‘Selfie Freedom’

Towards a Sociology of Everyday Selfie Practices.

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Masters by Research.

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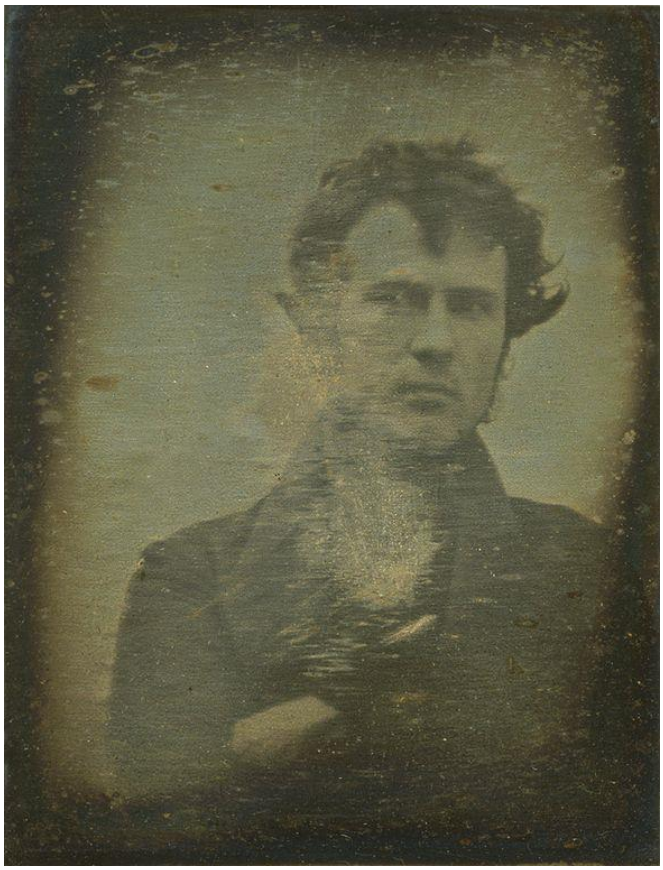

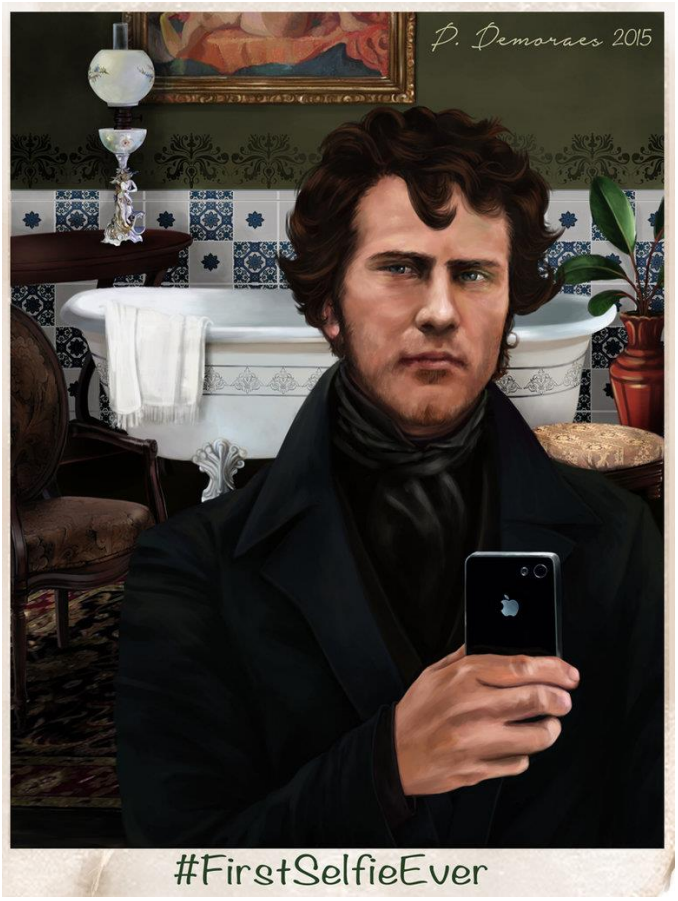

1. Demoraes, P. (2015) ‘Robert Cornelius‘ https://perselus.deviantart.com/art/Robert-Cornelius-534039912
2. The Public Domain Review (2017). ‘Robert Cornelius’ Self Portrait: The First Ever “Selfie” (1839)’ https://publicdomainreview.org/collections/robert-cornelius-self-portrait-the-first-ever-selfie-1839/

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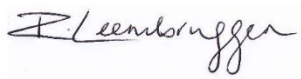
Declaration

I certify that this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution. I certify that any sources of information used and any assistance in the preparation of this thesis has be acknowledged. Ethics Committee Approval has been obtained from the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). My application approval is Reference No. 5201700383, dated 29 May 2017.[1]



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[1] See Appendix Item 8 for complete approval documents.

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To my supervisor, Alison Leitch.

Your intellect and insight inspires me to be innovative. Your patience has motivated my determination. Your encouragement has sustained me throughout this process. Thank you, Alison—I am forever grateful!

Abstract

This Master of Research thesis is an exploration of the everyday cultural practices of selfie-taking and selfie-viewing. It examines the social drivers behind the production, circulation and consumption of selfies, and looks at the emergence of selfies and selfie-taking as a cultural object and vernacular social practice. Based on a comprehensive review of the literature about selfies, social media, photography, and human interaction, as well as eight in-depth interviews with whom I call "selfie-enthusiasts' and 'anti-selfieists', I attempt to situate the selfie as an emergent cultural form in contemporary society. I approach my investigation of selfies by opposing the popular assumption that it is simply a frivolous enterprise, or a practice taken up solely by self-involved individuals. Through my empirical research, I create eight textural 'snapshots' of participants, giving the reader an insight into their opinions and experiences. I explain that both groups of selfie-informants take a reflexive stance, demonstrating thoughtful personal analysis of this seemingly thoughtless activity. Although I look at the selfie using an interdisciplinary approach, I suggest that studying the selfie through a sociological lens is a fruitful exercise: there is a sociology of the selfie.

Introduction

The sociology of everyday life has always piqued my interest. Although the rituals and routines of daily existence have been around for as long as human history, the concept of the 'everyday' is arguably a relatively recent invention (Bennett and Watson, 2002:x). As cultural theorists Tony Bennett and Diane Watson suggest, a key point in understanding the emergence of everyday life as a social category worthy of thinking about sociologically, is its increasing visibility in modern society. Among the many other social transformations that produced new understandings of everyday life, Bennett and Watson highlight the cultural forces and technologies that fostered the gradual and progressive expansion of changing ideas of the 'public' (Habermas, 1989). Additionally, they explore what was thought to be worthy of public representation in the social life of modern Western European societies. So, for example, the emergence of cultural forms such as still life paintings focusing on everyday domestic scenes in the 17th and 18th centuries, the extension of portraiture to the middle classes, and the rise of popular media and technologies such as photography, newspapers, documentary journalism, cinema, and television, all led to an expansion of the conceptualisation of the public as a more democratic phenomenon (Bennett and Watson, 2002:xi). In addition, Bennett and Watson note how the widespread adoption of these new cultural forms and technologies facilitated the increasing visibility of everyday routines, rituals and social interactions that were once largely relegated to the realm of the intimate private sphere. Perhaps then, it might be argued that many of these older technologies had already prepared the ground for our contemporary fascination with presenting and circulating representations of everyday life, now associated with a "24 hour webcam transmission of people eating, sleeping, watching television, washing, dressing, and working" (Bennett and Watson, 2002:xi).

In this thesis, I examine the 'selfie' and the current literature on 'selfie-taking' as an everyday emergent cultural practice. Changes in technology, specifically the internet and digital photography, as well as new social media platforms, all facilitate the practice of selfie-taking. This contemporary cultural phenomenon can, I suggest, be located within these broad social processes that have led to the increased visibility of everyday social interaction in public life. But to what extent is the selfie simply an extension of older everyday forms of vernacular photography? Or self-portraiture? Does the selfie represent an entirely new cultural form? How does the selfie extend our notion of the 'public' or illuminate new ideas of a new digital 'superpublic' (Senft and Baym, 2015:1589; boyd, 2006)? These are some of the questions I will be grappling with throughout the following chapters.

In 2013, Oxford Dictionaries dubbed 'selfie' the word of the year; a unanimous decision with "little if any argument" (Oxford Dictionary, 2013). And over the last few years, there has been a burgeoning of academic interest in the topic of the selfie, with at least two online projects devoted solely to selfie research.[2] Apart from this scholarly interest, selfies have also garnered significant popular appeal and discussion. For example, from March to May 2017, the London based Saatchi Gallery devoted an exhibition to selfies, using images from Rembrandt to the present day. Primarily using selfies submitted by the public, as well as historic 'selfies', Saatchi was transformed into an exhibition called *From Selfie to Self-Expression* (http://www.saatchigallery.com/selfie/).

Given this level of popular and scholarly interest in the selfie, it might be assumed that a definition of a 'selfie' is self-evident. But what exactly is a selfie? Although a consensually agreed upon definition is hard to pinpoint, a technical definition can be attempted. Generally speaking, the selfie is a portrait of the human face taken with a digital device—most commonly a smartphone—often for the purpose of sharing with another (Walsh and Baker,

[2] See for example the Selfie Network Research site (www.selfieresearchers.com) and Selfie City (selfiecity.net).

2016:2). Yet despite this relatively simple technical definition, in reality there are a plethora of selfie 'types' documented in the literature (see for example Table 1[3] and Table 2[4] for an indication of this variation). Thus, if we think of the selfie as a new kind of 'cultural form', a more nuanced definition is required.

In 2015, *The International Journal of Communication* (IJOC) presented a special volume dedicated to selfies. In the introduction, Theresa Senft and Nancy Baym give an astute definition of 'selfie' (Senft and Baym, 2015:1589). They assert that the selfie is first a photographic object that establishes the 'transmission' of human feeling in the form of a relationship. This relationship can be between the photographed and the photographer, the device and the user, or connected users through social network architectures and so on (Senft and Baym, 2015:1589). The selfie also takes the form of a practice or, in other words, a 'gesture'. This gesture is often intended to send messages to different individuals and audiences. The gesture can then be modified depending on the receiver, social media censorship, miscommunication and misinterpretation. Finally, according to Senft and Baym, the selfie can be considered an 'assemblage' of human and non-human agents: "…selfies are created, displayed, distributed, tracked and monetized" through these non-human agents (Senft and Baym, 2015:1589).

With this conceptualisation in mind, it is crucial to also remember that once selfies are uploaded and shared, they become part of the digital 'superpublic'. This term refers to an infrastructure that outlives the time and place of the production and distribution of the selfie itself (Senft and Baym, 2015:1589). The infrastructure can be understood as a virtual warehouse where all selfies and images are stored online. Thus, a selfie can be understood as a reflection of the everyday practices of individuals as well as an object of discourse about

[3] See Appendix item 1.
[4] See Appendix Item 2.

how people present, document and share their lives with others. Thus, it is worthwhile noting that the selfie also reminds us of a tension between ephemerality and permanency in networked spaces. The seemingly fleeting action is actually embedded with elements of durability and longevity thanks to this digital superpublic.

Often understood as a frivolous or unimportant activity, the 'selfie' is commonly associated with young self-involved men and women who are preoccupied with virtual 'likes' and therefore post selfies to feed their egos (Mascheroni, *et al*, 2015:5). This popular explanation I suggest, limits the potential understanding of selfies. As Hess argues, a deeper reading of the selfie provides insight into the dynamics of new modalities of human connection in a complexly networked society (Hess, 2015:1630). As an emergent cultural form, the selfie generates a relationship between portable devices (smartphones), networks of connectivity, the material spaces documented with the portable devices, and the user's or agent's affiliation with each (Hess, 2015:1631). These cultural and technological forms come together to create what we call a 'selfie'.

Chapter one begins with a brief reconnaissance into the background and development of photography and how the selfie might be situated within a discussion of vernacular photographic practices: I do not aim, nor claim to provide, a comprehensive history of the photograph or photography here. Instead, I highlight some crucial technological and socio-cultural moments in the history of the camera and photography in order to think about contemporary selfie practices. I also explore questions of memory and desire, fine art compared to everyday photographs, and the digital revolution. This includes the important yet often dismissed question of how and in what ways the selfie relates to the genre of self-portraiture. Are selfies a descendent of the self-portrait, or are they a completely different entity? (Walker Rettberg, 2014:34). Another pertinent question addresses the genre of

vernacular photography (Batchen, 1996). Where is the selfie positioned in relation to earlier everyday forms of photography, including for example, the snapshot?

In chapter two, I identify and review four key currents in the scholarly literature on selfies and their relationship to social media. These include the psychoanalytic perspective, debates on consumer culture, gender research and, lastly, studies that have considered the selfie as a new form of political activism. In chapter three, I draw upon Erving Goffman's classical wit in his seminal texts that deal with human interaction, etiquette and social codes of conduct: *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956), *Interaction Ritual* (1972), and *Gender Advertisements* (1979). These texts were obviously written before the emergence of social media platforms and the subject matter is focused on face-to-face social interactions. However, many scholars have amply demonstrated that Goffman's dramaturgical framework can also be productively applied to differently mediated situations in order to examine social encounters and human interaction in contemporary social life (see for example: Mendelson and Papacharissi, 2010; Pinch, 2010; Menchik and Tian, 2008; van Dijck, 2013).

In addition to Goffman's core sociological perspective, I also draw upon other sociological discussions about online interactions and behaviours, in particular, a common demarcation between interactions that occur in 'online' versus 'offline' settings. Firstly, I consider Trevor Pinch's (2010) argument centring on what he calls everyday 'mundane technologies'. Secondly, I employ Bernie Hogan's (2010) valuable distinction between 'exhibitions' and 'performances' and how these concepts operate in online settings such as social media sites. Finally, I look at the characteristics of social media sites and the difference in selfie-uploading practices according to which site is being used.

In chapter four, I employ data extrapolated from eight interviews conducted throughout July and August 2017. These interviews are semi-structured, in-depth conversations with what I

call ‘selfie-enthusiasts’ and ‘anti-selfieists’ and are focused on each participant’s experiences of selfie practices.[5] The selfie-enthusiasts bring first-hand experience of selfie-taking to the dialogue, elaborating on why they enjoy producing and consuming selfies. In contrast, the anti-selfieists articulate a more critical view of selfies and selfie-taking, thus broadening the discussion. For further details on methodological rationale, please see Appendix Item 7.

The writing in this chapter is inspired by Daniels Miller’s (2008) ethnographic investigation of people and their relationship to domestic objects in *The Comfort of Things*. In this book, Miller uses the interview to create a series of textual portraits of his interview subjects, where he describes both the person and the objects that surround them in their domestic spaces. Following Miller’s style, I create eight textual ‘snapshots’ of the participants. These snapshots are akin to mini-portraits, deliberately fashioned to give the reader a sense of who the participants in the study are and where their opinions and interpretations might come from. A key point that emerges through these portraits is the informants’ reflexive stance; each participant possesses a thoughtful personal analysis of this seemingly thoughtless activity.

My qualitative empirical study engages these selfie-enthusiasts and anti-selfieists on the ground—in a metaphorical street in selfie city—to tease out my overarching research question: What are the common ways of operating when engaging in selfie-taking or selfie-viewing practices? I suggest there are certain social agreements that each selfie-snapper enters into when taking, editing, and uploading a selfie to social media sites. Thus, although it is commonplace to conceptualise the selfie as a form of narcissistic-voyeurism, the selfie is surely more complexly situated and understood as a sociological artefact. In this sense, it is a reflexive artefact: a self-referential image that makes visible its own construction as an act as well as a product of mediation (Frosh, 2015:1621). As political economist Paul Frosh

[5] See Appendix Item 7 for more information on method.

suggests, the selfie forms a ‘self’ that fluctuates between an image and body; a self that is an object or agent of representation (Frosh, 2015:1621). Thus the core argument of this thesis is, contrary to popular opinion, that the selfie is not simply a manifestation of passive viewing, or the mindless consumption of images or even flippant selfie-snapping. Rather, I suggest that the selfie more often engages with notions of agency, self-expression, performance and even empowerment.

