PORNO SELF[IE]:

INTERACTIVE AMATEUR PORNOGRAPHY ON REDDIT GONE WILD

AND THE ORGANIZATION OF A NEW ONLINE EROTIC ART WORLD

by

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ABSTRACT

On Reddit.com, a sub-forum has been devoted entirely to enshrining a special kind of selfie, the porno-selfie. The present study, an online ethnographic content analysis of the subreddit Reddit Gone Wild, reveals the unique situation of the online community as distinct both from other social networking sites and other amateur pornography sites. Using Becker's art world as a guiding theoretical framework, I examine the influence of Reddit Gone Wild's social organization on art (porno-seflies) and artists' (female posters') careers on the site. Through its social organization built upon its convention, anonymity, and autonomy, I illustrate how the social phenomenon of creating and disseminating self-authored nude photos on RGW constitutes a new art world predicated by the increased technological advancements of digital smartphone photography and mass instantaneous communication.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Among society's youth and young adults, the selfie has become a normal part of everyday life. *Selfies* are, in a sense, the modern day self-portrait. Usually taken with a camera phone, they are photos people take of themselves that are most typically used for self-promotion on Social Networking Sites (Oxford Dictionary 2016). Selfies, and their catchy name, have reached such a level of cultural relevancy that in 2013, *selfie* became Oxford Dictionary's Word of the Year (Oxford Dictionary 2013).

On Reddit.com, a sub-forum, Reddit Gone Wild, has been devoted entirely to enshrining a special kind of selfie, the *porno-selfie*. A porno-selfie is a photo of any varying degree of sexualized undress taken by and featuring oneself. As selfies have become a norm for teenage and young adult communication through self-expression (Frosh, 2015; Senft & Baym, 2015), porno-selfies have likewise grown to a level of normalcy as communication through sexual expression, evidenced by the growing discourse surrounding their role in the prevalence of sexting[1] (Best & Bogle, 2014; Hasinoff, 2015) and revenge porn[2] (Barmore, 2015; Tungate, 2014; Henry & Powell,

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[1] Sexting refers to sending sexualized, risqué, or erotic messages through digital means such as text messages, emails, and social messaging apps. Sexts often contain nude or explicit images of oneself, including porno-selfies.

[2] Franklin's 2014 law review defined revenge porn as "a term for the posting of nude images of an unconsenting individual online, frequently by an ex-boyfriend. These photos are often linked to social media profiles, the victim's home address, and employer." Most frequently, the nude photo used for revenge porn is a porno-selfie

2015). While it seems that porno-selfies are most commonly taken for private use and shared with intimate partners digitally, their growth in popularity has spawned an increase in amateur pornography websites, functioning as online hubs for their gathering and dissemination. Particularly, these sites mostly encourage and promote the posting of young women's erotic selfies.

The porno-selfie can be thought of as an art piece where the self-portrait meets the nude painting; and, Reddit Gone Wild (RGW), as an online erotic art world where artists exhibit and members view and appreciate art. These statement may be met with some controversy as the debate over whether or not pornography is art has had a tumultuous history (Dennis, 2009). Whether pornography is believed to be tasteful, harmful, good, or a magnet that sways society's moral compass, is here irrelevant. This is not to suppose that those discussions do not have a place in academia, but it is not my purpose here.

Mainstream pornography is generally considered to be professional, managed and distributed by companies. As such, it tends to be viewed as a form of sex work, in which the women participating are often assumed to be motivated by monetary compensation, and exploited by male producers. Because the pornography on Reddit Gone Wild differs from mainstream pornography in that it is self-authored, non-commercial (unpaid), anonymous (photos are typically cropped at the neck and contain no identifying information), and evaluated based upon its aesthetic properties, it is best understood from an art world frame. This thesis uses Becker's art world as

that was previously given to the offender during an intimate relationship with the victim.

the guiding theoretical tool to analyze the social organization of Reddit Gone Wild and understand its cultural significance.

Just because something can be studied as an art world does not necessarily mean it should be (Becker 2008); for in so doing, without thought and theory, the definition becomes over extended and loses its worth as an analytic tool. That being said, I believe there is value in studying RGW, and pornography more generally, as an online erotic art world. First, through the art world lens, pornography is more easily studied objectively. While there is an entire body of literature on whether pornography truly is art, there is an even larger body of literature aimed at making judgements regarding the morality—or immorality—of pornography. This includes evangelical, feminist, gender, communications, deviance, and criminology scholars alike (Beisel, 1993; Dennis, 2009). Many have attempted to discern how pornography may affect a given population that it has clouded the opportunity to look more closely at the phenomenon itself. Second, the newest facet of pornography, amateur interactive pornography, like that found on RGW, mirrors the styles of collective activity witnessed in more 'traditional' art worlds. And third, selfies are a 21st century incarnation of a self-portrait, a classic art form in which artists use themselves as the subject of their portraits.

