstandingly expensive

gift that is supposedly to single her out from all the sisters. The "dream car" is aimed to make Kylie look like the most caring and loving child to the public.

@anna.reyna16: "Flex."

@ratnavarisha: "attention seeker."

Although Kylie collected 3.4% negative reactions like those presented above, some followers positively singled her out from Kris Jenner's other daughters:

@tila.s: "Why no other daughter do that for her befor???? [sic] Selfish."

The classic aggressive comments about Kylie's moral re-education and encouragement to donate money instead of spending it on her relatives are grouped into the third category. African children traditionally served as a good example for the donation target.

@simp1y.stella: "How about instead of spending money on another car in your huge collection and donate some money to children dying of starvation in Africa?"

Another class of negative comments consists of users' doubts about Kris Jenner's driving skills. The followers question whether "Momager" knows how to drive her luxury cars. It demonstrates their sexist attitude towards the whole area of interest which includes motorsport and sport cars. They define this hobby realm as a typically masculine one and, therefore, consider Kris incapable of enjoying her present in the right way.

@iamdanielsmz: "Nice gift for a man."

@markrichards1787: "Ya but [she] doesnt know how to drive it."

@sonia.bohanon: "dream car . . . can she even drive?"

@lofi_breeze: "Coreys [sic] dream car I bet hes [sic] gonna drive it."

The last category consists of backlash towards the whole Kardashian family's reputation. Some Instagram users express their wish to forget this omnipresent family that, with all its fame and money, has seemingly lost their sense of reality.

@jkelley2939: "It's amazing how vapid and out of touch these people have become. I got a $ 1.75 in my bank account. Why do people still care what they are doing? I'm looking forward to the day the world forgets about the kardashians."

@krushang_purohit: "We make stupid people famous."

Although these users dream of the world that has never known such names as Kardashian and Jenner, they are nevertheless following Kylie's Instagram page. According to their subscription lists, their Instagram actions speak against the explicitly announced desires in the commentary zone to the post "Expensive present." This is another instance of a user's criticism of Kylie saying more about them than Kylie herself.

Positive Comments. The post "Expensive present" received 0.8% less positive feedback than negative. The P comments account for 17.2% all extracted Instagram reactions to the video. The positive feedback is represented by four main types of complimentary notes:

- those that praise motherhood by adding some religious motives to the discourse,

- comments that show users' willingness to identify themselves within the Kardashian family,

- feedback in which the followers praise Kardashian family values and express love towards all female members of the clan, and

- those that focus on Kylie Jenner's appearance.

The first category of P comments includes the followers' admiration of Kylie Jenner's thankfulness towards her mother. Some Instagram users highlight the sacred nature of the mother-daughter relationship by bringing God into their comment. In order to show the sanctity and purity of motherhood, the followers tend to use the verb bless and the praying emoji 🙏.

@pinkcupkaix: "Kylie..God Bless you Beyond Measure ❤️🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏"

@smyrose: "God bless you Kylie for making your mom happy on her birthday."

@madeline_valentin_molina: "You are blessed to be able to buy her that car, you are a good daughter."

The second type of comment is represented by the followers' wish to be Kylie's parent so that she will give them a brand-new red Ferrari as a birthday present. The Instagram users can and want to identify themselves with Kris, encouraging a positive reaction to Kylie's expensive surprise.

@missecritten: "@misskim_m@shonaelizabeth1994 @jessjoyinsta@laura1gracex what I would do to be Kylies mum ❤"

@frontpaigenews2: "I may be younger than two of your sisters, but I'm down to adopt you. #JustSaying."

It is interesting that some subscribers often get confused with the family roles in the car surprise situation: sometimes they refer to Kylie as a mother and express their desire to be either adopted by the influencer or to be such a good parent as Kylie is.

@isabelscott: "@mishkasong can kylie be my mom pls."

@carmenyarisolgarcia: "I one day will gift my daughter a Ferrari as well. ❣"

This highlights how we, as a society, are more accustomed to mothers' giving and sacrificing nature than to children's reciprocation. All of a mothers' physical and mental resources are expected to be devoted to the wellbeing of their child. Well-raised grown-up children, in turn, are supposed to focus all their energy on their own children. That is why Kylie Jenner's carefully prepared, ordered in advance, and heavily customized present to her mother could presumably switch mother-daughter roles in the eyes of some Instagram users.

If we refer back to the goal to compare "Stormi's birthday party" and "Expensive present" brought up in the beginning of this section, the comment s above bring up the question of why the post "Expensive present" is viewed more negatively than Stormi's birthday party? Presumably, the reason could be in Kylie's money spent on her mother, rather than on her own daughter, which

signals that Kylie is not fulfilling the proper mother role or that she is fulfilling it but not for the right object.

What is important to mention is that Kylie Jenner has been fulfilling the "wrong" role in gender and race aspects too. Those aspects are mostly the reason why Kylie receives negativity. For instance, she becomes a young, female businesswoman, occupying a traditionally masculine area of respect [cover photo for business magazine], or presents herself masquerading as a woman of colour being a 100% white woman. Kylie provokes her Instagram public by playing the roles not assigned to her by the social symbolic order. She distorts the boundaries of the race, gender, and mother-daughter dynamics.

