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Using at least 3 examples, consider how image makers have utilised digital technology to explore at least one of the following: Conflict, Identity, The Surveillance State, The Technological world?

Identity is how we as people express ourselves and are seen by the world around us. There are many factors that contribute to someone's identity but a few that I know of are a person's beliefs, gender, sexuality, body image, nationality, social class etc. Those seem to be the main factors that will contribute to someone's identity, sadly some of those factors will determine how a person is judged or perceived which often leads to a negative reaction due to conflict within beliefs. Though when people have similar attributes within their identities, they can gain companionship. Through this, bonds are built and can cause people to "feed off each other's energies, thoughts, dreams, and even differences—which all play an integral role in shaping our identities." (Qiya Solihin, Complex, 2016)

A wide variety of photographers will utilize their image making techniques to express their thoughts, opinions, struggles or discovery within identity. I believe the representation of identity within the digital world is important as many people go through a time in life where they're figuring out who they are and feel lost within themselves so viewing work similar to their struggles is how they could feel heard or not alone. Another factor of representation being important within today's society is that I find photography to be an expressive outlet so seeing work using this subject matter could influence a similar interest in another artist or even influence somebody to take up a similar interest or hobby to photography as an outlet for their own personal struggles.

There are many types of digital technology, the most popular would be digital cameras, websites, films, music videos, social media and smart phones. The first thing I'd like to talk about for how an image maker utilizes digital technology is with the usage of a digital camera, this is probably one of the most popular ways of utilizing technology as there are

many different types of digital cameras that are available in today's world, some more affordable than others. A few of the most popular digital cameras being compact camera known as a point and shoot camera, bridge camera, DSLR camera, a drone and a Mirrorless camera. With digital photography the things you can do are endless which is why so many image makers take advantage of them and use them within their work.

Figure 1



Steevez Rodriguez

A photographer that I came across in previous work that utilizes digital cameras to explore female identity and empowerment within their work is Steeevez Rodriguez. Rodriguez is a photographer from India who in his work portrays women with a range of different body shapes, sizes and looks. The aim behind his photography was to “start a dialogue around unconventional body types and normalise them” (Rodriguez, Cosmopolitan 2019) the whole idea behind these photographs is to normalise body types that society tends to deem not normal or tend to not be the ‘perfect’ body type. Something interesting about the work is that the women he works with have all kind of different stories and backgrounds

so he has a variety of body types to portray. To make the women feel more comfortable he shoots in an atmosphere where they will be able to be their authentic selves which would be in the comfort of their own homes.

“To men a man is but a mind. Who cares what face he carries or what form he wears? But woman’s body is the woman.” — (Ambrose Bierce, 1911/1935, p. 15) women through many years have been faced with misogynistic, sexism body shaming and many more even in today’s day and age we’re still taught that if something happens to a women that it’s their own fault for what they were wearing or doing that they need male approval to feel appreciated which feel comes across within this quote as it gives off the message that women are nothing without their bodies and that their value is defined by their body which is ridiculous but now within work such as Sheevez, women are fighting back for their rights and empowering others by rebelling against society standards and identity showing off what normal bodies look like proving that a ‘perfect body’ isn’t everything and that they can be whoever they want to be.

With technology being so advanced we’re at a stage in life where cameras on the smart phone are such good quality to the point where they have similar outcomes to some digital DSLR cameras, some image makers utilise this as another way to create work. Many beginners start off using the camera of their phone to get into photography while some use it within their work. A photographer I looked at called Dafydd Jones uses the smart phone within his photographs, he documents people at events who are enticed with their phones rather than living in the moment and socializing. I choose to look at his work as this links to social identity and how people act within groups of people, he also has gone beyond using phones to photograph work and used this digital form for a project too.