In this article, I discuss the findings of my online ethnographic work on the site Reddit Gone Wild (RGW) and its implications for future pornography study. Though it is estimated that over 57% of millennials have taken and sent explicit photos of themselves via text, email, or social network (sexting) (Howard, 2015), I am concerned solely with those porno-selfies being distributed via RGW, as that is the art world I am examining here. Here I wish to focus not on the potential effects on the

morality of Reddit Gone Wild's viewers or producers, but rather on the social organization that makes the phenomenon possible and how that social organization influences porno-selfie posts to the site. In short, I ask *how is Reddit Gone Wild socially organized and what are the typical characteristics of the art and the artists' posting careers in that art world*?

I attempt to answer those questions in this thesis. In order to understand women's posting careers in Reddit Gone Wild's online erotic art world, it first becomes necessary to understand how Reddit and, in particular Reddit Gone Wild work, as they are distinct from both other social networking sites and other amateur pornography sites. First, in order to provide a base of knowledge regarding the sites, I explain at length how they work and are interwoven. Second, by reviewing the worlds of pornography, art, selfies, and their convergence, I explain why it is necessary to view this new facet of amateur interactive pornography found on Reddit Gone Wild through an art world frame. Third, I discuss the unique social organization of Reddit and Reddit Gone Wild and their culmination as an online erotic art world, followed by an analysis of the art on RGW. Lastly, I examine artists' careers using female posters' own voices (via their photo captions) to draw a better understanding of who the artists are and their posting motives in relation to the organization of Reddit Gone Wild. I conclude with a discussion of the influence of online social organization on artists' behavior, site norms and values, and implications for future porno-selfie research.

In the following section, I will go into a good bit of detail explaining the social networking platform Reddit and Reddit Gone Wild are built upon. Readers already familiar with using the sites may wish to proceed to Chapter 3.

Chapter 2

EXPLAINING REDDIT & REDDIT GONE WILD

To a complete outsider, the language and layout of Reddit may seem like a big inside joke from which you've been left out. The bland colors and small text give the page an outdated, amateur feel; words follow the sign /r/; numbers are sandwiched between arrows; pictures are too small to see; a search bar is prompting you to subscribe to something called *subreddits*; a little robot with red eyes and an antenna is staring at you; it's hard to tell where or even if you have to log-in; and, legitimate news stories are co-mingled with titles like *Best side boob so far this year* and *Lessons on reading sheet music*. If you do sign up, the layout can become even more jumbled. To be sure, Reddit can be a confusing place for first timers (see Figure 1). To prevent that same left-out feeling for readers of this paper who are unfamiliar with Reddit, the next several pages will define the basic principles of Reddit in simple language, using analogies, and making comparisons to better-known social networking sites (SNS).

Figure 1   Reddit Homepage Screen Shot

Imagine you walk into a favorite local restaurant; a place where nearly everyone goes to eat and catch up. Each table is having its own conversation, fueled by the mutual interest of those sitting there. Each table's discussion is different. Some tables are chatting about the latest political scandal, local news, activism, science, or art. Some are focused on love, dating, and relationships. At another table people are piling around someone's cell phone to see pictures of the family pet or new baby.

Then there are a few tables in the back room discussing topics that might be considered inappropriate for public, open spaces. They are talking about porn and sex while trying to convince the girls to take their shirts off. At another back table, the conversation takes a jump from inappropriate to disturbing by showing pictures of corpses, ranking them from least to most attractive. Across from them, a group of addicts exchange ideas about the best way to get a better high.

The kitchen and wait staff join the conversations of their tables while they take drink orders and serve food. Certain staff feel more comfortable serving front tables,

some enjoy the inappropriateness of the back, and others are content to serve both kinds. Regular guests who come nearly every day, the staff know well. Newer faces or acquaintances who have blended into the crowd, the staff are not as familiar with, but, still happy to serve. Likewise, the management is happy to have a packed restaurant regardless of what conversations are happening in their establishment. On the internet, this restaurant is called Reddit.com, or just Reddit. It is unique from all other social networking sites; and, in a way, actually hosts many other social networking sites, known as *subreddits* (what would be the tables in the above scenario).