I commence my enquiry with a series of questions relating to the origins of photography as a technical invention and cultural practice. When did photography as a visual practice first emerge? Who were its inventors? Why did photography capture such immediate popular appeal? How, in other words, is the selfie situated historically as a cultural form in contemporary society: a society that continues to yearn for the visual.

Chapter one:

Yearning for the Visual: Photography, Self-Portraiture and the Snapshot

Histories of Photography

The history of photography is a complicated tale, involving "partial successes, missed opportunities, good fortune and false starts" (Marien, 2010:3). Perhaps it would be best to say that what is concerned here are 'histories' of photography, not one all-encompassing 'history' (Price and Wells, 2004:3), as many have noted the so-called 'origins' and 'causes' of the invention (Batchen, 1999:18). It is not my task, however, to give a definitive answer to the question: 'who invented photography?' Rather, I would like to give a brief summary of the technical advancements and inventors surrounding the camera's creation in order to set the scene, if you will, and examine the selfie's predecessors.

It is difficult to pinpoint when or what exactly was photography's moment of origin. In his book *The Origins of Photography*, historian of photography Helmut Gernsheim regards the beginnings of photography as the greatest mystery in history. He suggests the knowledge of chemical reactions, as well as optical principles of photography, were known for over a hundred years prior to photography's 'actual' invention. Thus, the mystery lies in the fact that those with the ability to operate the camera obscura did not try to fix the image permanently (Gernsheim, 1982:6).

Cultural historian of photography Geoffrey Batchen notes that one of the earliest attempts at producing photographic images came from Thomas Wedgwood (1771-1805) and Humphry Davy (1778-1829). Wedgwood was one of the first to attempt to devise a method to automatically fix an image created by light, while Davy was a chemist who assisted Wedgwood in writing up his findings (Batchen, 1993:172). With an enthusiasm for science, Wedgwood and Davy experimented with light-sensitive materials using the camera obscura.

Their work plateaued in 1802, with Davy writing a report on the process, stating it was elegant, but not exactly useful, for stabilising an image through photo-chemical reactions (Batchen, 1993:172).

Approximately three decades later, in 1830, French artist and cartographer Antoine Hercules Romuald Florence (1804-1879), having travelled around Brazil recording the area's peoples and natural settings, became inspired to invent his own printing technique called the 'poligraphie' meaning 'multiple writing' (Newhall, 1982:25). In 1832, Florence changed the term to 'photographie' (derived from the Greek words for light and writing) and produced diplomas, tags, and labels, but failed in reproducing camera images (Newhall, 1982:142). Another precursor of photography was 'heliography' or 'sun-writing' developed in France by inventor Joseph Nicéphore Niépce (1765-1833). Again, working with light-sensitive materials and the camera obscura, allegedly without using the prior knowledge disseminated by Wedgwood and Davy or other European scientists and chemists of his time, Niépce created what was later known as a 'negative'. However, the ardent inventor failed to generate broad interest in the process, perhaps due to his concealment of the details of the technique he created (Marien, 2010:12).

Debates regarding who was the first to create a photograph have been closely followed by a discussion of who was the first thinker of photography. French photographer Marcel Bovis contends that without question, the initial idea of photography should go to Niépce (Bovis, 1986:269). According to Austrian historian Josef Maria Eder, the individual to be credited as the first "discoverer" of photography should be German Professor Johann Heinrich Schulze (1687-1744). Experimenting much earlier than the aforementioned inventors, Schulze's work with silver nitrate set a solid foundation for later inventors (Eder, 1945:60-62).

However, as Batchen highlights, the process of discovery should not be confused with that of invention (Batchen, 1999:26). Yes, it may be true that Schulze was the first photo-thinker but when it comes to determining who first brought the photograph into fruition, the two terms must not be equated. As Lynn White Jr. states: "Apples had been dropping from trees for a considerable period before Newton discovered gravity" (White Jr., 1968:111-112). This analogy illuminates the important distinction between cause and occasion in the 'discovery' of photography.

According to American curator and art historian Beaumont Newhall, a crucial phase in the history of photography and perhaps the most cited historical moment of photography, was the collaboration of the Niépce family and Louis Jacques-Mandé Daguerre (1787-1851) in France. In deciding to work with each other to improve the photographic process, each had a reason for entering into such a working agreement. In 1829, Daguerre promised to give Niépce's son, Isidore, an improved camera obscura, while Niépce agreed to show Daguerre the means by which he and his father were able to capture images with the camera obscura (Newhall, 1982:18). Daguerre subsequently created the eponymous 'Daguerreotype' process. He is thus recognised as the inventor of the first practicable method of capturing permanent images with a camera. At least, Daguerre was the man who was able to enjoy the honour and pecuniary benefits of being the first to present his experiments to the public (Batchen, 1999:25). On the 7th of January 1839, he presented his creation to the French *Académie des Sciences;* a presentation that would forever change the nature of visual representation (Daniel, 2004). Initially the Daguerreotype seemed excessively complicated, bulky and expensive. The camera and processing equipment cost 400 francs. As the object gained popularity, technical improvements were made and the process of taking images, particularly portraits, was possible in less than a minute (Newhall, 1982:30).

There was an entire group, many of whom I have not mentioned, of what Geoffrey Batchen calls the 'proto-photographers': those who practiced, recorded or claimed for themselves a "precocious onset of the desire to photograph" (Batchen, 1999:50).[6] So many individuals and groups were attesting to the fact that they had contributed to the creation of photography that it remains problematic to try and name the practice's 'true' inventor. Following the work of Michel Foucault and his archaeological method, Batchen suggests focusing not on inventors or moments of technological creation, but rather the appearance of photography as the object of a regular discursive practice (Batchen, 1999:36). He argues that the desire to capture images has long been part of humanity's visual cultural history. As early as the 8th of June 1839, Batchen notes that English journal *The Athenaeum* was complaining of the barrage of letters being received that referred to a new discovery, or improvement, to the science of photogenic drawing (Batchen, 1999:38). The desire to photograph was felt by a wide range of individuals. And whether they photographed landscapes, nature or cultural objects there was a key theme that traversed the world of photography: to make the momentary static. British scientist Henry Fox Talbot, a man touted as being a pioneer in the field of photographic development, made a statement that encompasses these elements: "The most transitory of things…may be fettered…and may be fixed for ever in the position which it seemed only destined for a single instant to occupy" (Talbot, in Newhall, 1982:25).

This desire to photograph and not merely profit from the activity indicated, says Batchen, the "yearnings of an entire social body" (Batchen, 1999:53). Although the majority of authorised statistics are hard to come by, official statistics taken by the state of Massachusetts recorded 403,626 daguerreotypes had been taken by the 1st of June 1855 (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1856, in Newhall, 1982). It would seem that photography came at an appropriate moment in cultural history. As Batchen succinctly states: "…that the new

[6] For a full 'roll call' of these proto-photographers, see Batchen, 1999 p. 50.

invention was received with such rapture, rather than indifference and silence, suggests that photography was an invention whose time had well and truly come" (Batchen, 1999:38). Thus, there was a period often neglected by scholars of photographic history that marked the transition of photography from an occasional, perhaps individual conception to that of an entire social inevitability. Although photography, as discussed earlier, was created by a few or perhaps many individuals in various stages throughout history, the urge and the longing to capture moments, images, and landscapes actually preceded the photograph. What spurs on society's desire to capture images?

The Question of Memory

Memory is a significant function of the photograph. In his striking tome *Understanding a Photograph*, John Berger questions what existed in place of the photograph before the camera's invention. An obvious answer may be a drawing, painting, or an engraving, yet, as Berger suggests, a deeper answer might be: memory (Berger, 2013:46). Berger suggests that photographs work for and against memory. Photographs can move from positive to negative effects when operating along the spectrum of memory: by first nudging, then supplementing, through to augmenting or even fabricating or impairing one's memory (Henkel, 2014:398).

Earlier writers dealing with the advent of photography often spoke pejoratively of the inadequacy and effortlessness of photographs. Marcel Proust, according to Susan Sontag, was no exception. In a scene in his famous novel *In Search of Lost Time*, the reader ascertains Proust's standpoint on photography and his aversion to the photographic image. According to Sontag, when speaking of photographs, Proust, "does so disparagingly: as a synonym for a shallow, too exclusively visual, merely voluntary relation to the past" (Sontag, 1977:128). He sees this voluntary remembering as inferior to that response which arouses all the senses:

"involuntary memory" (4:210).[7] Sontag goes on to assert that Proust misinterprets what photographs are. Rather than using photographic images as an "instrument" of memory, he sees the photograph as an inadequate substitute (Sontag, 1977:128).

Roland Barthes speaks of memory in the same spirit as Proust, a writer whose work was a crucial point of reference in his work *Camera Lucida*. Barthes asserts that "Not only is the Photograph never in essence memory…but it actually blocks memory, quickly becom[ing] a counter-memory" (Barthes, 1981:91). Nevertheless, Barthes encounters a memory through the prompt of a photograph. In *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes,* the author speaks of an occurrence he calls 'anamnesis'. When contemplating a photograph of his late mother, Barthes recalls experiencing "a mixture of pleasure and effort" describing tactile sensations of remembrance similar to that of Proust's involuntary memory. "For once" he says, "photography gave me a sentiment as certain as remembrance" (Barthes, 1977:70).

The Art of the Visual: Where Does Photography Stand?

We live in a culture that is saturated and obsessed with the visual, and this visuality is dominated by speed, ubiquity and ease of access (Dikovitskaya, 2012:69). Was this always the case? I propose that the answer is yes…and no. 'Yes' because in Western society, no matter what time frame one is examining, images—painted, carved, or drawn—were significant to the culture at hand. I also say 'no' purely because previously, society did not have the resources and technology to drive this obsession to the point where it is at today. While the qualities of today's visual society were clearly present centuries ago, the difference lies in the tools that allow the preoccupation with the visual to manifest, that is, the camera. As we have seen, until the last two decades of the nineteenth century, photography had been a cumbersome and expensive activity (Gualtieri, 2010:5). The first few versions of the camera

[7] This reference refers to the version: Proust, M (2003), *In Search of Lost Time*, 6 vols., trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (Modern Library: New York).

were bulky and non-portable, meaning it was a costly and time-consuming enterprise. Therefore, its use was reserved for those with professional technical experience and knowledge.

The birth of the Kodak camera, first produced and distributed in the USA in 1888, was the creation of an American amateur photographer George Eastman. Eastman saw the business potential in simplifying the procedure and equipment associated with the camera (Jenkins, 1975:96). Eastman, in the truest sense of the word, capitalised on a gap in the market: a market opportunity born in a cultural moment with the ardent desire of a society and culture to capture and store images. The Kodak marks a significant change in quantitative and qualitative characteristics of photography. Quantitatively, Kodak turned photography and photographic images into an everyday practice. No longer was the process or practice exclusive as essentially anyone could access the camera and the numbers of photographic images being taken and developed climbed sharply. Qualitatively photography thus shifted from the domain of professional and serious amateurs to a mass audience at a time when the idea of 'leisure' was also increasingly democratised. (West, 2000:36). Mass-produced and industrialised, the camera and analogue photography became an integral part of everyday life. This change in the characteristics of the practice envisages photography as a vernacular activity, separate from other traditional artistic forms.

Although art history's focus on unique individuality and artistic composition is not necessarily a suitable framework for the photograph, art historians and critics alike write their histories of photography by consistently comparing the form to fine art. Even before the mass production and distribution of photography had taken place, debates on the artistic value or credibility of photography were in motion. As we have already noted, for example, in regard to Proust's assessment the medium was often regarded as falling outside the realm of art, as it "assumed the power of accurate, dispassionate recording" as opposed to art's

creative and subjective flair (Price and Wells, 2004:13). Writing at the end of the 1850s, Paris-based poet and critic Charles Baudelaire was also not convinced that photography was an art form. Rather, he believed it was to support intellectual enquiry, writing: "…let it be the secretary and record-keeper of whomsoever needs absolute material accuracy for professional reasons" (Baudelaire, 1992:297). In his famous *Mechanical Reproduction* essay, Walter Benjamin speaks of the kind of questions we should be asking of photography and indeed perhaps of digital photography, including selfies. Rather than asking whether photography is an art, Benjamin suggests we should look at the transformation of art and transformation of visual culture due to photography's influence (Benjamin, 1969:8). John Berger's argument is of a similar vein. He suggests that society should stop continually comparing the photograph with fine art (Berger, 2013:245). Society gains, he suggests, a considerable benefit when it ceases to try and fit photography into an artistic shaped hole.

The Age of the Snapshot and the Digital Revolution

A photographic practice that does not sit well with art history is vernacular photography, a practice that produces the 'snapshot'. The snapshot is most often identified as a boring, ubiquitous photograph, part of the most familiar of the photographic genres (Batchen, 2008:121). The problem art history has with vernacular photographs or snapshots is the lack of contestation when it comes to social mores or pictorial conventions. Batchen notes that the snapshot is, of course, meaningful to the original maker, owner and subjects. Yet the visual banality of the shot means there is not much to work with in terms of evaluation based on originality and rarity (Batchen, 1996).

The snapshot has also been regarded as a cultural cliché. In an insightful article, Lynn Berger compares the linguistic phenomena to the visual form (Berger, 2011:175). A cliché she contends, "is a product of a technological change, with middle-class connotations. The

amateur snapshot is the exact same thing. Both are associated with the common man, indeed, both are *commonplace*" (Berger, 2011:178 - emphasis in original). Berger's understanding demonstrates a crucial aspect of the phenomenon. That is, the snapshot in being formulaic and repetitive is consequently looked at in a disparaging way. Many writers have expressed the dissatisfaction or even disdain at the notion of the snapshot. For example, champion of artistic photography, Joseph Stiglitz, lamented the fact that placing cameras in the hands of the everyday man and woman meant that millions of photographs are taken, with little labour requiring less knowledge of the craft (Stiglitz, in Nickel, 1998:11). Despite this view of snapshots representing the lowest common denominator in art culture, the snapshot democratised photographic practice, bringing about a new and exciting age of the visual into the range of everyone. The form has further proliferated with the development of digital technology. While the ability to take an essentially unlimited number of photographs is considered by some as a disturbing challenge to traditional photo-taking, others find it liberating (Murphie and Potts, 2003:75-76).

The term 'snapshot' was borrowed from hunting, referring to a shot taken quickly without careful aim. As already suggested above, the category of snapshot shifts the focus from professional producers of photographs to the everyday producers and owners of the images (Rogoff, 1998:15). Initially, snapshots were most often taken of family and friends, to be displayed in a photo album, taken out at family or friendly gatherings. Indeed, looking at a friend's holiday snaps can be an arduous experience, with repetition seemingly "endemic to the genre" (Langford, 2008:5). Despite this somewhat boring practice that everyone has experienced, society continues to take snap after snap, preserving memories as souvenirs or keepsakes (West, 2000:9). There are inherent contradictions in the snapshot. A snapshot tends to be predictable and formulaic. The magic of the snapshot however, is the way that the same boring, generic photograph can elicit emotion, pain or happiness in someone depending

on their contextual relation to the photograph. The fact is snapshots are "dull pictures we can't live without" simultaneously representing a social function and a personal talisman (Batchen, 2008:133).

Photographs are ubiquitous cultural objects in Western European society. From the Kodak moment came digital camera technology. With digital photography, no longer did one have to wait for negatives or prints to be developed, relying on chemical processes or darkroom technology. Screen-based, digital camera technology has thus contributed to dramatic changes in popular photographic practices (Rubinstein and Sluis, 2008:11). Two significant innovations, the review screen on the back of the camera and a 'delete' function have also resulted in shifts in the way photographs are taken. What this change means is still being debated. Visual culture scholar Peter Buse suggests, however, that "the obsolescence of a technology does not necessarily mean the absolute passing of a cultural form but rather the modification of already existing practices" (Buse, 2010:216). With digital technology, it becomes possible to engage with photography in a different way. The ability to review all photographs, edit, and potentially delete an image as soon as it is taken changes the way society approaches photography. With digital technology, the photograph is no longer exclusively a memento or a keepsake. The photograph's 'life' is dependent on a whim or the opportunity to take a 'superior' photo.

Snapshot. Self-Portrait. Selfie.

