

Chapter 21

Technologized Sexism: Controlling (Re)presentation of Women's Bodies Through Selfies

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ABSTRACT

Digital revolution experienced by the human race has made great impact on presentation of bodies and self. Observing the (re)presentation of self in the social constructed phenomenon of 'selfie' through sociological lens opens up gate for variety of conceptual and theoretical perspectives. The study aims to make inquiry in complex interplay among body, technology, and social control reflected in selfie. For this purpose, the study employs Netnography techniques along with thematic analysis under frameworks like dramaturgy, sociosemiotic, and dialectic to explore and describe sociologically relevant theories to grasp novel avenues of social control and (re)presentation of women's bodies through selfie. The chapter intend to develop space for further sociological research that enables the perception of selfies not only as socially constructed phenomenon but also a tool for social control over (re)presentation of self and objectification women bodies in cyberspace.

1. INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution has dramatically impacted how people present themselves and their bodies. Examining the presentation of 'self' through the concept of "selfies" in a sociological context reveals a variety of theoretical perspectives. The concept of selfies is observed as a part of a new culture evolved because of social media. This new culture has unique ways in which it influences sexism. People taking and posting selfies on social media are often mocked, shamed, or seen as objects of sexist content.

The chapter examines the complex relationship between the body, technology, and social control as reflected in selfies. The study employs techniques like Netnography and thematic analysis under

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frameworks like dramaturgy, sociosemiotics, and dialectics to explore and describe relevant sociological strands to grasp the novel avenues of social control and re-presentation of women's bodies through selfies.

The aim of the chapter is to highlight vacuum for further sociological research that sees selfies not only as a socially constructed phenomenon but also as a tool for social control over the presentation of self and the objectification of women's bodies in cyberspace. Studying technologised sexism through sociology provides a critical and nuanced understanding of the ways in which technology and society are intertwined and reinforces the sociocultural implications of technological advancements.

Technologised sexism uses technology to perpetuate the objectification and sexualisation of women. This may take many forms, including the production and distribution of pornographic images and videos, the creation of virtual female characters that are overly sexualised, and the use of social media to spread and amplify sexist and degrading messages. These technologies contribute to the normalisation of sexist attitudes and beliefs, and they profoundly impact how women are perceived and treated in society. Technologised sexism sometimes results in online harassment and cyberstalking, which are often directed towards women. The anonymity and accessibility of the internet make it easier for ill-intend users to engage in these types of behaviours, and the impact on the victims might be devastating. These technologies are often used to spread false and damaging information about women, intimidate and threaten them, and stalk and monitor their online activities.

Sociology serves as an essential discipline in studying technologised sexism because it helps to understand how social, cultural, and political forces shape technology and its uses. In other words, technology and its uses are not neutral but are instead influenced by the power dynamics that exist in society. Sociology also helps to analyse how these ideologies and beliefs are perpetuated through technology and the consequences of these perpetuations for women and society. For instance, the study of technologised sexism through sociology potentially reveals the ways in which social media platforms and the algorithms used on these platforms are used to manipulate people's perception of themselves and others and the impact this has on gender and body image. From a philosophical perspective, studying technologised sexism helps uncover the underlying ideologies and beliefs that inform how technology is used to perpetuate and reinforce sexism. For instance, in the context of social media and selfies, how women's bodies are represented, objectified, and consumed can be seen as a manifestation of more prominent patriarchal and sexist ideologies that shape the way society views women and their bodies. In sociology and history, technologised sexism is a relatively new concept that has arisen with the proliferation of technology in recent years. However, its roots can be traced back to earlier forms of sexism and gender-based violence that have existed throughout history.

1.1. History of Technologized Self and Sexism

The history of selfies can be traced back to the earliest days of photography, and it is a reflection of the evolving technology and cultural attitudes towards self-portraiture. While some scholars have criticised selfies as a symbol of vanity and self-obsession, they have also been embraced as a means of self-expression and communication. The selfie represents a new form of visual culture that is rapidly changing and adapting to new technologies and platforms. A selfie is technically a self-portrait picture captured with a smartphone or camera and shared on social media or internet platforms. The term "selfie" was first used in 2002 and has since become a ubiquitous aspect of modern digital culture. At the same time, the act of taking a selfie may seem like a recent phenomenon; the history of self-portraits can be traced back to the earliest days of photography.

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