In order to adequately understand the rest of this paper, it is first important to have a working knowledge of Reddit. However, because of the vastness of Reddit and its ever growing intricacies, it is impossible to explain here in detail every aspect of Reddit and the particularities for each subreddit. Instead, I will do my best to paint a general picture of how the site works in its most basic format. From there, I will hone in on details that are pertinent for understanding this paper and are unique to Reddit and the subreddit, Reddit Gone Wild.

Reddit, the Social Networking Site

Launched in June of 2005 (Smith, 2016), Reddit.com is commonly referred to as "the front page of the internet" by its millions of loyal followers due to its large news space (Reddit Home Page). According to one Reddit user, "If it's happening anywhere on the internet, it's on Reddit… and probably first" (Reddit Help). Reddit's website volume is so great that it is listed 31st on Alexa Internet's most visited pages-its traffic mainly comprised of visits from millennials (Alexa Internet, 2016). To give some context to the massive online enterprise that is Reddit, in just November of 2015, Reddit had 199,160,951 unique visitors from over 215 countries, viewing

member-created public pages (subreddits) a total of 7,584,684,796 times, and it has

seen exponential growth each month (Reddit About Page).

Reddit explains how the site works with the following four statements (Reddit

About Page):

> 1.) Redditors[3] vote on which stories and discussions are important. The hottest stories rise to the top, while cooler stories sink.

> 2.) Comments can be posted on every story on reddit. Comments add information, context, and humor.

> 3.) Anyone can create a community (called 'subreddits') [akin to forums and sub-forums on online blogging sites]. Each subreddit is independent and moderated by a team of volunteers.

> 4.) Reddit is open source. Community members are constantly tinkering and contributing features, bug fixes, and translations back to the site.

Viewing Reddit Subreddits

Viewing Reddit is not reserved only for site members, but for the internet

public as well. The Reddit homepage is currently and, according to site

administrators[4], will always be public. Additionally, the vast majority of subreddits

are also public. Think back to the example of the restaurant tables. While all tables are

under the same establishment roof, each one is independent and free to discuss their

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[3] The term Redditor is usually reserved for only those who actively participate on Reddit by posting and commenting on content. However, in this context, it also refers to site voyeurs, who do not have to have a Reddit account to up vote or down vote site content such as links, text posts, and comments.

[4] Site Administrators/Administrators/Admins are the few paid employees of Reddit.com.

own topic. Subreddits are topic specific forums created by community members for uploading links, text posts, and photos that other community members can view, vote, comment on, and post additional links, texts posts, and photos related to the particular forum topic. Essentially, they are made for community members to discuss a particular subject or promote a certain topic. Some are serious or thought provoking and others are made to be funny or even offensive; some are very narrowly focused; others are much more broadly based (Reddit Help).

There is a subreddit devoted to nearly every topic imaginable, from *baseball* to *the letter g* (Reddit). Subreddits and the Reddit Home Page feature the Reddit mascot, Snoo, an alien that seemingly watches over the pages. There are a handful of general administrator managed subreddits, but all others are created and maintained by community members.

Reddit boasts itself as a platform for free speech on the internet. Below, Reddit Help explains what content is prohibited on their site; everything else is up to site moderators of individual subreddits:

> While Reddit generally provides a lot of leeway in what content is acceptable, here are some guidelines for content that is not. Please keep in mind the spirit in which these were written, and know that looking for loopholes is a waste of time.
>
> Content is prohibited if it: is illegal; is involuntary pornography [revenge porn]; encourages or incites violence; threatens, harasses, or bullies or encourages others to do so; is personal and confidential information; impersonates someone in a misleading or deceptive manner; [or] is spam. In addition to not submitting unwelcome content, the following behaviors are prohibited on Reddit: asking for votes or engaging in vote manipulation; breaking Reddit or doing anything that interferes with normal use of Reddit; [and] creating multiple accounts to evade punishment or avoid restrictions.

Content that contains nudity, pornography, or profanity, which a reasonable viewer may not want to be seen accessing in a public or formal setting such as in a workplace should be tagged as NSFW. This tag can be applied to individual pieces of content or to entire communities.

To find subreddits on a certain topic, public viewers and community members can use the search bar on the Reddit homepage, use a general internet search engine, or search within a number of other subreddits made specifically for finding particular conversations. (This disorganization lends to the enigma of Reddit for outsiders). If you know the name of the particular subreddit you are looking for, specific subreddits can be found through the internet address bar by typing Reddit's main site address followed by /r/ and the subreddit name (for example, www.reddit.com/r/baseball). Those who have an individual log-in can subscribe to their favorite subreddits making them easier to find.