When investigating selfies, the topic of self-portraits inevitably enters the discussion. What came before the selfie? Some scholars have suggested that the self-portrait is the selfie's predecessor (Saltz, 2014), while others vehemently oppose the connection arguing that, unlike selfies, real self-portraits are difficult to make, beautiful and revealing (McGrory, 2014). Art historian James Hall describes the self-portrait as the "defining visual genre of our

confessional age: the sheer volume of contemporary self-portrait defies enumeration" (Hall, 2015:7). Part of a long-standing tradition of artistic expression, the self-portrait—whether painted, carved or drawn—has been part of social and artistic cultural life for centuries. Throughout Western history, from the ancient Greeks through to the artistic Renaissance of the fifteenth-century, self-portraits commissioned or made by artists were collected and venerated and often utilised as a means for elite forms of social distinction and display. Self-portraits are historically associated with a class hierarchy. A self-portrait is a formal representation of a subject, a vision brought to life by a qualified artist; a third party. The purpose of a self-portrait was to record an individual's place in the world, including social role and status. The keen intellect of John Berger has recognised that: "We can no longer accept that the identity of a man can be adequately established by preserving and fixing what he looks like from a single viewpoint in one place…We may still rely on 'likeness' to identify a person, but no longer to explain or place him" (Berger, 2016:170).

According to Berger, a key difference between the self-portrait of today and the traditional painted self-portrait is a matter of purpose and function. Rather than underwriting and idealising the social role of the sitter, seen as a useful part of a society, self-portraits have become wholly about the individual. Instead of being confirmed in one's social position, the self-portrait today is concerned with "the modern lonely desire to be recognised as one truly is" (Berger, 2016:168). This "lonely desire" is prevalent in many critiques of modern day selfies, as individuality has superseded social status.

There are a number of differences between selfies and self-portraits. In contemporary society the selfie would not be drawn, sculpted or painted. A crucial aspect of the selfie is in its instantaneity and digital form, as the image is quick, easy and ephemeral. Thus, technology has facilitated the creation of the selfie, as well as its rise as a cultural form. The selfie-er takes numerous snaps before selecting the one to upload or display—a choice only available

due to the advent of the digital camera. Furthermore, the self-portrait was taken with the intention of longevity only to be usurped by a greater creation. This is not the case with selfies. They are made, succeeded and erased daily or even hourly by the selfie-er. However, to complicate matters further, one could argue that selfies too stand the test of time. The digital archive of social media sites such as Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Tumblr and so on mean that even when the selfie is 'erased' or 'deleted' it is still part of the Big Data/metadata network of the internet (Geismer, 2016:331). Another difference between a selfie and a self-portrait is the supposed candid nature of the selfie compared to the formal, deliberate self-portrait. However, this distinction I would argue is in some respects blurred. For example, in the self-portrait genre, the artist would be commissioned to depict an idealised version of the nobility. The same can also be said for selfies in that they can have elements of calculation and rehearsal in order to depict an idealised representation of the subject. This, of course, depends on the situation. If, for example, an individual wants to take a selfie with a celebrity, presumably there is not much time for organisation; the selfie must be quick and candid. If however, a selfie-er is snapping multiple images of their new hairstyle, there is indeed time for not-so-candid strategy.

What can we say about the selfie after this brief examination of its possible connections and disconnections to earlier visual cultural forms: photography and self-portraiture? Having considered the emergence of selfie in the context of debates over photography as a cultural form, it appears that the desire to photograph preceded camera technology. Photography's moment had certainly come with an ever-increasing yearning for a way to capture moments, people and images of nature in the nineteenth century. Photography was welcomed with open arms. Enamoured with the visual, society's obsession with photography increased exponentially when the camera became more financially and physically accessible. Yet, art history has difficulty in positioning vernacular photography. The snapshot is accessible to the

masses and has thereby democratised photographic practice. With the snapshot genre came the selfie, and with the selfie comes hotly debated discussions on whether the selfie is a self-portrait. Despite obvious 'differences' between the two, such as speed of creation and social function, I contend that the self-portrait can indeed be seen as a predecessor of the selfie. Both share the common and crucial desire to represent and display oneself to the world. And, one might add that this connection is currently increasingly recognised and celebrated in elite art circles, for example, in the 2017 Saatchi art gallery exhibition *From Selfie to Self-Expression*.

How do the meanings about selfies circulate in contemporary social life beyond these discussions of older visual forms? In chapter two, I situate the selfie within four current scholarly debates, exploring the selfie as a newly emergent cultural form. A key question in this chapter is: What is the potential agentic nature of selfie-taking?

Chapter two:

Situating the Selfie

This chapter will synthesise several key scholarly frameworks pertaining to the phenomenon of the selfie. I confine my discussion to four key analytical perspectives: the psychoanalytic, consumer-culture frameworks, gender theory and finally, recent research on 'selfie-citizenship' and the use of selfies in political life. My aim in this chapter is not to build an exhaustive library (Rudestam and Newton, 1992:41) but, rather, to create a relevant survey of current selfie literature in order to embed my own research questions and reflexive engagements with my interview subjects in the following chapter.

Psychoanalytic Selfies

As many researchers suggest, a widely circulated perspective on the selfie phenomenon derives from psychoanalytic literature that focuses on the individualistic traits of selfie-taking behaviour. Moreover, it seems that psychoanalytic language and jargon has trickled down into the everyday, particularly in popular media. For example, popular media outlets have no shortage of articles and opinion pieces touting the selfie as a display of narcissistic and self-absorbed behaviour (Williams, 2016; Fottrell, 2017; Davison, 2015; Souter, 2017).

One problem with these popular opinion pieces is the way they use the term 'narcissism'. Although narcissism is a genuine personality disorder (Corry *et al*, 2008:593), it appears that many newspaper columnists and online writers use the term rather flippantly. In describing, for example, the supposed quintessential high school girl selfie as being narcissistic, it somewhat diminishes a serious psychological condition (Ostrow, 2015). These articles often appear to confuse issues of self-esteem, vanity and narcissistic traits with the clinically diagnosed disorder of narcissism (Malcolm, 2014). Halpern *et al*, suggest that the potential source of this popular opinion are the prolific studies produced by researchers inspecting

correlations between self-indulgent psychological conditions, and selfie-taking behaviour (Halpern *et al*, 2016:98). Moreover, websites such as psychologytoday.com that mix academic findings with popular opinion pieces further blur the boundaries (Rutledge, 2013).

However, in more scholarly research, the condition is treated with seriousness. Narcissism is viewed as a prominent psychoanalytic perspective through which to examine the phenomenon of the selfie. According to this literature, narcissists use social networking sites (SNSs) and social media platforms to enhance their social status by projecting a positive self-image by posting photos of themselves, and acquiring a lot of 'friends'. These virtual 'friends' work for the narcissist, in that they can numerically monitor their popularity as well as compare their popularity with others (Buffardi and Campbell, 2008:1306). Indeed, some researchers go so far as to argue that social media platforms are the perfect facilitator for the narcissists' needs. The platform facilitates the narcissist's desire for weak-tie connections that do not involve emotional investment that also result in larger public viewership. As noted above, the numerical representations that SNSs include, such as the number of 'likes', 'friends', and 'followers' one has means that the individual's online position and status can be quantified and measured, further cementing the narcissist's feeling of importance and grandiosity (Sundar, 2008). Further, SNSs also provide the narcissistic user or presenter with control over what their audience sees so that their presentation of a positive self-image is also under their control (Barry *et al*, 2017:49).

The frequency of postings (Barry *et al*, 2015:2), and their 'revealing' nature (DeWall *et al*, 2011:58) has been used as data to confirm the hypothesis that narcissists use selfies in order to gain attention in online environments. According to these studies, a narcissist uses images in a way that draws attention to themselves, such as wearing 'sexier' clothing, or including provocative content within their selfies (Vazire *et al*, 2007:1440). If this does not gain

attention, the narcissist will revert to "profane and aggressive" language to get the attention to which they feel entitled (DeWall *et al*, 2011:61).

Another common conception of selfie-takers is that young people take more selfies than their older counterparts. Research does suggest that young people—Millennials[8]—do indeed take more selfies than older generations (Qiu *et al*, 2015:444), partly due to their ever-increasing use of social media (Bergman *et al*, 2011:707-8). Some recent research claims that the younger the individual, the more likely they are to be interacting with social media and posting selfies, with adolescents posting more frequently than young adults, and young adults posting more than adults (Dhir *et al*, 2016:551). According to some researchers, a potential reason for this behaviour is that many young people have the desire for reassurance particularly when it comes to appearance and social activities (Brown, 1999:301). Couple this need for affirmation with a generation that has lived in an internet-saturated world for their entire life (Twenge, 2007), it would be expected that younger people use the internet as a tool for socialisation and connection. Psychology researchers Jessica McCain and Keith Campbell, suggest that an individual's 'birth cohort'—the generation one is born into—also contributes to the self-enhancing behaviours that young people take part in on social media, including posting selfies (McCain and Campbell, 2016:4). Thus, rather than these self-enhancing behaviours being part of one's personality, it is more likely that it is part of a Millennial's developmental make up (McCain and Campbell, 2016:4): a sign of the times (Bergman *et al*, 2011:706).

Beyond narcissism, psychological studies have also been geared towards understanding more general individual motivations behind selfie-taking with some suggesting that these needs and desires can be gratified with social media use (Rubin, 2009). These psychological needs

[8] Millennials are defined as those "born after 1980 and the first generation to come of age in the new millennium" (Pew Research Center Online, 2017).

include the need or desire to belong, the need to gain and maintain popularity, as well as the desire to be entertained (Utz, 2012). According to this research overcoming boredom and becoming a 'habitual' selfie-taker is a common reason why selfies are taken so prolifically (Sung *et al,* 2016:263; Kim and Chock, 2016:563). Keeping up with 'the Jones' or other people's lives can thus be viewed as a vehicle for everyday amusement or a means to divert attention from other more pressing matters.

In sum, while much of this psychoanalytic literature undoubtedly has value as it skilfully addresses the psychological reasoning behind an individual's selfie-taking and posting behaviours, my overarching critique is its reductive nature: its overwhelming lack of consideration of the selfie practitioner's vital qualitative experiences of selfie-taking practices and their empowering potential. Thus, although there are clearly individual elements to selfie-taking, from a sociological perspective my intuition is that the process of selfie-taking cannot entirely escape the rules and social interactions that are embedded in its social production.

Gender and the Selfie

The subject of gender and its relationship to selfies and selfie-taking is also an important sphere of analysis in the literature. Many scholars approaching the study of the selfie through this framework use canonical gender theory in their examination. Multiple studies have been conducted on gendered selfie-taking and viewing practices that focus on the difference in behaviour between male and female users of social media. Adopting a Goffmanesque analysis, a study from German researchers Doring *et al* examines the existence of gender stereotypical poses and behaviour in magazine advertisements (Doring *et al,* 2016:956). Utilising Goffman's categories and a random sample of 250 male and 250 female selfies from the social media site Instagram, the researchers hypothesise that selfies are less typical than magazine advertisements in terms of conventional presentation of gender practices. However,

even though selfies are user-generated content with the potential to challenge traditional gender self-representations, these researchers found that surprisingly selfies are even more gender stereotypical than magazine advertisements (Doring *et al*, 2016:957-961). More often than not, women tend to display themselves in selfies in positions and postures suggesting weakness, subordination, seduction, and even self-objectification (de Vries and Peter, 2013:1484).

In contrast, men are often depicted in positions—both literally and figuratively—of power. They stand over the woman, are larger by scale comparison, and carry themselves in dominant poses. Many researchers argue that possible explanations for this result include the influence of the mass-media and its strong gender-stereotypical displays that encourage people, whether knowingly or unknowingly, to reproduce the gender norms presented to them. Another potential causal explanation is the imitation of social media selfies by other users. The researchers suggest that if an individual looks at others' selfie-uploads on Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, etc., and sees normative gender displays, they may indeed be inclined to follow suit (Doring *et al*, 2016:961).

The issue of online gender regulation is another crucial topic to consider when looking at the interaction of selfies and gender theories. Gender and race researchers Apryl Williams and Beatriz Marquez use the term 'selfie policing' to describe the effect of people posting or commenting with negative or positive feedback about selfies on social media (Williams and Marquez, 2015:1777). They argue that these commenters and posters regulate others' selfie-posting behaviour, thereby controlling gender presentations (Williams and Marquez, 2015:1777). Speaking more generally about online performances, research has also shown that an individual's self-presentation strategies are influenced by their online audience's feedback and behaviour (Lee-Won *et al*, 2014:415).

A social regulation role is often taken up by certain selfie-viewers (Armstrong, 2016). For example, it has long been argued that for men, traditional notions of masculinity and what it means to be a strong male in society remain largely unchanged, even with civil and feminist rights movements (Kimmel, 1997:5). Thus, when posting selfies that conform to the hegemonic ideal of what is thought to be 'masculine', the male individual is often rewarded for adhering to socially constructed gender codes. In the same way, if a man posts a selfie that does not align with the hegemonic ideal, they are punished by commentators through verbal denigration and disparaging remarks: they are stigmatised (Goffman, 1963:3).

Similarly, according to some researchers, women are applauded and given affirmations when they display 'normal' performances according to their ideal gender roles (Butler, 1999:177). Perhaps even more harsh than a male's punishment for stepping out of the gender code is the double-standard response that a female can experience no matter what side of the gender code she chooses to identify with. An example to illustrate this is as follows: a woman chooses to be sexually overt in her presentation of self in selfies. She is of course, enjoyed by the male gaze, but does she warrant respect? No. In fact, it is up to the woman to decide what response she should get from the man (Burns, 2015:1724). Nelson aptly sums up this double-standard in the statement: "From the moral high ground, they [men] can damn a girl for visual promiscuity, yet enjoy the spectacle at the same time, both with the same misogynistic motives: I like your form but I'm able to scorn you. You're what I want but you're less than me." (Nelson, 2013).

These examples of gender policing indicate that selfies can also play a role as a regulatory social function (Burns, 2015:1718). There is a simultaneous combination of production and discipline. For example, selfie-takers produce images while spectators regulate and monitor different types of selfies. This thereby establishes the social order (Foucault, 1972:54). Women are encouraged to adhere to the socially constructed and socially accepted gender

norms and hierarchies. The pressure to adhere can be seen through the keen uptake of 'beauty' apps to edit selfies, most often accessed via smartphones (Hess, 2017). Should they fail, the threat of humiliation and social exclusion are very real and possible consequences. This further demonstrates the depressing features of how a "cultural practice can be used to privilege the expressive norms of one cultural group over others" (Fraser, 1990:69).

Of course, heteronormative issues are not the only topics covered in selfie and gender literature. From gay and lesbian online chatrooms with sexuality specific terminology and symbols, the LGBTQ community have used digital technologies to enhance visibility for some time (Duguay, 2016:3). With the advent of the selfie, queer visibility has grown, but as Vivienne and Burgess note this does not mean that visibility alone will challenge dominant discourses around LGBTQ communities (Vivienne and Burgess, 2012). This idea of visibility brings us back to the notion of the digital 'superpublic' in which the impact of the selfie outlives the time and place of when and where it was shared (Senft and Baym, 2015:1589). Self-presentational selfies have been known to combat stereotypical understandings of these groups, circulating and bringing attention to counter-discourses (Wargo, 2015:10). However, the opportunities for LGBTQ communities to produce user-generated content to contest traditional gender discourse is still being met with normative misunderstandings and challenges. According to Raun, continuing to engage broader publics by creating queer content such as selfies will be the key in challenging potentially harmful mass media representations (Raun, 2014). These mass media representations not only influence individuals in terms of gender display, they too have an impact on the way selfie-snappers use selfies for purposes of sharing.

Consuming Selfies

The first key assessment of the selfie from the consumer-culture literature is as follows: instead of depicting ideas of self-expression the selfie shows how individual agency is simply shaped by the power of consumerist mediation and capitalist forces (Borgerson, 2013:130). As such, one branch of this literature is not really interested in understanding the meaning of selfies generated by the selfie-takers themselves. Rather, it concentrates on the external capitalist forces that encourage or influence selfie-takers' economic motivations. However, a second branch of this literature is far more positive. This perspective suggests that selfie-takers indeed have agency and in some cases literally capitalise on their selfie-taking.