The P comments related to the Kardashians' family power-unity are found in the third category of positive feedback. Many Instagram users support Kardashian-Jenner family values and express their love for every female clan member. The Instagram users appreciate Kris and her daughters' remarkable drive to keep the clan together and to maintain loving and caring relationships with each other no matter what. This attitude inspires people and gives them hope that a happy future for the family is feasible.

@darkbeauty3167: "This is soo sweet of Kylie!! Kris is an amazing loving mom& deserves all the best!! I admire how she keeps her family together & always riding with & for them. I truly truly believe that!! Mama Matriarch. #Family...❤️💯💯"

@lifeofjuniorn: "Family First 🖤🖤🖤🖤❤️"

@doozy_beauty: "How to keep up with that?✨" (reference to the KUWTK show)

@imyaniee_datbx: "Yasssss ❤️❤️😊😊 I so love @krisjenner @khloekardashian @kyliejenner @kimkardashian @kourtneykardash."

The fourth category of positive feedback comprises all the comments superficially prioritizing Kylie Jenner's beauty over her actions. Many followers refer to Kylie as a Barbie or a

doll. In their compliments, the users characterize Kylie as beautiful, nice, and wonderful. It is

interesting that there are no comments mentioning Kylie's attractive or sexy appearance. The

motherhood and family discourse initiated by the video seemingly does not imply any sexual

motives. The act of giving highlights Kylie's desexualized, innocent beauty.

@paulina_betancur16: "beautiful kylie that good daughter."

@fashionista_blueline_: "Wow nice daughter Ky. Little gift to make mums happy is a

lot♥, benefits from her hard work what it#Weldon Kylie Barbie"

@hoopin_hayls: "Great baby doll you are! Beautiful and generous."

International Comments. International comments are the second-most frequent type of feedback

related to the video "Expensive present." I-reactions account for 22.2% of all selected comments.

According to the chart Expensive present: I-comments (see fig. 40), I-neutral feedback dominates I-

positive and I-negative comments altogether.

Figure 41. Expensive present: I-comments

Such distribution can be explained by the fact that P and B comments are usually directed at the subject of the posted photo or video, while N comments are expected to be of an interactive nature, namely, they are directed either to the Instagram public or to tagged Instagram users. Considering the target addressee of B and P comments (predominantly Kylie Jenner), it is unreasonable to expect the users to criticize or compliment Kylie in any language other than English because Kylie will not understand it. That is why I-N feedback is the most common reaction out of all international comments: it initiates a dialogue between two speakers of the same language and does not require the subject of the post to understand the discussion.

Neutral Comments. The post "Expensive present" features a traditional masculine object of interest—cars; therefore, it is not surprising that users who posted the prevailing self-oriented N and I-N comments, which tend to ignore the narrative surrounding the Kardashian family and focus exclusively on the "dream Ferrari," are predominantly men (see fig. 41).
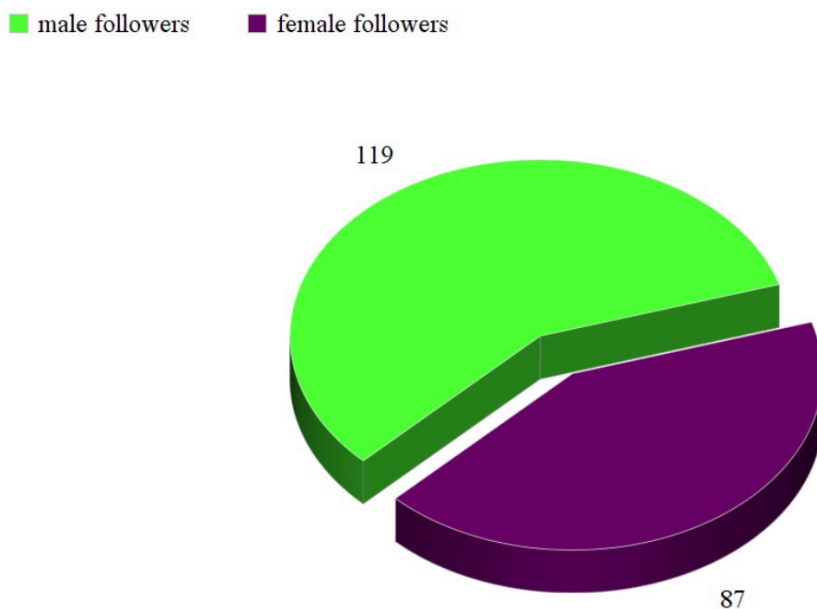

Figure 42. Numerical distribution of male and female commentators

The post has received a large amount of follower-oriented feedback filled with sexist undertones. Sexism manifests in the N comments in questions concerning Kris's boyfriend, Corey Gamble, and his passion for cars. The users show their certainty that Kris as a woman will not enjoy her car fully and for her boyfriend this car will be of more use.

@bulut34_04: "I've heard it's Gamble's favorite car, no??"

Kris along with Kylie is fulfilling a role she is not supposed to fulfill. Kris's car hobby is seen as "wrong" or "inappropriate" for a 63-years-old woman and, hence, receives negative feedback.

