IJoC Selfies

The Lonely Selfie King:
Selfies and the Conspicuous Prosumption of Gender and Race

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Introduction

Taking selfies has become an integral part of the social media experience. As discussed in the introduction to this special issue, selfies are internationally pervasive and evoke strong reactions from those that encounter them. Even if users do not produce selfies themselves, they cannot help but consume them. But the production and consumption of selfies is not merely a social media trend; selfies have become social artifacts that deliver social messages created and negotiated by the culture that produces them. Even within a single culture, an artifact's meaning can shift with context and those decoding the message. Gender and race play an important role in creating the context of almost all social messages and are particularly salient when analyzing the production and consumption of selfies.

In this article, we provide a sociological analysis of selfies, interpreting them as a social tool that can be used in producing and consuming racial and gender identities. To do this, we share the results of a study we conducted that considered the attitudes and experiences associated with producing and consuming selfies among millennials in New York and Texas.[2] Though we interviewed a relatively small number of participants—40 in total—we feel that the trends uncovered in this study warrant scholarly exploration. Our analysis focuses on both the production and consumption of selfies and on personal experiences associated with taking selfies. Here, we follow the lead of Ritzer and Rey (2013), who argue that rather than existing as a dichotomy, production and consumption always co-exist; there is always a

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[2] This article is part of a larger study on race-based differences in social media use among American millennials. The first paper, originally presented at Theorizing the Web 2014, "In Defense of Selfies: The Conspicuous Prosumption of Experience on Social Media" (Williams, 2014), laid the foundation for conspicuous prosumption.

bit of one present in the other. The term *prosumption*, originally coined by Alvin Toffler (1980), implies this continuum of production and consumption. Reviving this term in 2012, Ritzer, Dean, and Jurgenson further argue that social media have transformed the way prosumption occurs, allowing for mass prosumption, fueled by what Pine and Gilmore (1999/2011) term the experience economy: the value that we give to everyday experiences.

One of this article's authors (Williams, 2014) has added to these theories the idea of *conspicuous prosumption,* defined as the producing and consuming (prosuming) of constructed experiences with the *explicit* intent of allowing others to share in those experiences. We view the act of taking and distributing selfies as an act of conspicuous prosumption. Users post them so that others can be a part of their experiences, with the understanding that the Internet, particularly social media and social networking sites, have become spaces for identity manipulation (Chen, 2010; Mehdizadeh, 2010) or "selective self-representation" (Gibbs, Ellison, & Heino, 2006, p. 169). The increasing popularity of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest allow for the conspicuous prosumption of experiences. Users generate content and make it immediately available for critique and negotiation by the public, or at least their friends and followers. Social media, in turn, intensifies the effect of the perceived public sphere. Likes or comments on posts may inflate a user's self-concept of celebrity. Marwick and boyd (2010) argue that users "learn how practices of micro-celebrity can be used to maintain audience interest" (p. 130). Users overtly consume, negotiate, and reproduce experiences as a meaning-making process.

During this process, gender plays a prominent role in the way experiences are prosumed. Users post selfies on social media platforms, where gender performance is often policed by other users.[3] In the group we studied, the manner in which this policing occurred differed by gender: Men and women used different tactics and language to describe and discuss selfies and selfie taking; they prosumed meaning by a different set of norms and rituals. In addition to gender norms, we noted that selfie policing occurred through another mode of self-performance: racial identity. For instance, although all of our male and female subjects related to male selfies as a mode of conspicuously prosumed masculinity, our subjects' determinations of the appropriateness and desirability of that masculinity differed across racial lines. Although we acknowledge that sexual orientation plays an integral role in the prosumption of masculinity and femininity, our interview respondents did not make claims regarding their sexual orientation. This is something we would like to address in future work.

Comments, Likes, and Policing Gender

The performance of gender plays a fundamental role in the division of spaces within the *perceived* public and private spheres, on- and off-line. In *Gender Trouble,* Judith Butler (1999) states, "Consider gender, for instance, as a *corporeal style*, an 'act,' as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where '*performative*' suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning" (p. 177). Butler suggests that gender identity is grounded in the repetition of acts. Gender attributes are not expressive; they are performative. Femininity and masculinity are socially constructed and regulated by other members of society. The ideas of West and Zimmerman (1987) add to Butler's theory and

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3 See the work of Anne Burns, Katrin Tiidenberg, Kath Albury, or Sonja Boon in this Special Section.

demonstrate how gender performance becomes embedded in everyday social interaction. The vernacular becomes a space in which gender is significant.