Figure 2



(Dafydd Jones, 2011)

The above photograph taken by Dafydd Jones, there are two women talking to each other in the foreground at what looks to be some sort of social gathering while in the background there's another woman who's focus is in her phone seeming to be very engrossed by whatever is on the phone. The most interesting thing is that this was taken in 2011 when touch screen phones were still quite new. Since 2011, many such as myself have grown up with technology and phones so i personally know how much this generation can depend on digital technology when in uncomfortable situations so the fact that there's a photograph from 2011 showing someone on their phone at a party shows the beginning of isolation from each other and when people slowly stopped living in the moment. My opinion on phones is that they are great inventions but as a society I feel we rely on phone too much and have began to lose contact with individuals in person, becoming slightly dependent on them though during these unprecedented times where we were unable to see people technology and phones have been a big saviour but I believe what Jones was portraying through these photos is that there's good and bad to the creation. He's been photographing

the development of phones for a decade, “People look at their phones for all sorts of reasons—they might just be trying to find their way,” Jones says. “But I would say that for about three-quarters of the pictures in the book, the people should really be enjoying where they are.” (Dafydd Jones, 2019) this links to social identity finding your place within group settings not feeling a sense of belonging but Jones feels these people he photographs should be enjoying these settings that they’re in.

This is contrasting to figure 1 as Sheevez Rodriguez within his photographs wanted to make the women he was photographing feel the most comfortable and authentically themselves, so to do this he would tend to capture the photographs in their houses. While these photos taken by Dafydd Jones you can’t tell whether the people are in their element or not as it’s hard to read the atmosphere as it’d tend to be the women who’s on her phone looks the most out of place while she actually could’ve been having the most fun at that event moments before but just had to check her phone for a split second when the photograph was taken.

Figure 3



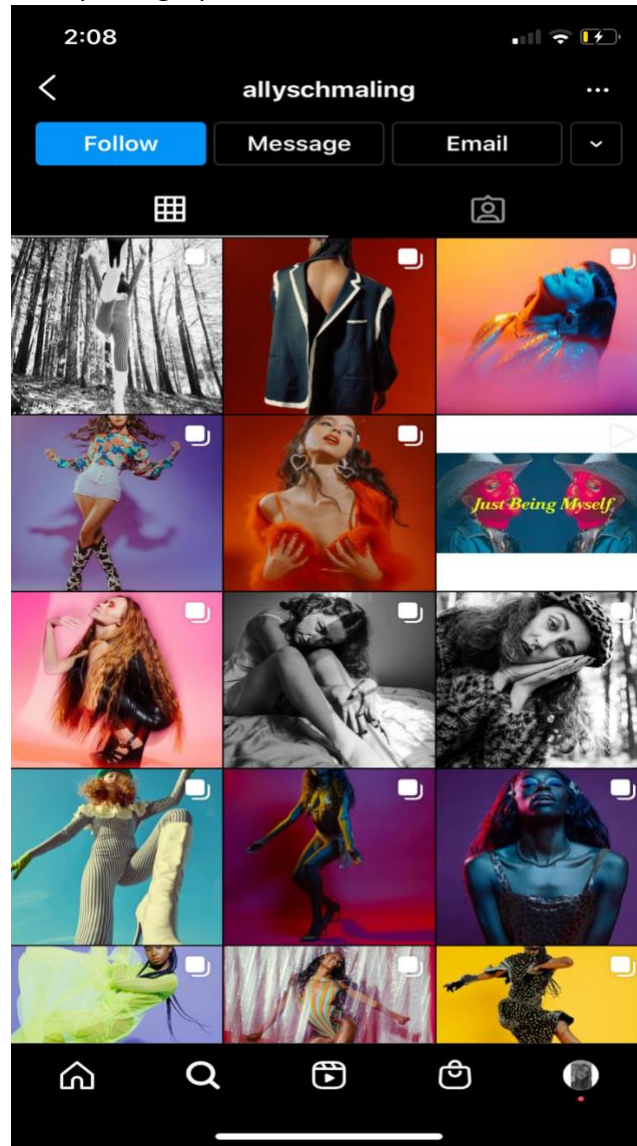
Ally schmaling, 2019

‘if there is not a space for you, make space” (Ally Schmaling, 2019)