Upon signing up for Reddit, you will be automatically subscribed to a number of basic, popular subreddits. Once subscribed to a subreddit, the top posts added to that subreddit will appear on your home screen. This is similar to the concept of a Facebook Timeline. To stop seeing posts from a particular subreddit, you must unsubscribe by going to that subreddit and clicking a red unsubscribe icon. Contrarily, if you wish to begin seeing posts from another subreddit on your homepage, you can visit that subreddit and click a green subscribe icon. This action is similar to *friending* someone on Facebook or *following* someone on Twitter; however, in this case, you are subscribing to an entire community and all content posted there by Reddit members. Also, Reddit differs from Facebook and Twitter in that the majority of active Reddit users do not stay on their home screen to conduct most of their activity. Instead, they visit individual subreddits and comment or vote on multiple posts and comments from within the subreddit, rather than their home screen.

Viewing Reddit Tabs

On both the Reddit homepage and subreddits, eight tabs labeled *Hot, New, Rising, Controversial, Top, Gilded, Wiki*, and *Promoted* run across the top of the page. The first six tabs (Hot, New, Rising, Controversial, Top, and Gilded) are designed to sort the order and filter which posts to display. Wiki houses essential information to understand Reddit or the subreddit being viewed and Promoted displays advertisements related to the conversation (Reddit About). The tabs Hot, Rising, Controversial, and Top are related to *Karma scores*. Karma scores, also known as *Karma* and *Love*, are the sum total of upvotes minus downvotes that a post receives from member voting. It is similar to a Facebook *like* (Karma will be explained in detail in the following section).

If viewing the Hot tab, recent posts with high Karma scores will be displayed. Under the New tab, posts are displayed in chronological order, from newest to oldest. The Rising tab uses an unknown algorithm to filter recent posts that have gained a high Karma score quickly. The Controversial tab displays posts that have nearly as many upvotes as downvotes or a negative Karma score. The Top tab displays posts in numerical order from highest Karma scores to lowest Karma scores (viewers can choose the time segment they wish to display from the past hour, the past 24 hours, the past week, the past month, the past year, or all time). The Gilded tab shows posts only by users who have a Reddit Gold account (Reddit About). Reddit Gold is bought in one month subscriptions and gives users additional features such as ad-free viewing. It is often bought and gifted to other Reddit members in appreciation for site contribution (Reddit Help). The proceeds Reddit receives from Gold accounts, goes toward funding the site.

Participating on Reddit: Creating an Account

In order to go beyond just viewing pages, an account must be made as the first step in actual site participation. Creating an account on Reddit requires relatively less effort than many other SNSs. A unique user name and password are the only pieces of information needed to create a new account. An email can be linked to that account; however, it is not required. Users may keep a single user name, or may choose to create one or more throw away accounts. *Throw away accounts* are used by members who may post content to a controversial site, or site which may obstruct the image they are trying to produce associated with a particular user name. For instance, a user who regularly contributes to discussions of Christian Living, may create a throw-away account if they also wish to contribute to a subreddit that has competing values with that particular forum (such as Reddit Gone Wild). Throw away accounts are not against site rules, as long as they are not being made to break other Reddit rules (such as uploading involuntary pornography).

In addition to free speech, anonymity is highly regarded by community members and site administrators within the social interactions taking place on Reddit. Therefore, a second reason for throw-away accounts is users also presumably feel they decrease the chance of having their real life identity revealed by limiting the amount of information associated with a single account. Deliberately posting identifying information about a Reddit user is known as doxing[5] to the Reddit community; and, as

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[5] Doxxing refers to posting information on Reddit intended to reveal another community member's real-life identity. For example, this could include a link to that user's Facebook page, a physical address, telephone number, banking information, place of employment, or school. This is strictly prohibited on Reddit and punished by banning when it occurs.

was shown above, is against Reddit site rules. When a user doxes another user, moderators of the subreddit in which the information breach occurred ban the offending user from the subreddit.

Throw away accounts are valued in protecting anonymity because of the unique way Reddit stores site contribution information for its users. On Reddit, archival histories for users are publically available, with no privacy setting. These histories are easily accessed by simply clicking on a user name. The information shown there reveals the different subreddits to which an individual has posted content, and the content that was posted there. It is not uncommon for Reddit users to create different user names for posting to certain subreddits.

