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The public performances of pop star Lady Gaga: reading representations of gender, sexuality and feminist identities

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ABSTRACT

This research project seeks to critically analyse the gender, sexuality and feminist identity representations in the musical and performance work of pop star Lady Gaga. It considers the implicit and symbolic meanings communicated about gender, sexuality and feminist identities through the intentional constructions of meaning and representations in Lady Gaga's songs and music videos. This study focuses on Lady Gaga's lyrics, music and singing, as well as on her performances and the visual images communicated in her music videos, as the main site of analysis and as the main communicator of these specific representations. Pop culture and pop music serve as fundamental contextual settings for this study, with semiotics and myth forming the main representation theories and methodological constructs of the project. Feminist and Queer theory are also prioritized in providing the primary discussion on understanding gender, sexuality and feminist identities, in ways that serve this study. Furthermore, the main argument of this research project is that Lady Gaga as a pop star and celebrity uses her capacity of influence to communicate alternative and subversive meanings and ideas about gender, sexuality and feminist identities, through her music, performative and aesthetic representations in the mass media. In adding to this argument, the meanings and ideas communicated by Lady Gaga are also resistant to traditional and accepted norms of gender, sexuality and feminist identities and, importantly, this study argues the ways that these representations are disruptive and challenging to the dominant ideologies of patriarchy and hetero-normitivity.