Conclusion. Although the post "Expensive present" is similar to the positively-assessed photograph "Stormi's birthday party," the video received more negative comments than positive ones (see fig. 42).
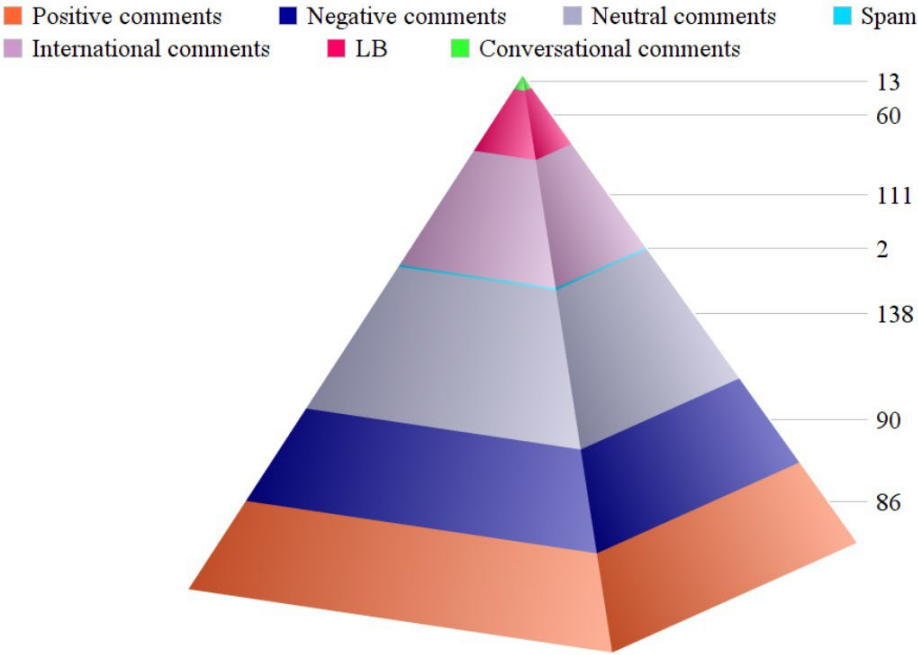

Figure 43. Expensive present

Why did two similar posts receive such a different proportion of positive and negative comments? In order to answer this key question, I must speculate on the difference between either the two gift recipients or two objects gifted. As I already discussed in the previous section, one of the content-

related issues of the post "Expensive present" is its reverse mother-daughter dynamic. Kylie Jenner, giving a carefully prepared, heavily customized, and unnecessarily premature gift to her mother rather than to her daughter, could be perceived as an unnatural action, something that, if the roles were reversed, would be assessed positively.

In fact, the Instagram community is not accustomed to children's giving and sacrificing nature. Mothers are usually those who are expected "to go all out" for their babies. That is why Kylie's identity as a daughter in the video "Expensive present" is imagined as being threatening by her mother-like behavior. She superseded her daughter role by taking too much initiative. Consequently, some Instagram followers cannot perceive Kylie as a daughter and refer to her as a mother: they compliment her good mothering skills, not noticing that, in the video, she is fulfilling a daughterly role. Other followers criticize Kylie for giving such an expensive present to her mother instead of helping children in Africa. They are convinced that abstract children are more suitable, natural gift-targets than her own mother. All in all, the dominance of negative reactions towards the post "Expensive present" could be closely related to the untypical mother-daughter role assignment of the gift giving. The photograph "Stormi's birthday party," on the other hand, does have a common representation of mother's caring, loving, and giving nature directed at her child. Hence, the photograph highlighting a typical mother-daughter relationship received predominantly positive feedback.

If I consider the different nature of the gifts themselves, another reason for the P/B comments disparity could be that the video "Expensive present" features a car that all Instagram users can research. With the help of a simple Internet search, within minutes, Kylie's followers are able to find all technical characteristics, dealership locations, and, what is most important, accurate prices of a 488 Gran Turismo Ferrari. Such information on an expensive present makes the gift seem more real, tangible, and attainable than a huge party with an undefined location, space footage, and

human resources involved. People are not able to estimate even the approximate price of the party; therefore, it does not seem to belong to their reality, as it is hard to be envious of what you cannot fully relate to. One of the prerequisites for envy towards a person is the desire to have something that the object of envy possesses and this something should be well-explored. In other words, the envious person should know a lot about the subject of envy.

SUMMARY

In the second chapter, I have examined three negatively assessed posts of Kylie Jenner. The discussed Instagram content illustrates the way Kylie's Instagram profile dilutes the race and gender dichotomies. In other words, the analyzed data has shown that Kylie's Instagram identity is not one that claims an affiliation with any particular socially constructed race or gender but is created as a gradual, boundless continuum of sociocultural interplay. The qualitative research of the commentary zones to the posts "Blackface," "Self-made billionaire," and "Expensive present" has revealed followers' propensity for criticizing Kylie Jenner's ambiguous race and gender representation on Instagram.