Media and cultural researchers including Douglas Kellner have theorised that the selfie is part of the 'capitalist spectacle' (Debord, 1994). By 'capitalist spectacle' they mean a media and consumer-driven society that is organised around the consumption of images, commodities, and staged events. In the obsession with selfie-taking individuals are submissively consuming spectacles rather than actively producing their lives (Kellner, 2003:3). These researchers further assert that contemporary media 'diets' are increasingly filled with "much more interactive pleasures" (Iqani and Schroeder, 2015:411).

According to writer Leslie Kan (2004), the spectacle of the selfie manifests itself in two main forms. Firstly, as a person who is exhibited for purposes of curiosity or contempt, that is, someone to be gawked at or despised. Secondly, a person can be marvelled at or admired. Much of the spectacle's appeal comes from its visual aesthetic and the ability to hold the gaze of the viewer (Kan, 2004). Some academics looking at selfies from this perspective have suggested that some moments of the selfie experience could be construed as making a spectacle of ourselves, a "spectacle within a spectacle", at times unavoidably due to the social media saturated landscape in which we live (Kedzior and Allen, 2016:1899).

In opposition to Kellner's argument, some other consumption theorists suggest that the selfie can more positively produce aspects of the self. In this sense selfies occupy a liminal state between narcissistic spectacle and participation in social life (Lasén, 2015). A degree of individual control is perhaps revealed as selfies are taken, edited, and uploaded by the photographer in the private sphere. Some researchers argue that the public sphere is influenced by private selfie-snappers (Chouliaraki, 2010:230). From this perspective for example, rather than seeing hegemonic ideals of beauty such as thin, white, high-class celebrities in popular media, individuals have the option to create their own diverse standards. Although, as the gender literature has already demonstrated, this is not always the case.

The selfie can also be utilised as a human-branding tool; a means through which 'everyday' individuals create a personal brand, gain followers, and amass an audience without traditional 'fame' (McQuarrie *et al*, 2013:13). If and when a selfie becomes commodified, for example through branding, it can take on varied meanings and values and subsequently be exchanged in different ways. If the human-brand technique works to its 'full' potential, an individual's selfies develop a monetary value. Thus, not only can the selfie function as a form of self-expression, it may also work as a way for regular people to become social media 'influencers' (Abidin, 2014:124). However, there is a tension within this perspective as to what agency really means in this context. Clearly this kind of human branding exercise may be a process of reappropriation, but it equally involves considerable risk. Is it simply a commodification of the Self?

Political Detournement

Political and civic activism are also emerging forms of the mobilisation of the selfie genre. Political 'detournement' refers to the counter-hegemonic cultural strategy employed by the Paris-based group called the 'Situationist International' (Trier, 2014:1). The term 'detournement' refers to "the reuse of pre-existing artistic elements in a new ensemble" (Debord, 1959:55). Here, I suggest that the concept of detournement can apply to selfie-taking as both politicians and regular citizens have repurposed the selfie and used it for their own objectives.

This style of selfie is encapsulated in the term 'Selfie Citizenship'. In his book of the same name, Adi Kunstman uses this concept to examine the conditions that enable a selfie to do political work (Kuntsman, 2017:14). Kuntsman argues that we have become accustomed to politicised use of selfies: a use that challenges psychoanalytic notions of the selfie as a vain or apolitical act. This edited collection has contributions from a wide variety of academics with diverse cultural backgrounds covering an extensive number of topics. From media anthropologists (de Seta and Proksell, 2017:29), to education experts (Hartung, 2017:39), and information and communication technology (ICT) professors (Bouko, 2017:49), *Selfie Citizenship* stimulates conversation about the potential for selfies to connect the "individual with the collective, the deliberate with the spontaneous, the marketized with the grass roots" coming together to demonstrate the selfie as a new form of techno-social practice, agency, and governance (Kunstman, 2017:15).

In contrast to some of the other literature we have already examined, the topic of empowerment is a common theme in this framework. Here, emphasis is placed on the way selfies are in fact "*produced* and *experienced* by people in socio-cultural terms" (Nemer and Freeman, 2015:1832 - emphasis in original). Some authors suggest ideas of empowerment are

distilled when selfies receive 'likes' or when one's social media site gains 'followers', as in the psychoanalytic literature. For some, this acknowledgement contributes to a sense of achievement and confidence (Bustard, 2014).[9]

Marginalised groups and the empowerment they achieve when taking and distributing selfies in non-traditional ways has been studied both across international boundaries and in terms of subcultures.[10] These marginalised groups find new ways of interpreting and using selfies to contribute to their social well-being (Nemer and Freeman, 2015:1834). For example, ICT and social media researchers David Nemer and Guo Freeman document the use of selfies in the slums or 'favelas' of Brazil. They find that illiterate youths use selfies as a form of education and communication, as well as a form of safety signposting for their families. Many young people share photos of themselves before or after school to let family members know they are safe (Nemer and Freeman, 2015:1844). A similar study found that groups of disadvantaged Indian women used self-portraits to overcome language barriers and discuss topics commonly viewed as taboo (Noland, 2006:13). Other researchers have reported the potential for selfies to realistically depict the social lives, history and circumstances of other communities in Mexico (Yefimova *et al*, 2014). Here we return to the notion of the digital 'superpublic'. These kinds of self-portraits, outlive the time and place in which they were produced, thereby offering extended usage for the agents and new forms of public visibility.

Other interesting case studies focus on marginalised practices such as the case of the politics and production of breastfeeding selfies. Residing in a liminal state between motherhood and sexuality, public and private, breastfeeding selfies are a new and controversial form of selfie

[9] Although this type of empowerment is sometimes said to be 'achieved', its assessment is measured through numerical figures to determine one's value. One must be cautious when using a quantitative approach like this. In this situation, the term 'empowerment' is used to describe what results from virtual approval from an audience. This is inconsistent with the empowerment experienced when one acts autonomously without external influence.

[10] For an additional international case study that deals with the use of selfies within the context of charity and social movements, please see Deller and Tilton (2015).

practice. Scholars ask the question: "how might breastfeeding—that iconic, embodied practice of motherhood—trouble the very idea of the selfie?" (Boon and Pentney, 2015:1760). Such selfies, if taken in non-traditional circumstances such as transgender breastfeeding or using supplemental breastfeeding devices can challenge and push the boundaries of maternal roles (Locatelli, 2017:6).

Politically charged selfies are another form of selfie mobilisation, and a further example of why selfies need to be understood from a variety of perspectives. These political selfies have been used by a number of politicians in various global presidential and prime ministerial campaigns. Aesthetically spectacular displays of self-promotion are still used by campaigning politicians, such as India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi's holographic performance (Baishya, 2015:1688). However, apparently many of these politicians, including Modi, are finding that selfies are a more everyday 'authentic' way for public voters to experience and connect with their leaders. Instead of being an inaccessible icon, selfies allow the politician to be more visible while giving the voter a sense of accessibility to the representative (Abidin, 2017:81). Other authors have noticed trends, for example, in Swedish politicians' selfie behaviours (Ekman and Widholm, 2017:68). These researchers have identified three types of selfies employed by the politician: Firstly, there is the 'politician as celebrity' where the politician takes selfies with 'normal' people. Secondly, the 'inter-celebrity connectivity' selfies in which politicians take selfies with prominent public figures and finally, the 'everyday life' selfie whereby the politician involved aims to portray ordinariness in contrast to extraordinariness (Ekman and Widholm, 2017:68-71). This practice is not dissimilar to a previous era when politicians saw fit to be snapped with babies, children etc., in order to come across as an 'regular' person.

Summarising Selfies

From this brief summary of the different theoretical stakes, it might appear, at first, that just as there are selfies for every kind of group there are 'selfies' for every theoretical position. But, despite their conflicting interpretations, I am drawn to these particular frameworks as they all offer productive insights into contemporary selfie practices. The psychoanalytic literature generally supports the notion that selfies are a self-absorbed narcissistic practice. Along with many other critics, I argue however, that this pathologising perspective is problematic as it reduces selfie-taking to individualistic character traits (see for example: Senft and Baym, 2015:1590). Consumer-culture theorists suggest that selfies are reflections of the influence of capitalist mediations with differing analysis as to whether these are agentic or non-agentic actions. Gender researchers employ canonical gender theory to re-evaluate and reinterpret the appearance of gender stereotypes, social regulation, and counter-hegemonic practices within the realm of selfie-taking. Civic-political researchers, on the other hand, often find that selfies have the potential to empower a range of otherwise marginalised individuals and groups. A common theme in all this literature, and one of my overarching research questions, is the concept of agency. This may come either in the form of a lack of, or alternatively, a strong expression of the agentic Self.

In chapter three, I look more deeply into the 'sociology of the selfie'. A key theorist I use to augment my discussion is Erving Goffman. I employ his conceptual framework to aid my assessment of selfie practices in order to conclude whether there are indeed sociological underpinnings that inform the selfie-taker's behaviour. The influence of the internet and some specific resulting social media sites are discussed. Does a different social media platform mean a different type of selfie? What are the ways of operating that selfie-snappers and

selfie-viewers acknowledge or adhere to? Is the culture we live in indeed a culture that has the “freedom of selfie”?

Chapter three:

Sociology of the Selfie

The Internet and 'Mundane Technologies'

The dominant popular history of the internet has been told through evolutionary narratives of progress known as 'versions'. Versions refer to the progressive stages of the internet, what it offers, and how it is used. Common terms that denote these stages include Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 (Allen, 2012:270). Web 2.0 is a label that refers to an interactive communicative internet, that facilitates connection and collaboration between people. There is some conjecture surrounding how to consider the current stage of the internet. Popular theories assert that it is in a transition period, still functioning as Web 2.0 but steadily moving towards Web 3.0. While this dominant history focuses on defining periods, pioneers, originators, and orderly development, it often omits a consideration of the private and personal experiences of individuals and their internet use (Allen, 2012:270). The internet became a social force because of the billions of individuals who partake in its functions on an everyday basis. Therefore, it is important to look at the internet not just from the perspective of a social and economic force, but to highlight the use of the internet by those individuals that make up the phenomenon.

Despite its reputation as a 'gamechanger' in social interaction, as sociologist Trevor Pinch argues, the internet can be viewed as a rather 'mundane technology'. It is an everyday, ordinary technological device (Pinch, 2010:419). Much like Goffman's examples of a merry-go-round, a door, or surgical implements, the internet is a taken for granted mundane technology that surrounds us in everyday life. And just like the merry-go-round in Pinch's argument, the internet and social media sites engage us in mediated interactions (Pinch, 2010:420). The internet is also a key technology that has had a significant impact on selfie

practices. The opportunity to upload and share selfies across international borders has no doubt contributed to its immense global presence. The simplicity with which one can circulate images transferring them from a device to websites or website applications is an example of the socio-technical network that is being built around internet technologies (Gómez Cruz and Meyer, 2012:215). The ease and accessibility of these options also adds to the mundanity of the action as you would be hard-pressed to find someone who finds these actions unusual or out of place.

Social Media Sites

Within the realm of the internet are social media sites or platforms that facilitate these Web 2.0 connections. Those that pertain to selfie-taking include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat (Miller, 2015:3). Internet and social media researchers have found that each platform is used for a variety of purposes. These purposes include personal use, such as connecting religious communities, sharing updates among family and, of course, selfies. It can also operate on a broader scale in terms of its use by political groups and commercial enterprises (Miller, 2016:150-156). It is perhaps useful to understand these platforms as 'polymedia': as interconnected media with complementary relationships between platforms (Miller, 2016:21). Therefore, instead of considering these sites in isolation, it is vital to acknowledge how people purposefully exploit the wide range of media literally at their fingertips (Miller, 2016:21).

Celebrating its 10-year anniversary in 2014 (Lincoln and Robards, 2014:1047), Facebook is one of the first social media platforms to have taken off at an exponential rate. Despite its constant presence and its use as a social media platform, for some people—mostly younger people—Facebook has become somewhat of a dated platform past its prime and seemingly usurped by 'cooler' platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat (Lincoln and Robards,

2017:520). Nevertheless, Facebook still plays host to over two billion monthly active users as of June 2017 (*Facebook*: 'Stats', 2017). There are innumerous amounts of information posted by users on Facebook, making it difficult for users to completely split from the site. As Lincoln and Robards note: "…it is a phone book, contacts list, photo album, video diary of their [digital natives'] lives" (Lincoln and Robards, 2017:520).

Instagram is a more recent platform founded in 2012. The company's CEO Kevin Systrom states that the company is "focused on simplicity and inspiring creativity through solving problems with thoughtful product design" (*Instagram*, 2017). An image-based platform, Instagram is home to 600 million users, a vast number of whom post selfies. Young people closely associate photography with Instagram, seeing the photo-sharing site as a stripped-down Facebook (Miller, 2015:6). Until recently, Instagram only allowed photographs from smartphones to be uploaded to the application, so actual cameras were not permitted. This has since changed, but a key point to take away from this function is the close attachment between portable device, photography, filters and application (Miller, 2015:6). They are all dependent technologies. The features come together and encourage users to regard the application as a vehicle for carefully crafted images (Miller, 2015:7).

Snapchat consists of photos and videos that can only be shared for a maximum of ten seconds, with images snapped for the purpose of relaying what is happening 'now' sent instantaneously. Anthropologist Daniel Miller asserts that one reason why young people, in particular, moved to such a transient medium was the problems of longevity encountered with Facebook (Miller, 2015:12). Many individuals have a problem with the permanency inherent in Facebook and Instagram. Thus, Snapchat is seen as a new form of visual communication, within which there is a sense of freedom and fluidity. Images can easily be sent back and forth without the concern for digital memorialisation. This, in turn, makes the platform and its 'disappearing data' all the more appealing to users (Charteris, 2014:389).

These approaches to the internet are useful for analysing the history and transformations of social media sites and their use among younger people. In this chapter, I aim to explore the subtle rules of selfie practices and whether or not individuals take a reflexive stance when asked to ponder the topic of the selfie. According to British sociologist Anthony Giddens, these questions "What to do? How to act? Who to be?" can be used as an entry point for understanding the trajectory of the self, or in other words, for understanding how and why people act the way they do (Giddens 1991:70). When referring to selfies, I suggest that a dialogue with Erving Goffman on the ways people go about presenting themselves is a fruitful exercise in answering these and my own research questions.

Dialoguing with Goffman

With his astute eye for the nuances and minutiae of social interaction, Goffman made his readers including myself, aware of a seemingly endless invisible realm of everyday conduct. Although Goffman was writing long before today's manifestation of selfies, as I have already outlined, many scholars argue that Goffman's work on everyday social interaction is an invaluable source for examining online as well as 'face-to-face' interactions. In the following section of this chapter, I will analyse selfie practices through a dialogue with Goffman, specifically using his texts: *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956), *Gender Advertisements* (1979) and *Interaction Ritual* (1972).

Presentation of Masks

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman uses a dramaturgical metaphor of stage performers to describe how individuals "perform" certain routines in our everyday lives (Goffman, 1956:10). He begins his influential tome with a quote from George Santayana, a Spanish-American essayist and poet who wrote frequently about "masks" and why people wear them in social settings (Santayana, 1921:131-132, in Goffman, 1956). Goffman also

quotes Robert E. Park on the purpose of mask-wearing (Goffman, 1956:12). Using Park, Goffman argues that individuals must have a belief in the role they are playing, so as to execute a believable performance. This mask is what Goffman would refer to as the "personal front". The personal front encompasses the fixed or general fashion in which a performer defines the situation for his or her audience (Goffman, 1956:13). It also includes the "expressive equipment": those items that are most commonly identified with the performer on a more intimate level, such as clothing, sex, age, posture, size and looks, and facial expressions (Goffman, 1956:14). Most, if not all these attributes, can be identified within a selfie and are used by the performer to "give" a certain impression that is also interpreted by the audience in order to make a judgement on the person 'present' in the selfie (van Djick, 2013:203).