According to Butler (1999), the rationality that contributes to the way individuals categorize sex, gender, and sexuality is culturally constructed. They repeat stylized bodily acts, and those acts are regulated by others. By repeatedly performing gender roles, selfie takers produce new social norms and rituals. The more likes actors have, the more likely they are to re-prosume similar gender presentations. Every selfie captures one of these stylized acts on camera. Repetition occurs when users engage in daily or weekly selfie posting.

Social media platforms provide a forum for regulation that is not subject to human memory but is instead memorialized online. Comments and other feedback from audiences can influence users' online self-presentation strategies (Lee-Won, Shim, Joo, & Park, 2014). Posters and commenters can regulate others' gender performances through the influence of negative and positive comments. Other users in the same network have access to the visible record of gender policing and can either internalize these ideas or reject them, further prosuming ideas about "acceptable" gender performance.

Kimmel's *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (1997) asserts that although modernization and technological advances have facilitated various social changes such as the feminist and civil rights movements, notions of masculine identity have remained largely unchanged. Masculine performance requires that men uphold the symbols and rituals of patriarchal society. When men fail to adhere to the expectations of their peers, they may be stigmatized into upholding the existing structure. Goffman (1997) defines stigmatization as the devaluation and rejection of members of society. Devaluation and rejection, or social stigma, occurs when a member of society no longer maintains a "normal" appearance in society. Kimmel's *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men* (2009) relates Goffman's thoughts to modern social life. He describes Guyland as the place where "guy" and "girl" code are constructed and contested (Kimmel, 2009). We can apply these ideas to the realm of social media. Commenters may use their words to demean an individual for breaking girl or guy code. Conversely, positive comments and likes can function as evidence of respect.

Kimmel's work on gender stigma echoes the earlier, offline research of Elijah Anderson (1999), who found that among Blacks and Latinos, gendered behavior and social relations are organized and dictated by a set of informal rules or codes in the Black urban community. Online and offline, comments function both as rewards for normative behavior and as tools of stigmatization, meant to temporarily break the social bond until the infraction is corrected. Being stigmatized may result in the loss of social capital, social networks, and social status. Therefore, presenting an acceptable binary sexuality is essential for maintaining one's role in the social and gender hierarchy. A man's performance of masculinity constantly needs the approval of other male members of society in order to be regulated and reinstated.

Methodology

For this study, Williams conducted semi-structured interviews with 40 social media users in New York City and various metropolitan areas in Texas. Then, both authors analyzed the interview transcripts.

Participants were sourced through university Twitter pages. The first 100 followers of the page were followed for the study. Users who followed back were contacted using the platform's direct message function. They were prompted using the following text: "You are being asked to take part in a study regarding Twitter culture. You may also be asked about your Facebook and/or Instagram usage." Participants were also informed that they could invite their family and friends to take part in the study. We would like to note that although participants were selected from university pages on Twitter, some participants followed the pages but were not students; thus, the sample consists of students, working professionals, and unemployed individuals. Next, interviews were arranged with participants and took place in person. In this article, all respondents' Twitter handles have been changed in order to protect their identities. The new handles bear no identifiable markers of participants.

Respondents self-identified as Black or African American (17), White (15), Asian (3), and Latino or Hispanic (5). Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 32, with a median age of 22.30. The age range was partially influenced by the Pew Research Internet Project's (2013) findings on social media users in 2012, which stated that Internet users between the ages of 18 and 29 are the most likely to use social media. With even greater specificity, the Pew Research Internet Project (2013) found that those living in urban settings are significantly more likely than rural Internet users to engage with social media. Considering the knowledge from the study, most of the participants were sourced from urban university pages, although we did include participants living in rural areas as well. Interviews lasted between 15 and 45 minutes.

Participants were asked questions from a set list and were also encouraged to speak freely about their experiences. In the initial study, everyone who was interviewed was asked about their age, race, and class, although some participants declined to respond to the question about class or were unable to determine their class positions.