The chart below (see fig. 43) compares the distribution of P, B, N, C, and LB comments among the three negatively assessed posts.
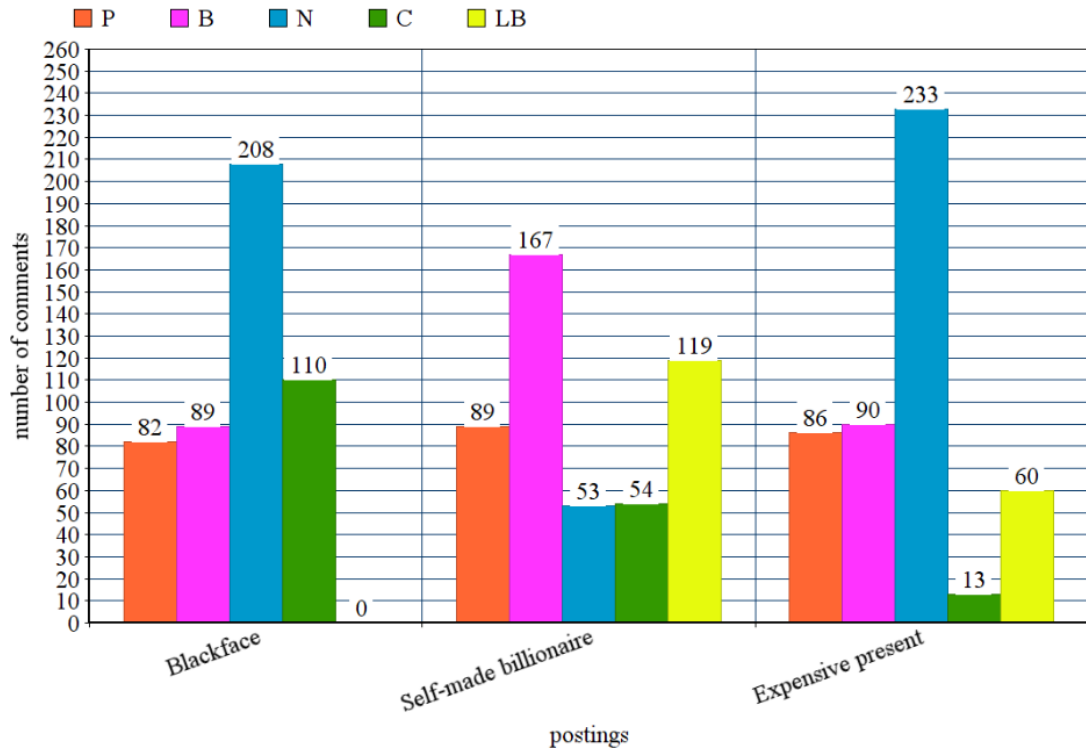
Figure 44. Comparison of the three negatively assessed posts

According to the statistical analysis, the most negatively perceived post turned out to be "Self-made billionaire," which collected 167 B comments out of 500. In her depiction on the cover of Forbes, Kylie Jenner can undoubtedly be categorized as a member of upper-class society. Her appearance speaks to her unambiguous class affiliation: her skin looks unusually white, her hair extensions are tied in a sleek, nondescript bun, and her makeup is light and natural. Kylie is represented as a white elite born into privilege. The source of users' negative emotions is found in her "self-made" status, which is called into question by the Instagram community.

The posts "Blackface" and "Expensive present" disrupt exclusive and unambiguous race and gender delineations, inviting followers to re-establish gender and racial difference. The enormous amount of C and N feedback manifests Instagram users' self-orientation when discussing Kylie's controversial content. The large quantity of C comments related to Kylie's photograph "Blackface" illustrates followers' considerable involvement in comprehending Kylie's blacklight experiment

from the racial discourse perspective. Furthermore, a notable number of N comments on the video "Expensive present" demonstrate the way in which her Instagram identity dilutes the demarcation of gender-determined objects of desire, inviting the typically passive male followers to participate in an opinion exchange process in the commentary zone. The active engagement with the content and its implications is based on Kylie's provocative choice of her mother's dream object, which happens to be a hypermasculine fantasy object—an expensive sports car. She gives a brand-new red Ferrari to a 63-year-old woman, activating male and female Instagram users alike.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have discussed seven posts by Kylie Jenner, who is one of the biggest social media influencers of our time. The detailed examination of her Instagram posts' comments sections has provided a deep insight into the perception of female gender, race, and class on Instagram. Through my cultural and statistical analysis of four positively and three negatively assessed Instagram posts of Kylie Jenner, I have discovered several correlations between the scope, or intensity, of her gender, race, and class performance, as well as the quantity of P, B, N, C, I, or LB comments.

The first chapter introduced four gender-marked photographs, "We are family," "Barbie," "Kylie's vacation with Stormi," and "Stormi's birthday party," which present Kylie in the traditional female role of mother, sister, daughter, and/or beauty-oriented woman. The qualitative research of followers' feedback was conducted within the conceptual framework based on the Mirror Stage theory of Jacques Lacan. The discourse topics, such as family values, envy, beauty standards, plastic surgery, and motherhood, have been observed through the lens of the Instagram camera which, in my analysis, is seen as the manifestation of the Lacanian mirror stage.

The qualitative analysis of the commentary zone showed that the gross volume of post characteristics that did not confirm or conform to female gender norms of Instagram society is

directly proportional to the number of opinionated P/B comments and inversely proportional to the number of indifferent LB comments. In other words, Kylie Jenner performing normative female gender on her Instagram tends to receive less B comments but risks receiving many LBs. On the other hand, Kylie challenging the traditional boundaries of polarized gender representations on Instagram is likely to receive opinionated feedback, including P, B, I, and C comments.