'Front' and 'Back' Regions

This "personal front" makes up part of a performance that occurs in the "front region" or "front stage" setting of social life. Goffman defines the front region as simply the place where the performance is given (Goffman, 1956:66). In terms of thinking about selfies, the front region would be the final published, shared, or edited selfie. But there is another aspect to the selfie when using Goffman's framework: the "back region". This region can be recognised as those characteristics of the performer that are suppressed or hidden, due to their potential to discredit the performance and the image of the performer (Goffman, 1956:69). When referring to the "back region" of selfies and selfie-takers, we can also think of the "tacit labor" that goes into selfie-making. In her work on Singaporean Instagram influencers, Crystal Abidin defines this "tacit labor" as "a collective of work that is understated and under-visibilised from being so thoroughly rehearsed that it appears as effortless and subconscious" (Abidin, 2016:10). Examples of tacit labour include time spent on perfecting make-up application and outfit combinations, working with the best lighting and posturing to

make their frames look smaller, as well as using image-enhancing and photo-editing software and applications (Abidin, 2016:10-12). I suggest that this term could be applied to Goffman's idea of the "back region", as this is the figurative or physical place where the performer knowingly contradicts the impression fostered by the front stage performance (Goffman, 1956:69).

However, there are times when there are slip-ups or "backstage difficulties" jeopardising the integrity of the selfie-taker's performance (Goffman, 1956:72). For the average, everyday person this could come in the form of unfortunately timed selfies[11], selfies where the caption does not correlate to the image[12], or selfies in which the intended or implicit message of the image is refuted.[13] Essentially, it is when the selfie-snapper—most likely unintentionally—allows the workings of the backstage to intrude into the front region. I will speak more on the effect of these incidences further along in this chapter. For traditional celebrities or 'microcelebrities' (Senft, 2014) such as Instagram influencers, the consequences of backstage difficulties are more visible and publicised. Goffman refers to these individuals as "exalted persons" that is, individuals whose personae have become so sacred there are somewhat "magical" attributes ascribed to them (Goffman, 1956:73). For these 'exalted persons' accidental '#selfiefails' as they are popularly named, are embarrassing with the potential to tarnish or "expose" an image that has been cultivated for an extended period (Marshall, 2016:513). For example, celebrities at the 2017 MET Gala were "blasted" for taking selfies in the bathroom while smoking cigarettes, and subsequently uploading them to social media sites (Friedman, 2017).

[11] See Appendix Item 4.
[12] See Appendix Item 5.
[13] See Appendix Item 6.

Impression Management

Impression management is a key concept in Goffman's interaction order that also applies to selfie practices. The concept is understood as a goal-directed activity of regulating or controlling information about the performative self that is conveyed to an audience. Goffman speaks of those 'expressions' that one intentionally "gives" or unintentionally "gives off" (Goffman, 1956:36), although there are often blurred boundaries between the two when it comes to selfies. For example, a person's 'duck face' selfie may be an intentional facial expression to "give" the impression that one's lips are fuller and their cheeks are more structured. However, this may "give off" a different impression to the audience—the 'duck face' selfie is now popularly viewed as a typical and dated pose (John, 2013). Nevertheless, all these expressions will in some way impress those in the audience (Goffman, 1956:2). Selfie-posting frequency is also connected to impression management. This topic arose frequently in primary interviews and is discussed as well in the scholarly literature. Individuals usually choose very carefully the number of selfies they upload per day, week, month and so on, so as to not come across as vain or narcissistic (Weiser, 2016:480). Selfie takers limit their selfie posts to manage others' impressions of them.

These aspects of an individual's performance present not only what he or she wants to portray to an audience, but they also tend to "incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society" (Goffman, 1956:23). These idealised performances are in a way "'socialised', moulded and modified to fit into the understanding and expectations of the society in which it is presented" (Goffman, 1956:22-23). An apt example of the integration of societal expectations into selfie images is gender stereotypes. Although selfies are user-generated content and therefore have the potential to challenge current expectations of gender roles, as I have already discussed, studies have found that selfies are in fact more gender stereotypical than advertisements (Doring *et al*, 2016:955). This is where another key text by

Goffman is useful for our discussion: *Gender Advertisements*. Goffman's focus in this book is the notion of 'Gender Display'; "If gender be defined as the culturally established correlates of sex…then gender display refers to conventionalised portrayals of these correlates" (Goffman, 1979:1).

Gender Stereotypical Selfies

Gender stereotypes are 'useful' in society in that they categorise; they are simple to decode and allow audiences to easily examine and evaluate the person in the image and perceive their presentations as 'natural' manifestations of femininity and masculinity (Tortajada *et al,* 2013:179). Nevertheless, gender stereotypes are limiting and at times dangerous, as they are a reductive and simplistic portrayal of complex and nuanced gender identities (Taylor *et al*, 2003). In *Gender Advertisements,* Goffman creates five categories used to analyse gender display in magazine advertisements. These categories include: 'relative size'; 'feminine touch'; 'function ranking'; 'ritualization of subordination' and 'licensed withdrawal' (Goffman, 1979:28-57). Kang later adds the term 'body display' (Kang, 1997:985). Research using these categories has demonstrated that in gender advertisements and more recently in selfies, women are depicted as the weaker gender.

The appearance of more gender-stereotypical selfies could be seen as a sign of cultural hegemony. According to Gramsci (1891-1937) the insidious nature of hegemony lies in the passive consent of the masses to adhere dominant cultural rulings, so much so these norms become ingrained in a collective psyche and consequently thought of as 'normal' (Lears, 1985:568). Although Gramsci was analysing the socio-political climate of the twentieth century, this notion of cultural hegemony can be applied to selfie culture. It has been suggested that these higher levels of gender stereotypical presentations online could be attributed to the influence of mass media. In other words, the hegemonic visual rhetoric of

mainstream media outlets trickles down into the everyday lives of selfie-takers and selfie-viewers. These individuals then somewhat unknowingly conform to normative gender roles in their selfies. According to Barnard, what occurs in many selfies is the selfie '(dis)empowerment paradox'. In this paradox an individual may feel empowered by self-shooting in a certain way, but simultaneously these images conform to a hegemonic ideal of femininity or masculinity (Barnard, 2016:74).

However as discussed earlier, selfies can also be used as a subversive counter-hegemonic practice as the selfie-taker has greater control over the images they are capturing of themselves. This control gives the selfie-taker a sense of autonomy when crafting visual self-presentations, but it must be remembered that this action is "inherently bound to structural and interactional relations" (Barnard, 2016:69). In this image-driven society, it is indeed difficult to go against the hegemonic ideals of gender identities, with the ever-strengthening reification of standard or normative gender roles. Thus, we see, perhaps unsurprisingly, that gender norms are still deeply embedded in new forms vernacular social interaction, including the production and consumption of selfies (West and Zimmerman, 1987).

Face-to-Face or Screen-to-Screen Interaction

A final way Goffman can enlighten sociological studies of selfies, is through his concept of face-work. In 1967, Goffman published *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour*, containing six essays dedicated to this topic. The essay I wish to draw upon is *On Face-Work* (Goffman, 1972:5). In this essay, Goffman clarifies the individual "line" that every interactant takes when engaging in face-to-face interaction. This "line" expresses one's view of the situation, an evaluation of group member/s, including him or herself. This line is then taken up and committed to throughout the interaction, whether the interactant is aware of it or not (Goffman, 1972:5). Goffman then defines "face" as "an image of self, delineated in

terms of approved social attributes—albeit an image that others may share" (Goffman, 1972:5). In this case, face-to-face interaction is an unmediated activity. Herein lies a difference between many of Goffman's other interactional frameworks and the face-work approach.

He goes onto explain that a person tends to "experience an immediate emotional response" when faced with, well, another face (Goffman, 1972:6). When looking at a mediated face—a selfie—through a social media platform such as Instagram or Snapchat, the immediate emotional response is usually not present, especially if it is an unknown face. Moreover, a certain standard of considerateness is expected in face-to-face interactions. The interactant is expected to demonstrate a level of civility to save the face of others (Goffman, 1972:10). If the abovementioned feelings are not present, the likelihood of the individual to "give face" to the selfie-taker will not occur. The interactant who does not make an effort to save another's face from humiliation is known as "heartless" (Goffman, 1972:11). This framework can, I suggest, be applied to the codes of conduct of selfie-takers and selfie-viewers in an online setting.

Many selfie-viewers work to maintain the face of a selfie-taker who has uploaded their selfie to a social media platform, which in Goffman's terms, means they are consenting to an agreement of mutual acceptance of the lines each member of the interaction wishes to uphold. This may manifest in compliments to the selfie-taker's looks, or admiration of their photo-taking prowess. When selfie-takers' lines are not upheld by the individual or a group, a "heartless" choice of action results. This choice is perhaps due to the awareness that an individual can remain anonymous online and never again encounter the selfie-taker. Goffman would refer to this circumstance as a "limitation to the interdependence between the current situation and the wider social world" (Goffman, 1972:7). If he or she is in an encounter with someone they will not have dealings with in the future, they can choose to enact an

aggressive style of face-work (Goffman, 1972:24). A contemporary example of aggressive face-work is "trolling" selfies on the internet, whereby the anonymous commentator engages in malicious online behaviour and intentionally disrupts the interaction order (Coles and West, 2016:234), understood here as the selfie interaction order. Negative comments on selfies can be made for a number of reasons. Perhaps the commenter wants to cause "fruitless argumentation" (Coles and West, 2016:233). Or they may, as was discussed in chapter two, have a desire to regulate and control the behaviour of the selfie-taker (Burns, 2015:1718).

The trouble caused by these commenters or disrupters, means that they "cannot be trusted to play the face-saving game" (Goffman, 1972:31). And to Goffman, face-to-face interaction is indeed a game, though a serious one that has consequences. It is a game in which selfie-players—both takers and viewers—can play "honourably or dishonourably…diplomatically or undiplomatically" (Goffman, 1972:31). Certain agreements are ratified in this social game. Yet when these understandings are disregarded, the mutually approved standards disintegrate.

So, Goffman, as I hope I have demonstrated here, is indeed useful. I would now like to turn to some other authors who have further extended Goffman's analysis, examining online interactions.

Online Performances and Exhibitions

Sociologist Bernie Hogan uses a Goffmanesque framework to distinguish between "performances" and what he calls online "exhibitions" (Hogan, 2010). According to Hogan, performances are those actions that have a sense of immediacy or instantaneity about them. Instant messaging, chat rooms, and live streaming videos would fall into this category (Hogan, 2010:380). All activity online begins as a performance but, with time, the nature of the performance changes form. Whereas performances are at first ephemeral, over time they become static. What is left are what Hogan terms 'exhibitions' that is, the artefacts such as

status updates, photos and traces of individuals' performances, for example, comments (Frosh, 2015:1609).

This is an important distinction when using Goffman to examine online behaviour. Performances have been equated with these permanent displays. For example, the term 'cyberperformers' signifies those people who perform and create exhibitions online (Robinson, 2007:106). Selfies can be considered as both performances and potential exhibitions because they are posted or begin their life in a live moment to be viewed by an online audience. Yet, they eventually become a static artefact. The nature of the performative selfie changes once it has been recorded. Although it is still a presentation or communicative act representing or signifying an individual's actions of presence, it is no longer bound to the space and time of the original performance (Hogan, 2010:380). This new artefact can be taken out of context, replayed or reshown in a different situation.

There is however, one other platform that somewhat challenges Hogan's distinction between performances and exhibitions. This is Snapchat. Consisting of images or very short videos, with no longer than ten a second viewing time with a small amount of text attached to it, Snapchat images are forever ephemeral. Images and selfies shared on Snapchat are focused on the instantaneous without much concern for the act of memorialisation (Miller, 2015:10). Furthermore, unless one 'screenshots' the Snap within the ten second time limit, and generally this is considered indecorous in the Snapchat community, there is no way for the audience to record the image. Thus, this indicates that Snapchat enables a constant performance, without a subsequent exhibition. It facilitates a movement towards communicative performance without leaving a permanent record of your display.

The sociology of the selfie is not, of course, limited to a Goffmanesque analysis. Nevertheless, Goffman is still, as I hope I have demonstrated here, very useful for

interrogating the selfie and selfie-taking practices in the micro-sociological settings of everyday life. Goffman reminds us that these vernacular encounters are indeed a rich source of information on the social codes and subtleties that individuals engage with in everyday interactions. Furthermore, a vital aspect to consider when analysing selfie-taking practices is the role that technology plays in this phenomenon. Selfie-takers interact with technology, coming together to produce an individual's selfie-viewing habits. But perhaps, more interestingly, it draws the selfie-snapper into an assemblage of technological devices, connected users and relationships of image sharing.

In chapter four, I return to some of these themes. I will take you through some metaphorical 'snapshots' and introduce you to my selfie-snapping participants through a series of 'mini-portraits'. The writing in this chapter is inspired by anthropologist Daniel Miller's ethnographic study *The Comfort of Things* (2008). In this book, Miller takes an anthropological approach to examine 'Stuart Street' a pseudonym given to an actual street in London. *The Comfort of Things*, Miller writes is "…a book about how people express themselves through their possessions, and what these tell us about their lives" (Miller 2008:1). Miller intended the book to demonstrate how one can understand people "through the medium of their things" (Miller, 2008:300). He uses the interview to create a series of textual portraits written to reflect the style of the 'sitter', describing both the person and the objects that surround them in their domestic settings.

Like Miller, I too want to convey something about the manner of the research and how it was carried out (Miller, 2008:301). Therefore, in my mini-portraits I give details on the location and some personal titbits about the interviewee, using a conversational style so as to connect the reader to the participant. I aim to demonstrate that there are people and personalities behind selfies. Rather than objects, as in Miller's study, selfies are the focus of my work.

Rather than a street, I take a snapshot of a moment in time, an aggregate of selfie-snappers and selfie-haters to piece together a picture of the world of selfies. Although it is obviously a limited picture, it is intended as a kind of 'snapshot' of everyday people and selfies at a particular moment in history. I aim, as did Miller, to take a walk down a metaphorical 'street', to give the reader slice of selfie life—the Stuart Street of selfie city.

Chapter four:

‘Snapshots’ from the Field

Why Snapshots?

This chapter consists of eight mini-portraits or ‘snapshots’ of participants, as inspired by Daniel Miller. I have several intentions in compiling these snapshots: I want to bring attention to the individual behind the selfie, demonstrating that there are people, personalities, and a public sphere behind selfies. Selfies are ubiquitous, at times fleeting, and often overlooked as an insignificant feature of everyday life and therefore it is easy to forget that the selfie is a human-shaped entity. All the participants in this study take a reflexive stance; even if they are not keen on taking selfies themselves, they are still willing and able to ponder and discuss the selfies they see and experience. Furthermore, I want to demonstrate that selfie-taking is a diverse and ever-changing practice, manifesting in many different forms. As such, the rules of selfie-taking are not easily applicable to all selfie-takers or selfie-viewers, yet certain codes of conduct and ‘appropriate’ or ‘acceptable’ ways of operating can be deduced. Many of these subtle selfie standards can be gleaned from this interview content, while others have arisen from an examination of secondary literature.

The Masters Student, 22 y.o.

Sally and I meet at a university café, one I had never been to before. It is a clear and crisp winter’s morning, with Sally commenting on the deficit in her winter wardrobe. She is in desperate need of new coats. As we line up to order she recommends the smashed avocado on toast, and the house chai tea with soy milk, so I accept the suggestion, and it does not disappoint. Sally is undertaking a Master’s at university, specialising in Media Studies. Specifically, she is examining multiple movies from the Tamil film industry in India, having had an interest in Indian cinema from a young age. Of Indian descent and born in Canberra,

Sally moved to Sydney to begin university study at the age of eighteen. Sally found her new city to be "Super busy… Super aggressive". We chat about how her thesis is coming along, while she looks through her phone for good examples of selfies from her camera roll.

Sally is a generous interviewee and an enthusiastic selfie-snapper. She has even selfie-trained her dog! She has no qualms in telling me about her love of and engagement with the selfie. Sally has grown up with both parents, her mother Janine and father, Vishal. Her mother has a similar fondness of the selfie, taking photos of herself with a 'flip phone' comparable to what Sally used when she was in high school: "My mum has been taking selfies for a long time" she says. The difference between the mother and daughter however, is the lack of trepidation in posting selfies to social media, according to Sally: "…she [her mother] also used to just take selfies of herself and she wouldn't post them anywhere, she'd just keep them like me. Nowadays she posts them on Facebook, and she doesn't have the same anxieties as me about posting selfies on Facebook". We discuss this variance in feeling, noting that being content with yourself and what people perceive of you comes with age. Nevertheless, Sally believes her mother's attitude toward selfie-taking is the same as hers— "I took a photo of myself, I think it looks nice, I'm going to post it". The dissimilarity in practices comes down to the amount of social media sites Sally is distributing her selfies across.