Next, we asked questions including, "Why do you take selfies?", "When do you take selfies?", and "How do you feel when people 'like' or 'favorite' your selfies?" Eight participants were also asked, "What do you think when women/men post selfies?" Often, participants dictated the scope of the interviews, which were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. After transcribing, we used a grounded theory approach to code and interpret the data. Early on, we noticed patterns regarding posting behavior, attitude, and audience engagement that allowed us to theorize that our subjects were engaged in the act of conspicuous prosumption on and through social media. To analyze how individuals of varied gender and racial backgrounds spoke about the conspicuous prosumption of selfies, we employed contemporary sociological theory. This allowed us to make some preliminary observations about the ways in which gender and race might intersect and integrate with conspicuous prosumption among millennials who produce and consume selfies.

Results and Discussion

In Williams' (2014) initial study, responses to the questions "Why do you take selfies?", "When do you take selfies?", and "How do you feel when people 'like' or 'favorite' your selfies?" crossed multiple platforms. Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter were the main focus of many of the discussions; however, participants also referenced Reddit, Tumblr, Foursquare, SnapChat, LinkedIn, Vine, and Pinterest. Our

respondents' platforms preferences varied. Their responses regarding the number of selfies they had posted online likewise varied.

Importantly, however, these variations lessened considerably once we accounted for racial identification. Among Black and Latino respondents, 11 out of 20 said that they had posted more than 800 selfies. Out of the remaining Black and Latino respondents, 2 reported posting between 51 and 200 selfies, and the remaining 6 indicated that they had posted very few selfies, between 1 and 4. Only 1 Latino said that he had never posted any selfies, and no Black respondents had never posted a selfie (Williams, 2014). Conversely, none of the White participants had posted more than 800 selfies, although 7 out of 10 White respondents said that they had posted between 1 and 50 selfies. The 3 remaining White respondents claimed that they had never posted a selfie.

The initial contrast in numbers prompted us to do a closer analysis of the interviews. We again found that responses were comparable among participants from the same race. When we added gender to the analysis, we discovered that Black and Latino men expressed similar views about selfie taking, while White men expressed divergent opinions. Although we found that males in our study performed gender-role regulation in vastly different ways than our female participants (discussed later), we noted that regardless of gender, the same racial cleavages existed.

Theorizing the Conspicuous Prosumption of Masculinity in White Men

One of the first things we noticed in conversations with men was that they used humor and sarcasm in their responses when explaining that selfie taking is "OK for girls." This is consistent with the argument of Burns (2014) and others that society is more comfortable with the idea of women being objects of consumption than the idea of men being objects of consumption.

> Question: About how many selfies do you currently have posted on all of your social media platforms?
> @cafeWM: Oh gosh. I'll like . . . sometimes take it if . . . I like, get a haircut or something or, like, do something funny with my hair. So like, I don't know a number but like, not a lot. . . . About 10 to 20.
> Question: So how do you feel when people like or favorite your selfies?
> @cafeWM: It's a positive thing. It's not like—I don't feel like, negative about it. It's not gonna weird me out because someone liked my picture.

Though @cafeWM's justification for taking selfies involves mundane activities, he still engages in the conspicuous prosumption of masculinity. He internalizes others' messages about White masculinity and also reproduces those ideas in the way he talks about selfies. A new haircut or hairstyle becomes proper justification for posting the selfie because the focus is not on his actual face. Shifting the focus away from facial features is a practice that is distinct to White males in this study. As we will discuss later in this article, Black and Latino/a men and women admittedly position their faces as the focus of their selfies.

User @NG_sq22, a 20-year-old male student, had strong opinions about men who take numerous selfies. Although he tried not to express negativity about the subject, his answers and facial expressions contradicted his message.

> Question: How do you feel when individuals like or favorite your selfies?
> @NG_sq22: It makes you feel like people care about you.
> Question: How often do you remove content because it didn't get enough response as you thought it should?
> @NG_sq22: I thought about it but . . . thought about takin' it down 'cause it's like if I only get two likes on this picture, then it's gonna be embarrassing, but then it would probably be more embarrassing because then it's like, "Oh you took that picture down because you only got two likes."
> Question: How do you feel about men who take a lot of selfies?
> @NG_sq22: Depends on . . . like a ton? That's kinda weird. I mean, it's not—you can do whatever you want. I might unfollow you, but I don't really care.
> Question: Why would you unfollow someone who took a lot of selfies?
> @NG_sq22: Because I want to look at cool things [on Instagram], not necessarily your new facial hair. Unless it's like my buddy, then I'd probably write down there, "You're retarded."