The examination of the positively assessed photographs has demonstrated the interrelationship between the amount of negative feedback and money discourse involved. If Kylie Jenner demonstrates even a few aspects of her financial success, she is expected to receive some backlash. "Kylie's vacation with Stormi" and "I am Barbie" almost lack negative comments, indicating that the content does not raise any issues regarding Kylie's financial wellbeing, whereas "Stormi's Birthday Party" and "We Are Family" gained some negative feedback because of their indirect connection to Kylie's privilege and money.

The second chapter has discussed three gender-unmarked posts, which I classify as deviations from the traditional feminine Instagram representational pattern. The photographs "Blackface" and "Self-made billionaire" as well as the video "Expensive present" depict Kylie as a race-mobile opportunist, successful entrepreneur, and car lover, respectively. The qualitative analysis of the posts' comments sections has shown that her negatively assessed Instagram content tends to provide polarized race and gender relations by paradoxically diluting race and gender Instagram representation delineations. Moreover, Kylie Jenner's postings highlight her inclusion within the privileged upper class.

 According to the analyzed data, the Instagram community disapproves of the way Kylie's Instagram identity fails to claim affiliation with a certain socially constructed race or gender pole. Moreover, Instagram critics condemn Kylie for being born into privilege but neglect her financial

accomplishments. The research has revealed a direct correlation between the amount of a post's gender and race ambiguity and the number of N and C comments received.

The chart below (see fig. 44) compares the distribution of the major types of comments among all seven of Kylie's Instagram posts.
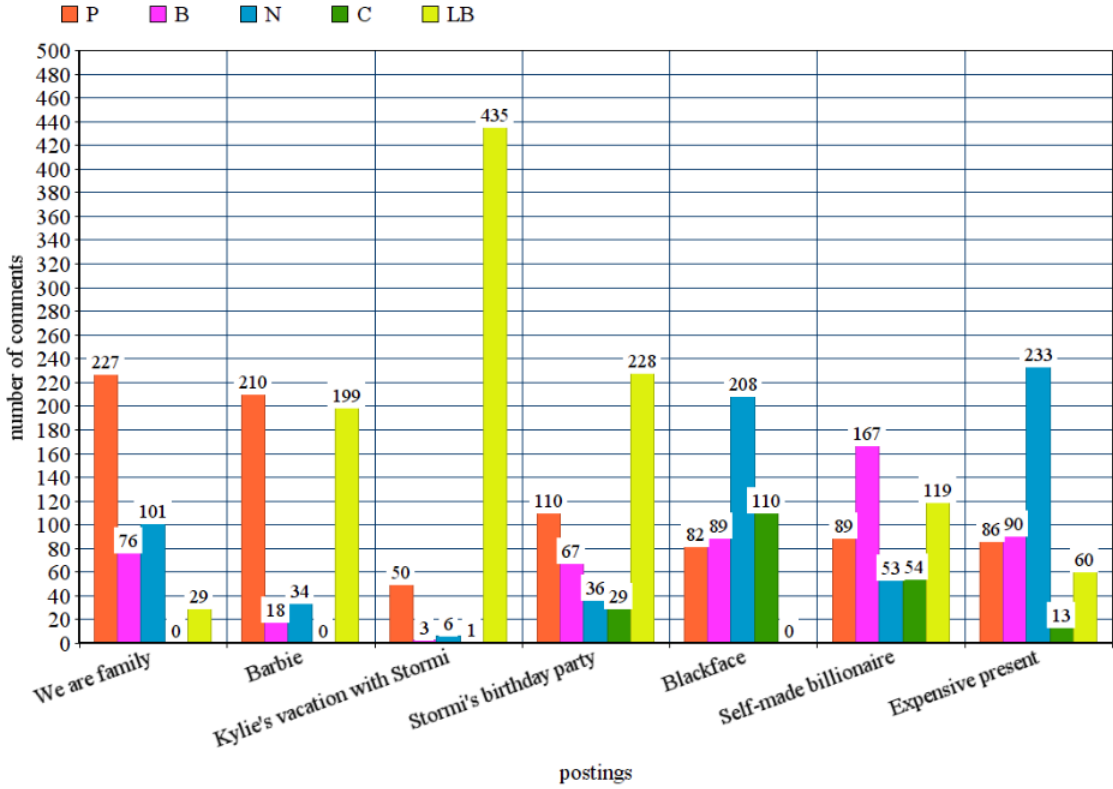

Figure 45. Comments distribution overview

According to the chart, the posts "Blackface" and "Expensive present," which I deem negatively assessed content, do not show a wide gap between the number of P and B comments. Therefore, it is reasonable to think that the prevailing number of B comments related to those postings is just a coincidence. However, it could be argued that another randomly selected 500 comments from these posts would reveal a different numerical distribution: P comments might hypothetically prevail over

B comments, for instance. It is important, then, to underline the different nature of the followers' motivation behind the given positive feedback regarding positively vs. negatively assessed posts.

In relation to "Blackface" and "Expensive present," the majority of positive feedback is exculpatory in nature. Positive comments tend to defend the influencer from all kinds of haters' attacks. Followers' content approval, which appears at the end of such comments, functions as a brief compliment in addition to an extremely protective opinion aimed to justify Kylie's stunt. The focus of such P comments is redirected from Kylie's perceived status as a role model to Kylie imagined as a sympathetic victim.