Sally believes the type of selfies she takes and subsequently posts depends on the social media site she is uploading to: "Each platform has its own variety of selfie…each platform operates in very different ways". Sally brilliantly articulates the difference in selfie-posting behaviour between three platforms; Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook. She asserts that the fleeting nature of Snapchat allows for more silly, everyday selfies. Her interpretation of Instagram is more aesthetic, so she tends to post more "artistic" photos. Finally, Facebook is seen to be more of a timeline, where Sally can post "really nice" photos of herself, or with other people, celebrating occasions.

Sally's recognition of the varying uses of selfies according to the social media platform, follows the theory of Daniel Miller's ethnographic-historical analysis of photographic practices in the age of emerging and ever-changing social media platforms (Miller, 2015:14). Miller proposes that 'social media photography' is the final step in the democratisation of image-making, as there is no longer an exclusive connection with art. Like the feelings expressed by Sally, Miller builds his argument around changes in photographic practices brought about, he contends, by the emergence of Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. Facebook, he suggests, is for older generations, used for storing images and remembrance, while Instagram is seen as a craft. Snapchat is concerned with the frivolous and ephemeral and as such "bludgeons to death our idea of conventional photography" (Miller, 2015:4-6,10).

The topic of filters comes into the conversation. I ask a question about the growing interest in filters, specifically on Instagram and Snapchat. This topic interests Sally, as she has experienced essentially, "racially designed filters". "What do you mean by 'racially designed'?" I ask. Sally gets out her mobile phone and shows some of her selfies that were taken with multiple Snapchat filters. The majority of these filters' transformational power does not sit well with Sally:

"So, I find some of the filters just look garbage on me. Because they're made for people with fairer skin....and there's one filter, and I hate that filter because it makes my nose smaller, it makes my eyes bigger, and it makes my skin lighter. And it weirds me out. I call it the 'Caucasian filter'.

Scholars speak of the technological filters built into social media, particularly Instagram (Walker Rettberg, 2014:29). There is a skin tone bias inherent in earlier photographic representations (Roth, 2009). This bias appears to have continued to modern photographic

editing applications. These technological filters seem to have taken their cues from what Walker Rettberg calls 'cultural filters' which include norms, expectations and normative discursive strategies (Walker Rettberg, 2014:22). These cultural filters are just as, if not more, important than technological filters as they guide and can even determine our modes of expression.

As we continue to chat about selfies, the topic of self-portraits comes into the discussion. Sally is pleased to hear that some scholars suggest a connection between selfies and self-portraits: "I love the idea of a selfie being referred to as a self-portrait, makes it sound very serious and important". "Is it not?" I ask. For Sally, it most certainly is. Sally has been interested in media studies her whole life, also establishing a YouTube channel to review movies. Sally has had plenty of access to cameras, and while growing up, was encouraged to take photos of anything and everything. After getting to know Sally's selfie life, it appears that the selfie is an extension of her social life: connection, communication, and documentation are key.

The Prison Chaplain, 58 y.o.

As I sit across from Will—baptised as Will, not William—he tells me about his last week at work; it was hectic to to say the least. Will is a prison chaplain, also working as an educator, frequently with inmates who are in need of drug rehabilitation. He has been in this job for around twelve years. He is currently assisting an ex-inmate with a drug addiction to find stable accommodation. Even though it is his occupation, it seems there is a tension between leaving work at work, and bringing the work home with him. It is clear that Will is passionate about his work and passionate about helping people—even if it takes a toll in terms of stress and energy levels. Will tells me it is crucial to build up a rapport with the inmates, to also be seen as a mate, not only as an authoritative figure. Will is 58 years of age. He grew up in

Homebush, and moved to Greater Western Sydney in the early nineties to start a family with his wife, Jocelyn. Prior to working as a prison chaplain, Will worked as a minister of religion, a pastor of a church in the Greater Western Sydney area.

As we transition from general conversation to a discussion of selfies, I discover Will is "certainly not a fan". He is happy to joke around with his four children (including triplets) about taking selfies, making light-hearted fun when the kids get their smart phones out ready to take a snap. Soon I come to realise that Will does not approach selfie culture in general as a light-hearted phenomenon. Will believes there is something deeper going on, on a psychological level. "Selfies could also be a cry for help" he says. Whether it be looking for validation or affirmation, stemming from a narcissistic personality trait (Halpern *et al*, 2016:98), Will sees the proliferation of selfieists as coming from a place of insecurity. Furthermore, he equates high-volume selfie-takers with those who are addicted to graffiti: "maybe this is another form of graffiti, in the sense that it is about validation, but in the form of a picture as opposed to a 'tag'". It is clear to see from our conversation that Will's work has an impact on his understanding of selfies and selfie practices. He frequently brings up addiction, insecurity, affirmation, and the importance of the word 'self' in selfie: "does the selfie demonstrate the essence of my being?" he asks.

That is not to say that Will does not see the potential in selfies. He uses an example of a selfie of someone who is fighting on the front line, experiencing the horrors of war: "Now that would be a very powerful selfie" he says. Such selfies, not specifically a war-zone selfie, but those that empower individuals or groups and bring awareness to a certain activity or practice, are growing in numbers. A specific example is that of the autopathographic selfie. A term originating from literary studies, an autopathography is a narrative in which the focus of the story centres around the protagonist's illness, treatment and impact of the illness on their life (Tembeck, 2016:1). These types of selfie could be taken by people who Will calls "social

interrupters" that is, an individual who wants to make a statement—most often controversial—about their life or the lives of others.

I ask Will about the impact of technology on selfie practices. The virality of selfies is because of smart phone applications, according to Will: "App developers have exploited that desire in people, you know?" That desire that application creators have identified and used in the development of their software has been acknowledged by Gómez Cruz and Meyer, in which they discuss the 'fifth moment of photography' (Gómez Cruz and Meyer, 2012:.215). According to the authors, this moment is the latest of all photographic moments, that is, when the iPhone becomes a socio-technical network. The speed with which one can upload and share photographs can be accounted for by the ease and simplicity of smart phone software, as well as the increasingly fast connection of 3G and 4G internet technology. But behind all of this is, as Will noted and was discussed in chapter one, is a desire to photograph and widely distribute those images, even the most mundane of pictures (Cohen, 2005:890).

Finally, Will suggests that even though the majority of selfies he sees have "elements of banality" due to their ubiquitousness, the selfie can still be artistic. One of the most prominent themes in this interview was the issue of purpose, that is, what is the purpose behind the selfie? In his study of photography, sociologist Pierre Bourdieu argued that objects featured in photographs had their value determined socially (1996:74). When displaying a number of photographs to French peasants, they critique many of the images based on sameness. Multiple images of the same thing—in this case a leaf—is not interesting to Bourdieu's viewers because, well, what is the point? (Bourdieu, 1996:93). Will echoes this sentiment, arguing for selfies with purpose, intent and meaning, not simply photographing for the sake of it (Bourdieu, 1996:120).

The IT Architect, 38 y.o.

I arrive at Frank's apartment at around 7:00 pm. He and his fiancé Merna had just arrived home from work. Frank is an Information Technology (IT) architect for New South Wales Health, and has been employed by the government for approximately six years on and off. Merna is a Sales Area Manager in the wholesale meat industry. Her father is a butcher, so her love of quality meats does not surprise me. I am welcomed into their home with an offer of a pint of English Ale—I am not a beer drinker, but I can appreciate Frank's love of craft beers: "It's actually quite good" he says. Frank's taste in alcohol is also not all that surprising, having been born in Derbyshire, a county in the East Midlands of England. He abbreviates it to 'Derby' as we continue our conversation and mutual love of all things from the Mother Land—particularly the music. British rapper, *Roots Manuva* is blasting in the background, as the three of us share a chat and a cigarette before I suggest we begin the interview.

"Yeah" Frank says quietly, "I'm not a big fan of the selfie". Frank most often associates the selfie with airbrushed, pouting young women, trying to portray their lives as a perfect *mise en scène.* That does not appeal to Frank: "They're presenting an untrue representation of their lives!" he says, with a few more expletives included. He asserts that people who take selfies—well in this case, 'typical' female selfies such as the 'duckface'—are "hiding" behind their selfies. "It's a persona, a mask" he reiterates.

Erving Goffman speaks of human interaction with dramaturgical metaphors arguing that humans 'perform' in everyday social encounters (Goffman, 1956:8). Goffman suggests that individuals take on certain roles depending on the interaction at hand. We perform these roles and get to know each other as we too get to know ourselves. Frank unknowingly uses some of Goffman's dramaturgical terminology in stating that selfie-takers hide behind a mask. Quoting American urban sociologist Robert E. Park, Goffman reiterates that at times, these masks become our true selves: "we come into the world as individuals, achieve character, and become persons" (Park quoted in Goffman, 1956:12).

Selfies are a manifestation of everyday performance. Although they are in an online setting, selfie research can benefit from sociological analyses like Goffman's. Similarly to previous interviewee Will, Frank differentiates between 'narcissistic' banal selfies and those with purpose. When presented with the notion that selfies could empower marginalised groups on a global scale, Frank was not averse to the idea: "Well, I think that's fine…If you use them for a good reason then that's fine" he says. It has been found that the selfie can be repurposed and used not only for profile pictures or for self-promotional forces (Diefenbach and Christoforakos, 2017:3). As we have discussed, many researchers see the selfie as a vehicle for empowerment. Youths in the slums of Brazil use selfies to increase literacy and communication levels, as well as a form of 'sign-posting' to show family members that they are okay in the dangerous streets surrounding the 'favelas' (Nemer and Freeman, 2015:1834).

Towards the end of our conversation, the topic of privacy comes into the discussion. The emergence of new forms of and options for managing privacy is a simple formula for Frank: "Everything on the internet tells you about privacy; privacy tools are there to keep things private if you choose to do so". "Why do you think people don't keep things private then?" I ask Frank in response. He believes that the majority of the population wants to be seen and people intentionally put themselves on display for attention.

Australian academics Michael Walsh and Stephanie Baker make an astute observation of the public-private distinction in regard to selfies. Walsh and Baker suggest this traditional dichotomy of public versus private is not the most useful approach to analysing the selfie. It is accepted that the boundaries between public and private are blurred (Kumar and Makarova, 2008:326). The authors argue that it is not productive to examine the selfie as an 'either or' public-private category, but rather the focus should be on the socially contingent nature of privacy. They suggest it is worthy to consider the possibility that consumers and producers of the selfie do not have the same regard for the public-private demarcation as previous

generations (Walsh and Baker, 2016:14). For these more technologically-adapted generations, privacy needs to be acted out and undertaken throughout the everyday. Creating 'pockets of accessibility/inaccessibility' that make some parts of ourselves accessible to others in some times and some places helps us get away with denying online audiences access to other places or times (Nippert-Eng, 2010:6). There is a permanent accessibility of the visual, allowing the photograph to become not just a tool of remembrance and nostalgia, but a technology that feeds into the transformation of the public and private social life (Walsh and Baker, 2016:3).

The Lawyer, 30 y.o.

I sit across from Leila at a football field, on a cold Sunday morning in July, just a five-minute walk from her home in Rozelle. But Leila, 30, did not always live in the Inner West: "I grew up in Western Sydney" she says. This is very important to Leila; having grown up in a well-publicised, low socio-economic status suburb, she believes it is important to be honest about her history, particularly considering her profession as a lawyer. When Leila started at her current law firm—where she has been employed for six years—she found welcome lunches and introductions always managed to get around to the topic of where Leila lived. At first, she was reluctant to speak truthfully of where she grew up. However, with increased experience in the firm and making strong connections with her co-workers came confidence, and now Leila says she speaks with pride about her home town: "It's very important to be true to myself".

Perhaps Leila's history, and the importance she places on authenticity, translates to her views on selfies: "I think they're glamourised and don't necessarily reflect reality" she begins. Much like interviewee Frank, Leila associates selfies with untrue representations of the persons in the photograph, or displays of vanity and self-obsession. Although she can

appreciate the ‘good’ that selfies can do in terms of social causes and individual empowerment, she still maintains that the majority of selfies on Facebook are manufactured and staged presentations.

“Okay well, what about differences between male and female selfies?” I ask. “Do you think men or women take more selfies?” Leila ponders this question for a moment. “This is so interesting…” she says. Leila brings up an example of something she has read on the topic and has experienced too. To illustrate her point, Leila uses an example of a woman taking a selfie with a friend on holiday while wearing a bikini. The woman then chooses to upload the image to a social media site. According to Leila, the woman may be sharing the photo for the purpose of showing off the location of the holiday (Lyu, 2016:192), or confirming a sense of friendship with the other person in the image. No matter the reason, Leila said that there is usually a person on social media, most often a heterosexual male, who makes an objectifying comment about the woman. These comments, Leila says, are derogatory as they frequently refer to the female’s body image, her eligibility as “wife material” and shaming terms such as “slut” or “skank”. “No matter what the interpretation is, the responsibility for the response is on the person taking the selfie not the viewer” she insightfully notes. She continues, “Then there’s a shift in perception about the person in the photo, that she is now a slut…And there is no criticism levelled against the person that is commenting”.

Gender-focused selfie scholars have found similar patterns of online behaviour to what Leila is describing. English academic Anne Burns argues that ‘By using the selfie as evidence of a number of negative female stereotypes…the close affinity that is discursively constructed between women and selfies means that criticism of the selfie acts as a thinly veiled means of undermining the subject’ (Burns, 2015:1718). Female selfie-taking is seen as an undesirable practice, with online commentators and observers denouncing the right for women to express themselves in whatever way they choose. This assertion of dominance becomes a tool for

social regulation, with negative connotations attached to female subjectivity (Burns, 2015:1722).

Throughout our interview, I brought up the issue of context, and the use of captions alongside selfies: "Captions can assist to put things in context, and help the viewer interpret your photo as you want them to interpret it" Leila says. It has been suggested that individual selfie-takers create a sense of self through uploading selfies and using a textual component known as captions (Manderstedt and Palo, 2015). Captions can be a way to 'take the edge off' the seriousness of the selfie, perhaps being ironic or saying something completely unrelated to the selfie it is associated with. The use of text alongside images has been a pertinent topic of discussion for many decades.

This is evident in Walter Benjamin's influential essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, which speaks of the changes to the way society sees art in the modern age of film and photography. Written in 1936, a key theme in this essay is the concept of 'aura': the sense of authenticity and originality that is, or was, inherent in an original work of art. This aura, Benjamin argues, has been lost with the proliferation and influence of of technological reproducibility on works of art (Benjamin, 1969:5). Referring to 'picture magazines' as a case in point, Benjamin discusses the way 'signposts' are now provided for readers. No longer can an image speak a thousand words, instead "captions have become obligatory" (Benjamin, 1969:8). These captions are explicit and imperative, acting as directives on how to interpret an image; an altogether different function to that of a title of a painting. Although Benjamin was writing in the early 20th century, the essence of his argument is useful in analysing the textual component to selfies on social media sites. The author of the photograph wants to direct you to the 'correct' or suitable interpretation of the image they have composed

The Police Officer, 25 y.o.

Matthew is a 25-year-old police officer who has been in the Force for approximately three years. Currently stationed at the Lower North Shore in Sydney, Matthew has always wanted to be a police officer, but after a couple of years he found that the role of General Duties Officer was not for him. Thus, he decided to make a change and apply for a different position in the Proactive Crime Team. The role involves proactively searching for offences being committed and looking for wanted or identified offenders or suspects. They also have a particular focus on theft and drug related offences. Matthew is much happier in this role, making the work-life balance easier to manage.

As we finish up speaking about his new role at work, I begin with some general selfie questions. Matthew would consider himself as an anti-selfieist. This selfie-stance becomes clear as the interview continues. It is not so much the idea of taking selfies that annoys Matthew, rather, it is the type and number of selfies he is bombarded with on social media that grinds his gears: "I'm not really a fan of them…Do we all want to have to look at what you are doing every second of the day?" he says, slightly exasperated.