Unfollowing those that take "a lot" of selfies is a tactic of stigmatization. While an unfollow is a relatively inconspicuous tactic, comments are an explicit form of gender policing. In the above excerpt, @NG_sq22 spoke about posting comments on selfies that he deemed uninteresting—selfies featuring "your new facial hair." He posts comments like "you're retarded" to discourage other men from violating selfie "rules" and gender code (Anderson, 1999; Kimmel, 2009). He also conveyed some unease about taking selfies, "[I] thought about takin' it down" but enjoyed receiving positive feedback, or likes, on his selfies because "It makes you feel like people care about you." Affirmations demonstrate to the actor that his gender performance is acceptable for the moment, even if he claims to dislike selfies.

When men do not receive as many likes on a picture as expected, some may become insecure in their gender presentation. Respondents said that they felt that their selfies were undervalued.

> Question: How do you feel when individuals like or favorite your selfies?
> @follow_me: It makes you feel good. Like people tryin' to say I look good or somethin'.
> I try to put pictures up that get a lot of likes 'cause it's like, I see some people that put pictures up that are so stupid, of like a shoe, and they'll get like 75 likes or something. And I'll put pictures of me or my friends and it will get like 15. But like, usually if I get like 30 or something, I'm pretty stoked about that.

Ultimately, positive feedback in the form of likes or favorites only temporarily affirms the acceptance of their performance as White men. The affirmation received from selfies that generate likes demonstrates that they have appropriately adapted to the expectations of White heterosexual manhood.

White men projected the idea that selfie taking is somewhat stigmatized, but Black and Latino men expressed dissimilar opinions.

#Imaman: Selfie Taking as Self-empowerment for Black and Latino Men

Black and Latino men operationalize their gender performance in a slightly different manner than their White counterparts. The image of the macho man and the hypermasculine persona are highly recognized in those communities (Gutmann, 2007). In both groups, machismo dictates that men become the dominant actors of their households. These two cultures have a conservative perspective about family dynamics, gender performance, and sexual identity. A macho man exhibits confidence about his sexuality, is aggressive, refrains from showing weakness through emotions, and is actively dominant (Gutmann, 2007). Users @mediaSE and @orangeH, two Black men, discuss how they feel about macho men who take selfies:

> Question: About how many selfies do you currently have posted on all of your social media platforms?
> @mediaSE: I say like 9, and that's a high number.
> @orangeH: Selfies—approximately 10. That might be high. I'm not a big selfie person. I know some dudes who are major selfie kings.
> @mediaSE I used to hashtag "selfie king" all the time.
> Question: OK, how do you feel about that?
> @orangeH: Selfie kings—for girls to take selfies, I understand it. For guys to take selfies all the time . . . I just think it's kind of shallow. Like, why do you need so many pictures of yourself?
> @mediaSE: I got a homeboy, his pictures are all selfies. Actually, I got one other one like that too. His pictures are all selfies. I can't get with that.

Although these respondents felt that taking an abundance of selfies was more acceptable for women than for men, relative to White men in the study, they are more accepting of selfies in general. These two respondents take issue with men whom they believe to be shallow, as evidenced by too many selfies. But their responses reflect a noteworthy absence of gender policing through comments and unfollows. Even when @mediaSE says he "can't get with that," he still follows several friends that post numerous selfies.

The contested acceptance of selfies among Black and Latino men demonstrates that these images play an important role in the representation of masculinity. The notion of the selfie king coincides with regulations of masculinity and gender presentation that are often crucial in Black and Latino social structures. Macho men are required to be confident and selfie taking allows them to blatantly construct that confidence. When users like posted selfies, they reaffirm and reprosume ideas about masculinity.

The selfie can also be used to demonstrate alternative styles of masculinity adopted by both Black and Latino men. "Black Male Masculinity and Same Sex Friendships" (Harris, 1992) argues that Black males adopt alternative styles of masculinity to cope with interpersonal pressures. Selfies may also

allow Black and Latino men to freely express their style of masculinity as a positive sense of self-importance, which acts as a barrier to ongoing racism and discrimination (Williams, 2014). In two separate conversations, @nocfish and @dizzyG, who self-identified as Black and Hispanic (respectively), explained how taking selfies made them feel empowered and attractive.