Another aspect that distinguishes P comments on negatively assessed posts from P comments on positively assessed ones is their tendency to neglect all of Kylie Jenner's accomplishments and highlight only her static female characteristics, such as exceptional beauty or her mother/daughter status. The quality of follower-oriented feedback also varies between positively and negatively assessed posts. The content that praises femininity triggers indifferent and distanced Like Back comments, while the content that occupies a gender-unmarked or masculine area of interest causes engaged and passionate C and N comments.

The different characteristics of P and B comments in relation to gender-marked and gender-unmarked or masculine posts provide a deep understanding of commentators' abilities to identify themselves within the narrative created and shared by Kylie Jenner in her Instagram profile. She is the big Other who represents to the followers what they desire to attain. The more exotic, outlandish, and exceptional her Instagram gallery is, the more her Instagram operates as the big Other. When the users are able to position themselves in the same surrounding, agentive role, or life situation as Kylie does, the users tend to positively assess such posts because they potentially do not lack anything Kylie possesses. However, some posts are hard for the users to identify with. Such posts demonstrate Kylie's upper-class privilege and the results of her incredible financial success. Those

posts remind Instagram users of the origin and wealth they lack and, unfortunately, are not able to gain. Hence, the content highlighting Kylie's unfemininely strong influential power and excessive wealth trigger a feeling of envy, which the users try to get rid of by neglecting Kylie's success in various ways with the help of not only B comments but a whole range of different reactions in the comments section.

The discussed Instagram material has shown that Kylie Jenner profits from situating herself both within the realms of privileged whiteness and authentic blackness by being able to adjust her public representation to particular needs. When she strives to eroticize and ethnicize her public image, in order to promote her appropriated black culture commodities, her Instagram identity moves towards the black race pole on the imaginary scale. If Kylie wants to be perceived seriously by, for instance, the audience of the upper-class *Forbes* magazine, she returns to her original white race pole.

The same type of fluctuation can be seen with regard to Kylie's gender representation. Her Instagram content consists not only of typical feminine posts but also of those depicting her as inhabiting a masculine niche of interest: money and power relations. The *Forbes* cover illustrates Kylie's adaptive capacity to change her position on the gender scale. In order to look competent and professional, Kylie makes the decision to wear a large black suit, she ties her hair up, and sheds her Barbie-like femininity. With no traces of Kylie Cosmetics on her face, she looks natural and desexualized. She tries to look like a proper entrepreneur or, in other words, a man.

The chart below (see fig. 45) demonstrates the correlation between the number of negative comments and the gender/race ambiguity of the posts. As we can see, the photographs with a prevailing number of P comments do not show any fluctuation in race or gender belonging and always conform with female gender representation norms. With regard to the posts that received

predominantly B comments, they demonstrated gender/race ambiguity and tend to highlight Kylie's upper-class inclusion.
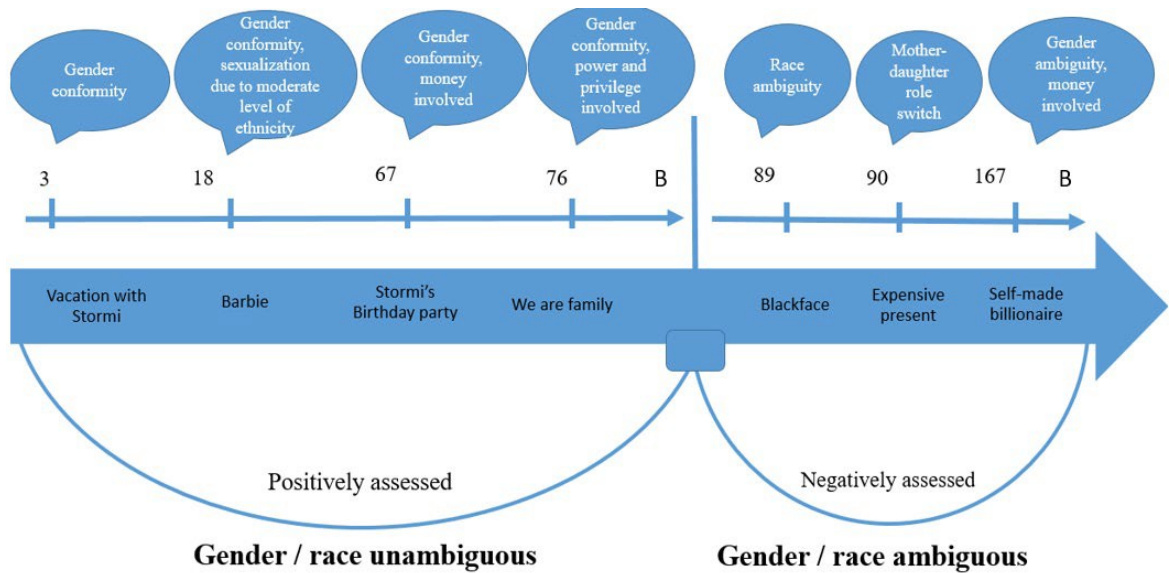

Figure 46. The scale of ambiguity

It is important to note that Kylie's unambiguous class belonging influences the public perception of her raced and sexed body. Her exotic, ethnic appearance in combination with her privileged white origin tend to erase negative connotations related to the black culture (e.g., poverty, antisocial behaviour, lack of integration) and allow her to repackage black style trends, including specifically black body shapes, facial traits, hairstyles, and fashion, to a wider audience by presenting them as something brand new and innovative.