It seems that Matthew is not approving of current selfie practices, or in fact, the undeniably more visual culture of contemporary society (Mirzoeff, 1998:3). Enamoured with the visual, a vast number of people in our society have the urge or impulse to photographically capture all moments—mundane to momentous—throughout their daily lives. Furthermore, smart phone applications such as Instagram and Snapchat, allow people to snap pictures with ease and accessibility (Wendt, 2014:9). These applications keep us constantly engaged with our image, with comment and 'like' notifications encouraging users to continue to interact with the upload. Visual culture critic Brooke Wendt notes: 'The selfie, the focus of the dialogue, accumulates likes and comments as if it is magically socialising with its user.' Thus, the user

can become engaged in a conversation between his or her self, selfie, and social network (Wendt, 2014:20). It seems the practice and process of selfie-taking that is, 'the act of self-portrayal' is also a focus—the final image is not the only outcome (Levin, 2014:20).

As we continue to talk about male and female selfies, hashtags and captions, the topic of Not Safe For Work (NSFW) selfies comes up in conversation (Tiidenberg, 2016:1563). Matthew, as is the case with all the participants, is not okay with the misuse of private selfies. He has not personally come across any police matters that have dealt with the issue of 'revenge porn' but is very wary of the potential consequences: "People, whether male or female—and a lot of the time it is female—have their private photograph shared without consent. That's obviously a huge 'no no'" he says. Yet, the advent of NSFW selfies is not always all doom and gloom. The practices of adult NSFW selfie-takers, have been read as a practice of freedom, specifically for women (Tiidenberg and Gómez Cruz, 2015:77). Sites such as NSFW blogs, in which users generate original selfie content, have become engaging platforms for women. Members of the blog community are taught new ways of seeing, which transforms their views on what is appealing or photographable. This consequently establishes a more productive context, within which a wider variety of selfies and identities can be shared and embraced (Thorpe, 2008:212).

Towards the end of the interview, Matthew continues to speak about the gripes he has with selfies, specifically celebrity selfie-culture. He suggests that there are "a lot of morons in the world" if the most followed Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat accounts are people whose claim to fame comes from a reality television show and "an association to some brands", he says. Selfie culture does not cut it for Matthew, especially when the most popular selfie-snappers are those who "do nothing and don't help people or society". Perhaps his work in the police force has something to do with his opinion, I wonder...

The Public Relations Manager, 24 y.o.

I meet Frances at her parent's house early one Sunday. Frances is feeling much better than she normally would on a Sunday morning: "I actually got ten hours sleep last night… I didn't go out for once, and I feel really good!" She says. I congratulate her on her good night's sleep, something we all could do with a bit more of. But a good night's sleep is not common for Frances. Working as a public relations (PR) manager in an office in Surry Hills means a lot of client functions, PR events, and late nights. I am not entirely sure what a PR Manager does, so Frances explains: "For example, Instagram influencers, I contact them and get them to talk about our products, or our events; I invite them to our events. So that counts as coverage and a win for our client, really".

Frances is a veteran selfie-enthusiast, but has reigned in her selfie-snapping since getting braces put on her teeth. But she still takes selfies, just for a different platform and for a different purpose. Previously, Frances would take selfies for her Instagram, including some 'sexy' snaps to promote her work in a previous job in the glamour model industry. Now, she mostly posts frivolous selfies on Snapchat using different filters. And like previous participant Sally, Frances notices the changes it makes to her face: "You don't realise 'til you take it off; it changes the whole shape of your face!" she says. Instead of multiple daily selfies, as she used to take, Frances is now one who appreciates viewing lots of selfies. She says her Instagram is full of "hot girls, most of who I follow are just hot girls". These "hot girls" are not technically influencers she says however, they have garnered a considerably large following, posting selfies at the gym, in tight clothes, wearing striking makeup and so forth.

In the interview with Frances, I brought forward five selfies from both traditional celebrities—Justin Bieber, Kylie Jenner, Chris Pratt, Chris Evans and Ricky Gervais—and a

microcelebrity—Lexi Laphor.[14] The selfie of Kylie Jenner is, according to Frances, deemed to be a 'typical' female celebrity selfie: "She's doing the 'feminine' pose, and the big lips are a thing as well. It seems like a normal selfie" she says. Yet, Frances does not see anything wrong with that.

I then show Frances the selfie of blogger and Instagrammer Lexi Laphor, an aesthetically and contextually different case to Kylie Jenner. Lexi is a very vocal, queer feminist, identifying herself as @femmeasfuck on her social media platforms. She also has multicoloured hair, multiple piercings, and has grown out her underarm hair. In an interview with Lexi on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's *Art Bites* program called 'The Glass Bedroom', Lexi says: "I can be very sexual and unapologetic about that—and that's what I think is so powerful about producing and collaborating and posting you own stuff online…" Lexi also goes on to say: "For me to collaborate with other queer photographers, make-up artists and things like that, it can be really meaningful…and build up your community".

Lexi appears to be a non-conformist or what she calls a "radical queer person", someone who is trying to enact change in society. When I present the selfie and this background information to Frances, she has an unexpected response. Rather than seeing Lexi as a non-conformist or a change-maker, Frances contends she is just like Kylie Jenner, in a way: "They ['hippies'] try hard not to conform… She's still taking a picture of herself and posting it all over social media…She is just trying to be like 'I'm not like other girls'. She is just part of a different stereotype" she says. Thus, Frances would categorise this selfie as 'typical'. This is quite a different opinion to her fellow participant Leila. Interestingly, Frances also has a different opinion on the Ricky Gervais selfie. While the majority of the participants saw it as an ironic or parody selfie, making a critical comment on celebrity selfie culture (Eagar and

[14]See Appendix Item 3 to view these selfies.

Dann, 2015:11-12), Frances saw it simply as a joke selfie, one you would send to your friends on Snapchat.

Social media has created platforms for self-promotion utilised by both 'traditional' celebrities, as well as what Marwick calls 'microcelebrities'. A microcelebrity is 'a mind-set and a collection of self-presentation practices endemic in social media, in which users strategically formulate a profile, reach out to followers, and reveal personal information to increase attention and thus improve their online status' (Marwick, 2015:138). Selfies are a key tactic that both types of celebrities use to enhance their profile and gain and maintain followers in the 'attention economy'. In a media-saturated, information-rich world, the attention economy refers to the capacity of a media-profile to attract viewership (Fairchild, 2007:359).

The Primary School Teacher, 25 y.o.

Wendy has had a rough day. She recently started full-time primary school teaching, and has found it to be, well, not as rewarding or fulfilling as she had hoped. There are a lot of troubled children, from broken families with serious behavioural issues: "It's just a lot to take in. I've definitely jumped into the deep end" she says. Prior to full-time teaching, Wendy studied full-time and worked as a part-time carer at a before-and-after school care centre, a position at this stage she much prefers. She says: "I just want to interact with the kids in a fun and loving and personal way… But at school, I can't really do that". School obviously has expectations of professionalism. Wendy is torn between having a fun-loving relationship with the children, and her role as an authority figure and disciplinarian.

When it comes to selfies and Wendy's online activity however, this separation is appropriate and necessary: "I work with kids so I wouldn't want any children to see my Instagram, ever!" Wendy explains that who she is at her job is not who she is in online representations. The

concepts of online self-presentation and self-disclosure are highly relevant and interrelated in discussion of social media activity, with scholars suggesting that a precondition of self-presentation online is a necessity to disclose personal information (Dhir *et al*, 2017:2). Furthermore, Barnes (2006) has identified a 'privacy paradox' in which individuals are consensually sharing photographs and written updates, yet they are doing so with a sense of uneasiness about potential negative consequences of their actions. This relates to Wendy's privacy concerns in that she has the desire to act like and represent her 'true self' online, yet she feels a sense of trepidation when thinking about the potential of non-intended viewership.

As we continue the interview, we come to the topic of looking back on selfies. When asked if she looks back on her social media photos or the content saved from these accounts, Wendy says she does enjoy taking a trip down memory lane: "I really enjoy looking at my Instagram feed, just because… I like how I've curated it" she says. It is interesting that Wendy uses the term 'curate' to describe the organisation of her Instagram profile, as such a word is often associated with art galleries or an exhibition in a museum. Such a statement connects the selfie with artistic enterprises—individuals are becoming more inclined to thoughtfully organise online self-presentations, picking and choosing what to share with whom and when (Walker Rettberg, 2014:3). Today's selfie is perhaps less about self-reflection and more about presenting one's creation to a wider audience, like a work of art (Kozinets *et al*, 2017:1). Many of these kinds of selfies, those that work with different lighting, camera angles and perspective, reflect common standards of self-portraits. Furthermore, they both create a static form out of a 'fluctuating yet significant slice of life' (Carbon, 2017:6).

Midway through our interview, Wendy mentions that she deletes photographs from her Instagram from time to time. "Why would you delete photos?" I ask. Wendy says that if the photo or selfie no longer reflects who she is as a person, she will delete it: "Just if I feel like it is not who I am anymore… Everything that is on my Instagram, I am quite comfortable with

it being on there" she says. It is an interesting admission to make, as none of the other participants spoke about deleting posts on any social media platform selfie or otherwise, even though this is a very common practice (Lang and Barton, 2015:149). This statement reflects Wendy's desire to curate her Instagram. Her ever-changing sense of self, personal and professional circumstances dictate what is and what is not appropriate for her online self-presentation.

Geismar sees Instagram as a digital archive; an evocative conceptual framework as social media is commonly seen as having 'obsolescence built into its technical form, and fickleness built into its user base' (Geismar, 2016:331). One can upload and delete selfies and any other posts however much they please. Yet it is important to remember that metadata or Big Data sets—extensive amounts of online data that can be computationally analysed to reveal patterns and trends in user activity—do not 'delete' online activity, as it is continually monitored and used.

The Marketing Administrator, 25 y.o.

I met Rhian on a Saturday afternoon at her apartment located East of Parramatta. Rhian and her Grandma, or 'Babul', derived from 'Babushka' meaning 'Grandmother' in Russian, had just come home from their ritual weekly shopping trip. Rhian was rather worn out, as her Babul, being a slight build and 82 years old was not able to hold any of the shopping. Especially not the three kilograms of mandarins she insisted on purchasing. They lovingly bicker in Armenian once they enter the door with all the groceries, welcoming me into the apartment along the way. Rhian's Babul does not actually live with Rhian. Babul is having some health problems, and the family decided it was best for her to spend more time at their place to keep an eye on her, ensuring she keeps up with healthy eating, medication timing and so on.

Rhian, compared to the other participants in this study, has a different opinion on what constitutes a selfie—rather than having to be taken by oneself, Rhian believes that someone else can take the selfie for you: "I would consider the photos, even if someone else took it, to be a selfie". Her reasoning for this position comes from her artistic photographic flair, the "good eye" she inherited from her late father. To get the right angles and to produce a beautiful selfie, considers that you can utilise the photographic work of another: "I take amazing photos of other people", as well as fantastic photos of herself, too.

Rhian is an avid and unashamed selfie-enthusiast, averaging anywhere from seventeen to seventy selfies per sitting. She enjoys taking selfies by herself, but throughout the interview, I find out that a lot of her selfie-taking is with her best friend, Taylor. Not long after they met did they discover their mutual love of selfies. Rhian and Taylor employ each other as personal selfie-photographers, always scoping out opportune moments and locations for selfie-snapping.

As Rhian speaks about her selfie experiences, it becomes clear that she has been heavily influenced by her late father's photo-taking abilities, as well as her Babul's fascination with self-portraiture. Rhian tells me her father was the first person in his Iranian village in the Tehran Province to have a camera: "He took amazing photos… My aunty said it [the camera] was huge, everyone [in the village] loved it and everyone was interested in it". Vernacular photography—ordinary photos or, images of the everyday—is a significant yet neglected field of study, encompassing most photographic images worldwide (Batchen, 2000:262). Both Rhian's father and her Babul engaged in vernacular photography. Her father took photographs of his travels, as well as those 'mundane' images of his family, friends and so forth.

It is Rhian's Babul however, who I would like to discuss further. Rhian explains that her Babul has created somewhat of a sanctuary of herself in her own house: "It's ended up being a shrine to herself! And our photos have taken a backseat in her house!" Rhian says. Rhian's Babul's love of self-portraiture is manifested in a collage-like "shrine". Geoffrey Batchen speaks of the significance of photographic albums and collages, as a way of giving the owners of the photographs 'other ways to intervene creatively in the image-making process' (Batchen, 2000:266). Batchen notes that the use of collages was not solely confined to albums. They were and still are, as is the case with Rhian's Babul, used to decorate domestic spaces, with walls becoming 'festooned' with images (Batchen, 2000:267).

As previously mentioned, Rhian credits her father for her photographic eye, and her Babul in terms of being comfortable with taking risqué selfies: "When it comes to taking photos, me and my grandma are very similar…We will take it to the next level!" she says. It is interesting to note the inter-generational commonalities in terms of engaging in firstly, self-portraiture for Rhian's Babul and secondly, selfies for Rhian. Another similarity is the way in which the ladies keep the photographs to themselves. Babul does not go about handing her photographs out to people, as she is happy with her personal shrine. In the same way, Rhian is not a selfie-uploader. Although she takes hundreds of selfies, very few make it so social media. Rhian attributes this protection of her selfies to the worry that the photos will not be appreciated. She explains: "When you put in all that effort to take that nice, beautiful photo…And then uploading it, and not getting the gratification".

Rhian's choice to not upload her selfies, is not as unusual as was once practiced. Many young people are opting out of sharing their selfies, for reasons concerned with privacy, intimacy and context (Lasén and Hjorth, 2017:133). Rhian however, will not curb her selfie-taking behaviour. We talk about the shift in society's definition of privacy, and what is considered acceptable content. Rhian expresses her feelings, in a way that I believe encompasses the

essence of selfie practices for young people: “You can take [a photo] of anything! If you don’t like it don’t look at it” she says, “It’s like freedom of speech; it’s freedom of selfie!”

So, where does the selfie leave us?

Conclusion

During the initial stages of this research project, I was interested in exploring whether or not it was possible to discern some broad set of universal 'rules' that applied more generally to selfie photographic cultural practices. But as I delved deeper into the theoretical literature and the diversity of selfie genres, I found that neither 'rules' nor one singular overarching form of 'culture' are necessarily suitable organising categories for discussing the selfie. We should, perhaps, speak in the plural about selfie cultures and cultural practices. But although my selfie-enthusiasts and anti-selfieists do not necessarily acknowledge 'hard and fast rules' (for uploading, editing or making selfies), they do discuss and, at times, appear to adhere to a number of conventions; spoken or unspoken guidelines and ways of operating.

The topics of agency and non-agency also emerge as recurring themes in discussions of selfie-taking and selfie-viewing practices. Some theoretical frameworks see selfie-taking as a non-agentic action. These approaches perceive selfie-snapping as passive production and consumption of images influenced by capitalist forces. Others see selfies as a manifestation at the cultural level of narcissism and other worrying psychological needs and traits. A more positive appreciation of selfies in the literature views selfies as empowering, assisting users in feeling a sense of autonomy because they are in control of the images they produce. Although the selfie clearly warrants interdisciplinary investigation, examining the selfie through a sociological lens is, I conclude, a fruitful exercise. In other words, as I hope I have demonstrated throughout this text and particularly in chapter four, there is a sociology of the selfie. And just as selfies may be seen as socially productive, they are also socially provocative.

My empirical research demonstrates that selfie-takers, selfie-viewers and even anti-selfieists exercise reflexivity by extensively pondering the nature of selfies and selfie-taking in

everyday life. While some echo the popular view of the selfie as a negative reflection on our society as self-absorbed and narcissistic, others contend that the selfie is a far more complex entity tapping into concepts of artistic value, self-expression, self-presentation, and the intense sociality of networked communities. Still, others are more ambivalent, torn between numbers of perspectives. Although I have offered here, particularly in chapter three, only a small slice of life on a metaphorical street in Sydney in 2017, all these views reflect, I suggest, the tone of the wider debate over selfies in public life. The common denominator that exists with all the participants in my study is their ability, willingness and obvious desire to share their thoughtful opinions and experiences. We might call this 'selfie reflexivity'.