Ally Schmaling is a photographer from Boston who created a photo series exploring queer and gender nonbinary identities. Through this project Schmaling wants to capture people who are going against normalities of male and female labels who are doing their own thing by being who they are authentically. They use photographic portraiture to express queer and nonbinary identities, which is an important topic as it leads us to a place where people can just be themselves with no judgement. “ It's our job to push institutions forward and create art that reflects the world we want to see” (Ally Schmaling, 2019) Through their photographing process Schmaling ask the people how they would like to be seen, which links with figure 1 as Rodriguez also asks the people he’s photographing on how they’d like to be seen and photographed which I think is an amazing way of working as it makes the person modelling feel apart off the process more. I feel with both of these photographers their images come across very natural as you can tell the people are comfortable and feel empowered by themselves. Schmaling has also shown that through their work they were able to overcome some personal identity struggles such as body dysmorphia, gender and sexuality. The usage of colour and the freeness the photographs have drawn me in as feel the colours also express the individuals representing happiness as the colours are bright.

Ally schmaling is one of many photographers who use social media to promote and share their work. Social media is a big platform for image makers as this is a good way on how to get your photography out into the world and even get noticed by other photographers, models or companies. Not only do Image makers use social media as a way to share their creations they also use it to connect with other people who want to collaborate to become

more knowledgeable about this career path. This is another way they utilize digital technology as social media is another big factor of the technological world. The main platforms that artists, photographers etc will use are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



(Ally schmaling Instagram 2020)

This is an example of how an image maker can use Instagram to promote their work and speak on sensitive topics such as identity. This to me is smart way to grow as a photographer as more people can see your work from all across the world. They also by posting their images they are bringing attention and making it easier to have the

conversation for people who are questioning their own identity whether that be their sexuality or gender.

Figure 4

I think a big factor that shapes who we are as people and is part of our identity is how we are brought up because through that we are taught that one way is right from the beliefs of parents as well as the people around you growing up so only learn a little part of the world and the issues going on then when you get older you learn more, change opinions, develop more knowledge on the situation and issues in the world which can also lead to someone finding their identity or losing themselves as what they were once taught was no longer true. “Many of our beliefs are not chosen, we are born into them “ (Giles Fraser, The Guardian, 2016) such as traditional things such as boy’s clothes or girl clothes when now personally believe that clothes don’t have a gender, they’re just clothes and people should wear whatever they feel most comfortable in which brings me on to a photographer that i discovered called JeongMee Yoon who over the last 14 years has done a photography series called “The Pink and Blue Project.” The project is influenced by her daughter who adored pink so Yoon wanted to make a project where she shows how blue is considered “masculine” while pink is considered “feminine” so the project has children and young people with their items from their bedroom or items that they collect. The results show some boys with pink items, boys with blue items, girls with pink items and some with blue.



The pink and blue project, JeongMee Yoon 2005- present

Looking at Yoon's work you can see how progressively colours have become more gender fluid and parents/children have moved away from typical blue is for boys and pink is for girls which shows development within society. Through Yoon's work she was able to explore political and social identity through different culture preferences where they stand on gender preferences as she photographs children from south Korea, America and many other places. Though this wasn't always the case as "If you go back to the 18th century, little boys and little girls of the upper classes both wore pink and blue and other colours uniformly," said (Valerie Steele, director of the Museum at FIT, 2018.) society is always changing which shows that in the 1800's roles were reversed and it's slowly becoming normal to wear whatever clothes regardless of gender. The reason i looked at yoon's work is as she also uses a blog which is part of digital technology to record her findings and express identity.

After looking at a variety of photographers, I have come to the conclusion that there are many ways that identity is explored within photography. Anyone can struggle with their identity and finding themselves along with a person's Identity can change over time as they grow and depending on who they surround themselves with can have an impact on who

they become. Furthermore, I discovered that there are many ways that image makers utilise digital technology to explore identity along with building up their own portfolios. I feel this topic will continue to be relevant with years to come as the world is constantly changing i am sure our identities will be explored more as time goes on. Through all of the photographers I looked at one that stood out to me the most was Ally Schmaling work as the colour palette she used instantly drew me into all the concepts. Also feel colour enhances the identity topics she explores as they showed the reality and truth that comes with struggling with their identity which is truly eye opening. The way they photograph and set up their images asking the models how they want to be portrayed or what they would like to be perceived as and each person looked in their element. I think after looking at all the work a great way to explore identity is portraiture photography and when the photos have more depth to them which makes the viewer relate on a personal level.

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