> Question: How do you feel when you post selfies?
> @nocfish: I just feel like, "Man, nobody can't tell me nothin'." Man, nah, honestly, that I just feel that I could make it. Why I really like taking pictures of myself is, like, to show, like, I'm strong, like I don't need other people to have a good time, like I could be there by myself. All my pictures are selfies—that's all I take.

> Question: About how many selfies do you currently have posted on all of your social media platforms?
> @dizzyG: Like a percentage-wise would be like 80%. I'm a big selfie person.
> Question: How do you feel when individuals like or favorite these images?
> @dizzyG: I feel like, um, like I'm cute.

The observable confidence exhibited in the actual selfie or in the caption of the image becomes either a positive affirmation through a like or stigmatized through an unfollow or a negative comment. Black and Latino men may prosume performances of masculinity that allow them to adhere to the expectations of their culture.

Men and Selfies? Black and Latina Women Talk About Selfies

Men may underestimate the legitimacy of a woman's opinion regarding masculinity, but women also operate as agents who reinstate and maintain the existing social order. Although women do not control the codes by which they operate, they wield power to regulate the behavior of others (Kimmel, 2009). Again, social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram intensify the regulation of gender performance. In Black and Latino cultures, the hypermasculine gender constructs further mask the power of women's opinions. Black and Latino men contradictorily indicate that selfies are more acceptable for women while they enjoy receiving positive feedback from posted selfies.

Both Black and Latino women and men agree that it is acceptable for women to take selfies. Given the trends of the initial study (2014), we expected to find that Black and Latina women approved of men who take selfies. We were somewhat surprised to find *indifference* toward the idea of men posting selfies. The following conversation is largely representative of opinions held by many Black and Latina women in the study.

> Question: How do you feel about men who post selfies?
> @Z_sparkles: It's fine as long as they're not makin' the duck face.
> Question: What is it about the duck face that you don't like?
> @Z_sparkles: It's not attractive for anyone to do.
> Question: Is there ever a time that you like it when men post selfies?

@Z_sparkles: I'm indifferent about it . . . I don't like or dislike it.

These results are markedly different from the responses of White women in the study, which we will cover in detail in the next section. Still, we wondered why Black and Latino men indicate gaining personal strength from posting selfies if Black and Latina women genuinely feel indifferent about men and selfies and thus give no feedback, positive or negative. Who are the selfies really for?

It is possible that for Black and Latino men, posting selfies is more centered on projecting oppositional identities (Florini, 2013) to individuals outside of Black and Latino communities than on attracting the opposite sex. Feedback from other members within their culture groups may not be as weighty. Often, they already find security in a sense of community with other members of the same race or ethnic identity (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999). Thus, the need to convince women in that ethnic group of their validity is not as important as a defense against racial prejudices from non-minority-group members (Keyes, 2009).

We also know that a comparison between interview responses and actual posting activity would be helpful in better understanding the complex interaction between Black and Latino men and women. Due to the nature of this article, there is simply no room for that type of analysis, but we will discuss additional possibilities in the conclusion. These results ultimately demonstrate how inconsistent the expectations of gender presentation can be for both women and men regardless of race in our society.

"Please No. Next. Stop.": White Women's Perspective on the Man Selfie

For White women, the man selfie must adhere to very strict expectations. According to White women in the study, only group selfies are moderately appropriate for men. Both women in the following conversation said that they would judge a man's personality based on the number and type of selfies he had posted.

Question: How do you feel when men take selfies?
@JSmrs: Complete turn off.
@amsam: It depends on what they're wearing. If they are shirtless, I'm like, no sir! Let's not. I don't need to see that, and if I did, that's not how I would want to see that—where everyone else is seeing that. [Laughter.]
Question: Is there anything else, other than that you don't like them?
@amsam: If there is a guy taking a selfie in the bathroom, I can't handle that.
Question: Why can't you handle that?
@amsam: I don't know. Like if I'm on eHarmony and they are in the bathroom like tryin' to take a selfie—I'm like no. I can't handle that. No. Next! Please, no. Next. Stop. You better make it look like it's not a bathroom if it's a bathroom because now you're just in there looking at yourself in the mirror and now you're taking a picture and it's just like—stop. [Laughter from @amsam and @JSmrs.]
Question: To clarify, what you don't like about bathroom selfies is that they're in the mirror taking a picture?