As outlined in the introductory chapter, the selfie is part of the ever-increasing trend towards the heightened visibility of everyday life in contemporary society. Technologies such as the smart phone with its inbuilt camera, web applications, social media platforms and improved remote internet connection all mean that the selfie can be transported and transformed from a moment in the private sphere to a digital record in the public sphere. The lives of selfie-snappers, if they so choose, are constantly being disseminated and displayed to audiences across cultures and borders. The seemingly insignificant or uninteresting features of our everyday routines have become a staple in the selfie-taker's repertoire of images. Like the snapshots of old, these are, perhaps, the new dull photos we cannot live without.

What has also emerged through the keen uptake of selfies and other forms of digital photography is an ever-changing relationship between the ephemeral images that selfie-takers produce and the permanency of digital archives. We may no longer routinely retain physical photographs, including selfies, as keepsakes or souvenirs as the images are constantly being usurped and replaced by new and evermore 'exciting' snaps. And instead of capturing a moment in time with the pressure of our fingers triggering the sound of the shutter 'click', we

now simply lightly touch the screen: ‘click-view-delete’. Yet, even after they have been removed or electronically ‘deleted’ all these images of our everyday lives remain as ephemeral traces—even ghostly ones—stored in the vast digital archives of the internet.

The selfie, it must be said, is a thoroughly slippery and elusive cultural phenomenon. Although selfies are ubiquitous, they clearly resist easy definitions or categorisation. As photographic objects, selfies forge all kinds of relationships between the human actors involved in their construction and the technologies that allow their transmission. The selfie is quintessentially a malleable exercise in digital self-portraiture. It is protean: an object and practice that can take on many forms. The selfie can tell us something about visual culture, photographic practices, ideas of time and place and what are meant by the terms ‘self-portraiture’, ‘private’, ‘public’ and ‘presentation of self’. But ultimately the selfie cannot be pinned down. Selfies are constantly morphing: moving, appearing, disappearing and reappearing as animated digital lifeforms. They are an integral element of a society that operates with ephemeral images and transitory trends. Elusive, fleeting, liquid, transforming and potentially transformative, selfies capture the zeitgeist of our time. They are a worldwide phenomenon. And, for some at least, they represent a new kind of visual freedom: Selfie freedom.

Appendices

Item 1: Table 1

Overview of typical types of selfies, including a short characterization and main aims often found with people who take such selfies.

Type of Selfie	***Characterisation***	***Main Aims***
Autobiography Selfie	Used to document an individual's life: ranging from momentous occasions to mundane events	• Documentation • Remembrance
Parody Selfie	A humorous selfie, used as a form of social commentary or critique.	• Reflection • Humour
Propaganda Selfie	Used to communicate physical attractiveness, for the purpose of gaining social media followers	• Self-promotion • Endorse physical attractiveness
Romance Selfie	Demonstrates and celebrates either: real-world togetherness or aloneness. Maintains a visual, virtual presence in lives separated by physical difference.	• Celebration of circumstance
Self-Help Selfie	Based on the idea of self-invention or re-invention. Showcases mastery of expertise in an area of personal development.	• Take viewer on personal journey • Demonstrate capability and contentment
Travel Diary Selfie	Personal experience framed by space and place. Incorporates physical surroundings with self.	• Display adventurousness • Contemporaneous and retrospective events
Coffee-Table Book Selfie	Use of selfies as an aesthetic artistic endeavour	• Emphasises: Imagery > text, aestheticism > information, and photographic technique.

Data tabulated based on description by Eagar and Dann (2015:10-17).

Item 2: Table 2

Overview of typical types of selfies, including a short characterization and main aims often found with people who take such selfies.[15]

Type of selfie	Characterization	Main aims
Classic selfie	Taking a photo just from the own face without more additional ingredients, looking quite neutral	• Self-reference • Documentation
Situation selfie	Portraying a specific situation in which the selfied person is currently (in the bed, in a miserable situation, with fun)	• Authenticity • Humor
Emotional selfie	Expressing a specific emotion very clearly and explicitly	• Emotion • Mood
Optimization selfie	Posing to optimize the physical appearance (e.g., by shooting from above, trimming the facial shape by muscle activities)	• Attractiveness • Idealization
Celebrity selfie	Integrating a celebrity while taking a selfie	• Importance • Identification
Sports selfie	Taking a selfie while making sports activities (indoor)	• Sportiveness • Energeticness • Performance
Leisure selfie	Taking a selfie being lazy, chilling out	• Mood
Food selfie	Selfie-ing while eating	• Authenticity • Passion
Drink selfie	Selfie-ing while drinking	• Authenticity • Passion
Mirror selfie	Shooting a selfie through a mirror	• Spontaneity • Authenticity
Landmark selfie	Posing in front of a significant landmark (building, landscape)	• Exclusivity • Interest
Outfit selfie	Focusing on new or special outfit	• Trendiness • Innovativeness
Body selfie	Pronouncing specific body parts, especially the belly ("belfie"), muscles, body parts of particular appeal or salience	• Sportiveness • Beauty Physical • properties
Car selfie	Taking a selfie while driving a car	• Spontaneity • Performance Personal • situation
Ultimate selfie/ Daredevil selfie	Initiating a stunt in the face of a camera	• Performance • Fearlessness
Purpose selfie	Making clear with the selfie that something important will go on (e.g., by showing a weapon, a claim of responsibility)	• Importance • Power
Fingermouthing selfie	Fingers are in front of the mouth or touch the lips	• Spontaneity • Expression • Attractiveness
Selfie-reference selfie	Making explicitly clear that the photo is a selfie by, e.g., shooting the selfie-ist in a mirror while making the selfie	• Self-reference • Creativity
Selfie-stick	Selfie taken from a farther distance as usual by help of a selfie-stick, a monopod which is typically extensible	• Context relationship • Part of the whole • Competence • Mastering of difficult situations
AirSelfie	Takes the selfie from a device that flies above the selfie-ist, mostly ensured by a camera drone	• Competence • Context relationship
Weefie	Shows not only the selfie-ist, but also other people who are directed toward the camera	• Social embedmen • Social relationship

Image sourced from: Carbon, (2017:7).

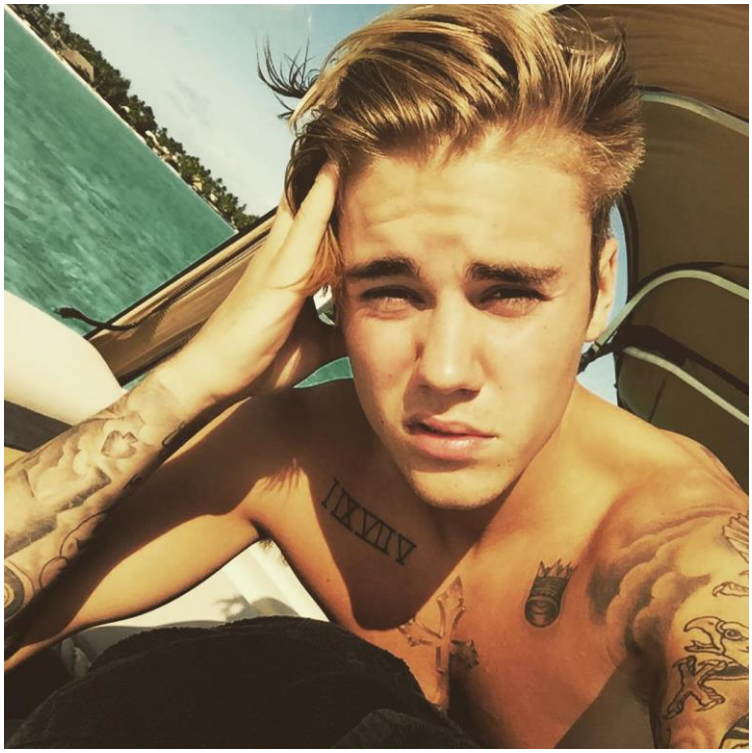
[15] There are many types of selfies in circulation, with an ever-increasing number of selfie neologisms being created, although not all are officially accepted terms like 'selfie'. Table 1 is sourced from an article by Professor of Psychology, Claus-Christian Carbon; the table lists commonly known or typical selfies, such as the mirror selfie, celebrity selfie and car selfie (Carbon, 2017:7). Australian academics Toni Eagar and Stephen Dann in their study of selfies as as tool for human branding, have too created a typology of sorts (Eagar and Dann, 2015:10-17). In Table 2, I have summarised their seven types of selfies using the same categorisation as Carbon's typology.

Item 3: Photo Elicitation Selfies

1. Kylie Jenner

Source*: Instagram* @kyliejenner

2. Justin Bieber



Source: *Instagram* @justinbieber

3. Ricky Gervais

Source: *Instagram* @rickygervais

4. Chris Pratt and Chris Evans

Source: *Instagram* @prattprattpratt

5. Lexi Laphor

Source: *Tumblr* femmeasfuck.tumblr.com

Items 4-6: #selfiefail images

Item 4: Unfortunately-Timed Selfie*

Source: Viktorija G. '10+ Of The Worst Selfie Fails BY people Who Forgot To Check The Background', *Bored Panda*
https://www.boredpanda.com/funny-selfie-background-reflection-fails/
Accessed 4 September 2017.

* It can be debated as to whether or not this is indeed a 'fail'. Some may look at this image as a complete triumph of selfie-taking. Again, this alludes to the way in which selfies are difficult to pinpoint or categorise.

Item 5: Selfie that does not correlate to caption**

Source: Viktorija G. '10+ Of The Worst Selfie Fails By People Who Forgot To Check The Background', *Bored Panda*
https://www.boredpanda.com/funny-selfie-background-reflection-fails/
Accessed 4 September 2017.

**** When one looks closely into the reflection of the woman's selfie, there is in fact no 'traffic'. This makes the caption false and therefore makes this picture a #selfiefail in that the image does not align with the caption.

Item 6: Selfie in which implicit or intended message of the image is refuted***

Source: Viktorija G. ‘10+ Of The Worst Selfie Fails By People Who Forgot To Check The Background’, *Bored Panda*
https://www.boredpanda.com/funny-selfie-background-reflection-fails/
Accessed 4 September 2017.

*** It can be assumed that the subject of the image is aiming to display strength, toughness and ‘typical’ masculinity. This message is refuted however, because it appears the subject has enlisted his mother or grandmother to take the photo for him.

Item 7: Method and Methodology: Extra Information

Stuart St Revisited: Notes on Methodology

A key aim of this thesis is to unearth the mechanisms and motivations inside the world of selfie practices. Following Goffman, my research uses a micro-sociological approach to understand the selfie. A micro-sociological examination refers to a focus on the everyday social and communicative interactions between individuals that form the basis for the large-scale workings of society. The selfie phenomena cannot, I suggest, merely be explained. It must be interpreted in an inductive way to understand and discover people's meaning of their social lives.

Although there are clearly individual elements to selfie-taking, from a sociological perspective, my intuition is that the process cannot escape the rules and interactions that define its social production. I want to go beyond the psychoanalytic explanation, and unpack an intricate puzzle—a puzzle made up of concepts of Self and expression, performance, documentation, technology, and even empowerment. The other chapters in this thesis work by using key theoretical frameworks as a way to organise the examination and analysis of selfie practices. In contrast, my method section or 'Snapshots from the Field' takes a more creative approach to demonstrate the interview data.

I interview what I call 'selfie-enthusiasts' and 'anti-selfieists', to gain varying perspectives and opinions on the matter—all participants are over the age of 18. I interview eight people in total: four selfie-enthusiasts and four anti-selfieists. Each interview went for a duration of 30 to 60 minutes. Participants were recruited through a Facebook advertisement, with friends of friends referring participants for interview. Thus, it was a random sample with people from varying walks of life with a 50:50 ratio of male to females and a mixed age group.

Selfie-enthusiasts are seen as ideal participants, as these individuals enjoy taking, and usually uploading selfies to social media platforms. In other words, they partake in as well as simultaneously consume and produce the 'rules' of selfie culture. Anti-selfieists are perhaps a less obvious choice. How can someone who dislikes or perhaps vehemently opposes the phenomena, contribute to answering to this research question? I argue that anti-selfieists see the rules of selfie-taking and then take an oppositional stance. In other words, even though they are not themselves snapping selfies, their dislike for the spoken or unspoken conventions of selfie culture shows that they acknowledge and perhaps critique what is occurring, taking a reflexive stance.

I acknowledge that other research methods could have been used. Methods such as content analyses and surveys have the potential to reap sufficient, valuable data. Yet, these quantitative approaches do not suit my research questions. Nevertheless, I use the tool of photo elicitation in my interviews to combat the lack of quantitative methods. Douglas Harper notes that photo elicitation method is "based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview" (Harper, 2002:13). The reason for using this method is that images, like photographs, evoke deeper elements of human consciousness that do words (Harper, 2002:13). When interviewees are presented with images, a different kind of information is evoked. It has been found to elicit longer, more comprehensive interviews, and assists the participant in overcoming interview-based fatigue (Collier, 1957:856). Thus, rather than analysing hundreds of selfies, I use five selfies of my choosing to display to the participants. I display a mixture of male and female, 'serious' and 'frivolous' selfies from public celebrity's Instagram and Tumblr accounts, encouraging the interviewee to comment on and analyse these selfies.[16] Furthermore, I asked the interviewees to show me examples of

[16] See Appendix Item 3 to view these selfies.

their selfies, selfies they have seen, or selfies that assist them in explaining a concept or idea.[17]

There are of course many limitations to the use of just an 'interview' as a method of data collection. It takes a detailed yet small snapshot of a wider social phenomenon and as such it has been argued that interviews do not reap sufficient data. I am aware of this limitation, but in my opinion, it is crucial to investigate micro-social worlds as our everyday experiences involve these social interactions. Interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow humans (Fontana and Frey, 2005:697). Therefore, some analyses should reflect these aspects of our social life, unearthing the nuances and complexities of the selfie phenomenon. I argue that this type of examination is just as important as macro studies. I look at new modes of being in the world, taking notice of the taken for granted aspects of emerging forms visibility, photography and visual culture.

[17] I asked this question at an appropriate time, and only proceeded if the interviewee felt comfortable doing so.

Item 8: Macquarie University Ethics Approval

Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor
(Research)

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MACQUARIE University
SYDNEY·AUSTRALIA

29 May 2017

Dear Dr Leitch

Reference No: 5201700383

Title: *The Sociology of the Selfie: Rules of Engagement.*

Thank you for submitting the above application for ethical and scientific review. Your application was considered by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC (Human Sciences & Humanities)).

I am pleased to advise that ethical and scientific approval has been granted for this project to be conducted by:

- Macquarie University

This research meets the requirements set out in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007 – Updated May 2015) (the *National Statement*).

Standard Conditions of Approval:

1. Continuing compliance with the requirements of the *National Statement,* which is available at the following website:

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/book/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research

2. This approval is valid for five (5) years, subject to the submission of annual reports. Please submit your reports on the anniversary of the approval for this protocol.

3. All adverse events, including events which might affect the continued ethical and scientific acceptability of the project, must be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.

4. Proposed changes to the protocol and associated documents must be submitted to the Committee for approval before implementation.

It is the responsibility of the Chief investigator to retain a copy of all documentation related to this project and to forward a copy of this approval letter to all personnel listed on the project.

Should you have any queries regarding your project, please contact the Ethics Secretariat on 9850 4194 or by email ethics.secretariat@mq.edu.au

The HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities) Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures are available from the Research Office website at:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics

The HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities) wishes you every success in your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Karolyn White
Director, Research Ethics & Integrity,
Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee (Human Sciences and Humanities)

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007) and the *CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice*.

Details of this approval are as follows:

Approval Date: 25 May 2017

The following documentation has been reviewed and approved by the HREC (Human Sciences & Humanities):

Documents reviewed	Version no.	Date
Macquarie University Ethics Application Form		Revised application received 23/05/2017
Response addressing the issues raised by the HREC		Received 23/05/2017
Photo Elicitation Images	1	23/05/2017
Participant Information and Consent Form	1	23/05/2017
Interview Questions for Selfie-Enthusiast	1	23/05/2017
Interview Questions for Anti-Selfieist	1	23/05/2017
University Advertisement	1	23/05/2017
Facebook Advertisement	1	23/05/2017
Hard Copy Advertisement	1	23/05/2017

***If the document has no version date listed one will be created for you. Please ensure the footer of these documents are updated to include this version date to ensure ongoing version control.**

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