One of the main characteristics of Kylie Jenner's positively assessed posts is their ability to manifest normative femininity for the influencer's Instagram community. Kylie's negatively assessed posts are usually gender-unmarked or manifest certain aspects of masculinity. Negatively assessed content shows the tendency to demonstrate Kylie's financial success in combination with her inborn upper-class privilege. Moreover, it tends to dilute racial and gender dichotomies. In other words, such content threatens race or gender polar categorizations, which can ruin the hierarchical

normative order of Instagram representation. Women acting out nontraditional roles still make people uncomfortable and sometimes reactionary. It forces virtual female gender manifestation to be structured as a polar system which does not allow any intersections. Kylie Jenner's Instagram negatively assessed posts contradict the defined social symbolic order and break the visual phallus rule, while positively assessed posts conform all the standards of the phallus hierarchy.

The results of my master's thesis do have some limitations, as they are based on a quite limited sample of comments. The statistics on the qualitative and quantitative commentary distribution are centred around 3,500 comments, which are sufficient only for observing general trends in the Instagram behaviour of Kylie Jenner and her followers. Accordingly, one area for possible further research in the field of virtual female gender representation and social media cultural studies may lie in the examination of a larger sample of comments related to Kylie's virtual identity. Although the Kylie phenomenon suggests a global audience, where national differences are flattened, it might be interesting to add some international aspects to the study by researching the Instagram profiles of female influencers from different countries. The comparison of various female social media identities in relation to their nationality is one of the ways to widen the research focus.

References

Arterbery, Andrea. "Does anyone own the cornrow." *The New York Times*, 3 Nov. 2015,

    www.nytimes.com. Accessed 4 May 2019.

Bergner, Gwen. "Who Is That Masked Woman? Or, the Role of Gender in Fanon's Black Skin,

    White Masks." *PMLA*, vol. 110, no. 1, 1995, pp. 75–88. JSTOR,

    www.jstor.org/stable/463196.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "sex".* New York: Routledge, 1993.

    Print.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. 1990. Print.

Butler, Judith. "Giving an Account of Oneself." *Diacritics*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2001, pp. 22–40. JSTOR,

    www.jstor.org/stable/1566427.

Butler, Judith. "Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist

    theory". In Case, Sue-Ellen (Ed.) *Performing feminisms: Feminist critical theory and*

    theatre. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.

"Chapter I". *Dear White People*: The First Season, written and directed by Justin Simien, 2014

Cooper, Belle. "7 Powerful Facebook Statistics You Should Know for a More Engaging Facebook

    Page." *Buffer*, 19 Apr. 2016, www.buffer.com. Accessed 21 Dec. 2018.

Corliss, Rebecca. "Photos on Facebook Generate 53% More Likes Than the Average Post [NEW

    DATA]." *Hubspot*, 27 Aug. 2017, www. blog.hubspot.com. Accessed 22 Dec. 2018.

Evans, Dylan. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge, 1996.

    Print.

Freud, Sigmund, and Katherine Jones. *Moses and Monotheism*. London: The Hogarth Press and the

    Institute of psycho-analysis, 1939. Print.

Freud, Sigmund. *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and*

   Neurotics. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1938. Print.

Freud, Sigmund, Alan Tyson, James Strachey, and Peter Gay. *Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of*

   His Childhood. New York: Norton, 1989.

Frey, Kaitlyn. "Kendall Jenner Looks Back on Her 'Ugly' Years on KUWTK: 'The Glow Up Is

   Actually Just Nuts." *People*, 6 Aug. 2018, www. people.com. Accessed 14 Feb. 2019.

George, Sheldon. *Trauma and Race: A Lacanian Study of African American Racial Identity*. Waco:

   Baylor University Press, 2016. Project MUSE.

Gervis, Zoya. "5 Reasons Leo Moms Are The Fiercest Type Of Parents In The Zodiac" *Elite Daily*,

   9 Aug. 2016, www.elitedaily.com. Accessed 2 Mar. 2019.

Gherovici, Patricia. *Transgender psychoanalysis: A Lacanian perspective on sexual difference*. New

   York: Routledge, 2017.

Giddens, Anthony. *The transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern*

   Societies. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992.

Grosz, Elizabeth. *Jacques Lacan*: *A Feminist Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1990. Internet

   resource.

Hassoun-Lestienne, Pascale. Malade d'Envie. In Pascale Hassoun-Lestienne (Ed.), L'envie et le

   désir. Les faux frères. Collection Morales, no. 24. Paris: Editions Autrement, 1998a. 13–58

Hetrick, Laura. *Exploring three pedagogical fantasies of becoming a teacher: A Lacanian and*

   Deleuzo-Guattarian approach to unfolding the identity (re)formation of art student teachers.

   Ohio: The Ohio State University, 2010.