@amsam: They are like admiring themselves taking a picture.

@JSmrs: Plus all the work that it takes to actually take the picture. You don't ever just do one.

@amsam: First of all, if I've ever taken a selfie in the mirror—that is hard. It takes a lot of time to actually get one that looks anywhere near OK!

@JSmrs: Right, exactly.

@amsam: To be in the bathroom and think like, "I'm gonna—look at me! Look at me. I'm hot and I'm in the bathroom." You're not hot in the bathroom, OK?

Question: So when men take pictures outside of the bathroom, is that OK?

@amsam: If they are flexing or trying to look a certain way, like strong or whatever, I hate it. I think it's stupid. Like stop it.

@JSmrs: I don't like it 'cause I think it's drawing attention to yourself and I don't like that. If you want to take a group picture, that's fine.

Question: OK, what if they were *all* in the mirror taking a group picture?

@amsam: [Laughter.] I think that's dumb. I've definitely taken a picture with other people before. Just with guys, it's just dumb.

@JSmrs: It's a little silly.

Selfies that were taken in the bathroom were the greatest violation of masculinity for @amsam and @JSmrs. An interview with @gym_girl offers a slightly different view of men who take selfies.

Question: How do you feel about men who take selfies?

@gym_girl: [Long pause.] I don't know. Very interesting.

Question: What do you mean by interesting?

@gym_girl: I mean—so I follow a lot of, like, fitness pages, so there are a lot of guys, like, taking photos of their bodies. I guess you can look at it both ways, like, "Wow, he like trains pretty hard" or like, "Wow, he's pretty arrogant."

The interviews above reveal that certain selfies can make men seem more self-absorbed than others. *Effortful* projections of masculinity can be abrasive to White women and incite strong opinions. Masculinity tends to be perceived as an *effortless* performance that is simple to read. The idea that some selfies take more energy to create than others is essential to understanding the policing and prosumption of gender through selfie taking and social media. White women unknowingly police gender as they take notice of and comment on men's selfies with negative feedback. Through negative feedback or the absence of feedback altogether (by withholding likes), they may stigmatize the actor for violating gender code (Anderson, 1999) while hoping that men will refrain from taking certain selfies.

Conclusions

In summary, women and men engage in the conspicuous prosumption of experiences differently. Moreover, both White women and men have a noteworthy aversion to selfies, whereas Black and Latino women and men generally approve of selfies. And, as Williams (2014) originally found, Black and Latino respondents produce selfies in much higher quantities than White selfie takers. But with the added gender

analysis, we now understand that Black and Latino women and men may have divergent motivations in their prosumption of selfies and in their acceptance of selfie taking.

Concerning race, the initial study contained a more detailed discussion about selfie prosumption as an act of self-defense, but it also lacks a comparison of respondents' answers and their actual posting behaviors. Additionally, we cannot assume that Black and Latina women are *only* talking about selfies posted by Black and Latino men and women. Likewise, we cannot assume that White men and women are *only* talking about selfies posted by White men and women. A future study should analyze attitudes about selfies posted specifically by men and women of the same race so that we can better grasp these groups' motivations for posting selfies. In order to more fully understand the conspicuous prosumption of all experiences and identities—gender, race, sexuality, and others—future research should compare comments and likes on posted selfies with the ideas that people say they have about selfies and selfie taking.

This short analysis is only the beginning of work to be done on selfies and gender. We were unable to discuss the heteronormative policing of gender on and through social media. It is unclear whether men and women expressed varying opinions about different sexualities. Expressing sexuality and gender can be two disjointed aspects of the conspicuous prosumption of gender through selfie taking. It is also important to note that only a few respondents self-identified as gay. Since the social structure is overwhelmingly heteronormative, stigmatized sexuality expression was not discussed in the study. In order to gain a better understanding of how stigmatized sexuality is prosumed on social media, further research must be conducted on the relationship between sexuality regulation and the performance of gender. Identifying key words that are used to police gender and sexuality can also highlight the role that comments play in the stigmatization of others and the regulation of gender performance. Studying how homophobia emerges on social media can help researchers understand how heteronormative structures powerfully affect the LGBTQ community.

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