Irigaray, Luce, and Carolyn Burke. This Sex Which Is Not One. Ithaca, New York: Cornell

   University Press, 1985. Print.

Irigaray, Luce. *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1993. Print.

Jenner, Caitlyn. Interview by Diane Sawyer. *ABC News*, 2017.

Jenner, Caitlyn. *The Secrets of My Life*, 1st edition. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2017.

Jenner, Kris. *Kris Jenner . . . And All Things Kardashian*. New York: Gallery Books/Karen Hunter
        Publishing, 2012.

Kallas, Priit. "Top 10 Social Networking Sites by Market Share Statistics." *Dreamgrow*, Jul. 2018,
        www. dreamgrow.com. Accessed 23 Dec. 2018.

"Kim Kardashian." *H8R: The First Season,* directed by Adam Vetri, 2011

Kroll, Luisa, and Dolan, Kerry. "America's Richest Self-made Women." *Forbes*, 11 Jul. 2018,
        www.forbes.com. Accessed 5 May 2019

Lacan, Jacques. *Ecrits: A selection*. Trans A. Sheridan. New York: Norton, 1993.

Lacan, Jacques. *My Teaching*, 1967. Trans. David Macey. London: Verso, 2008.

Lacan, Jacques *.....or Worse: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XIX*., 2018. Print.

Lacan, Jacques. *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan: Book III. The Psychoses*, 1955-56. Trans. Russell
        Grigg. London, UK: Routledge, 1993.

Lacan, Jacques. *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan: Book IX: Identification*: 1961-1962.
        1998, 136.

Lacan, Jacques. "The signification of the phallus". In B. Fink (Trans.), *Ecrits*. New York &
        London: W.W. Norton, 2006.

Lord, M G. *Forever Barbie: The Unauthorized Biography of a Real Doll*. New York: Morrow and
        Co, 1994. Print.

Mizoguchi, Karen. "Kendall Jenner on Sister Kylie Being 'Jealous' of Her Modeling Career: 'She
        Loves Attention." *People*, 10 Oct. 2015, www. people.com. Accessed 20 Feb. 2019.

Moore, Henrietta L. *The subject of anthropology: gender, symbolism and psychoanalysis /
        Henrietta L. Moore.* Cambridge: Polity, 2007.

Negrón-Muntaner, Frances, and Rita Gonzalez. "*Boricua* Gazing: An Interview with Frances

> Negrón-Muntaner." Signs, vol. 30, no. 1, 2004, pp. 1345–1360. JSTOR,

> www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/421885.

Niccol, Andrew, and Peter Weir. *The Truman Show*. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1999.

Kristeva, Julia, and Arthur Goldhammer. "Stabat Mater" *Poetics Today*, Vol. 6, No. 1/2, 1985

Niccol, Andrew, and Peter Weir. *The Truman Show*. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1999.

Nusselder, André. *Interface Fantasy: A Lacanian Cyborg Ontology*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press,

> 2009. Print.

Obar, Jonathan and Steve Wildman. Social media definition and the governance challenge: An

> introduction to the special issue. *Telecommunications Policy*, Volume 39, Issue 9, 2015,

> pages 745-750, ISSN 0308-5961, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.telpol.2015.07.014.

> (http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308596115001172)

O' Malley, Katie. "Kendall Jenner Gets Real About Her Jealousy Of Sister Kylie Jenner And How

> They've 'Flipped Roles' In Life" *Elle*, 2 Nov. 2018, www. elle.com. Accessed 23 Feb. 2019.

Parrott, Gerrod, and Richard Smith. "Distinguishing the experiences of envy and jealousy". *Journal

> of Personality and Social Psychology*. 1993, 64(6), 906–20.

Rand, Erica. *Barbie's Queer Accessories*. North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1995.

Rogers, Mary Frances. *Barbie Culture*. London: Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 1999.

Seacrest, Ryan and Jonathan Murray creators. *Keeping up with the Kardashians*. Ryan Seacrest

> Productions and Bunim/Murray Productions, 2007.

Silverman, Kaja. *The Subject of Semiotics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983. Print.

Silverman, Kaja. *The Threshold of the Visible World*. New York: Routledge, 1996. Print

Silverman, Max, editor. Frantz Fanon's 'Black Skin, White Masks': New Interdisciplinary Eassys.

> 1st ed., Manchester University Press, 2005. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1vwmfcj.

Spitzack, Carole. Confessing Excess: *Women and the Politics of Body Reduction*. Albany, N.Y:

    State University of New York Press, 1990. Print.

Sudweeks, Fay, Margaret L. McLaughlin, and Sheizaf Rafaeli. *Network and Netplay: Virtual*

    Groups on the Internet. Menlo Park, CA: AAAI Press, 1998. Print

Suleiman, Susan Rubin. *The Female Body in Western Culture: Semiotic Perspectives*. North

    Carolina: Duke University Press,1985.

Vidaillet, Bénédicte. "Lacanian Theory's Contribution to the Study of Workplace Envy." *Human*

    Relations, vol. 60, no. 11, Nov. 2007, pp. 1669–1700, doi:10.1177/0018726707084304.

Williams, Patricia J. *The alchemy of race and rights*. Harvard University Press Cambridge, Mass,

    1991

Žižek, Slavoj. *The Plague of Fantasies*. London: Verso, 1997.