<div align="center">Participating on Reddit: Voting, Karma, & Comments</div>

After logged into an account, users can participate in the Reddit community by voting, commenting, submitting posts (links, text posts, photos, videos), private messaging other members, friending other members, creating subreddits, and moderating subreddits. Though Reddit has not publically released an exact ratio of Reddit community members with actual user accounts to non-member viewers, outside parties have estimated that about one out of every five Reddit viewers is a community member with their own user account (Smith, 2016). In June of 2015, Reddit had over 36 million active community members (Smith, 2016); however, it is important to keep in mind that an unreported number of those are likely throw-away accounts, meaning single individuals may be responsible for multiple active user names.

Reddit.com's About page defines Reddit as "a type of online community where users vote on content" (2016). This voting is carried out through upvotes (akin

to a Facebook 'like') and downvotes (essentially a 'dislike'). Nearly every post and comment on Reddit can be upvoted or downvoted by other site members. When posts or comments are voted on, they are given a score called Karma Points or simply Karma. Karma is the net total of upvotes minus downvotes; and yes, a post can have negative Karma. Negative Karma over -100 is not displayed, though it is recorded and tracked by Reddit. Posts and comments with higher Karma are shown before posts with lower Karma. Reddit theorizes that posts with higher Karma are those that are more appreciated by the Reddit community (About Reddit).

Posts that get voted on and receive Karma are any content added to Reddit – this could be in the form of a link to another article, a photo, or a comment on any other post. Next to a post, an arrow pointing up and an arrow pointing down is shown. Reddit members, including those not subscribed to the particular subreddit on which the post appears, can click the up arrow to upvote and the down arrow to downvote. Unlike other SNSs like Facebook, upvotes and downvotes on Reddit are anonymous, meaning which users have upvoted or downvoted a post is not known; voting is anonymous. In earlier versions of Reddit, the number of upvotes and downvotes was displayed in addition to the Karma score; however, Reddit administrators disabled this feature in an attempt to mitigate the bandwagon effect (Reddit Help). The sum Karma score is still shown on the majority of posts (See Figure B); and, like other posts, the placement of comments on the feed is also influenced by Karma scores (those with the most Karma will be displayed at the top, those with less will be further down or at the bottom). In addition to each post or comment receiving Karma through the voting system, users also receive two kinds of individual Karma – Comment Karma and Link Karma. In most simple terms, Comment Karma is the sum of all Karma received by

the user's comments on other user's posts and Link Karma is the sum of all Karma received by the user's posts (whether they be links, photos, or new discussion threads) (Reddit Help).

Figure 2   Upvoting, Downvoting, & Karma on Reddit

Participating on Reddit: Friends & Following

Similar to SNSs like Facebook and Twitter, community members can friend, or follow other users. When a user friends another user, all posts and comments made by that user can be easily found by going to /r/friends. This is very similar to the above concept of subscribing to subreddits where the top stories from each of the subreddits you have subscribed to are displayed on your home-screen. The difference here is that friending follows the activities of individual users. For example, a user may really like the site contributions UserPseudonym makes to /r/baseball and /r/football. Instead of visiting both of those subreddits frequently and searching for posts by UserPseudonym, that user may find it more efficient to just friend UserPseudonym so

that comments and posts made by UserPseudonym to both subreddits can be seen in one place (/r/friends).

To friend someone, click on an individual's user name, which will appear next to posts they have submitted or content on which they have commented. By doing this, you will be shown that user's entire activity history on Reddit, their Link and Comment Karma, and their Trophy Case[6]. This page is essentially that user's portfolio of contributions to the Reddit community; it includes all posts that person has commented on and content they have posted to subreddits. Like the subreddit subscribe button, a green *friends* button (See Figure C) is also on the page. By pressing the button, that user will automatically become your friend, and you will have an easy way to monitor all site contributions made by that user[7]. Friending is anonymous and rather invisible to the user being followed. The user whom you friend will not be sent a request, authorization, or notification; in other words, users have no way of knowing who or how many other users have friended them, or controlling who can or cannot (Ask Reddit; Reddit Wiki).

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[6] User Trophy Cases on Reddit display digital awards Reddit and subreddits give to users for achievements such as being a member for a certain number of years, translating content into another language, and participating in beta testing of new features.

[7] The exception to this includes contributions the friended user makes to subreddits which do not have fully open access, such as private subreddits and subreddits only for gilded members. For example, if the friended user comments on a post under a private subreddit, you would only see that post if you also had access to that same private subreddit. Likewise, if the friended user posted a link in a subreddit designated for gilded members only, you would not see that post unless you also were a member of Reddit Gold.
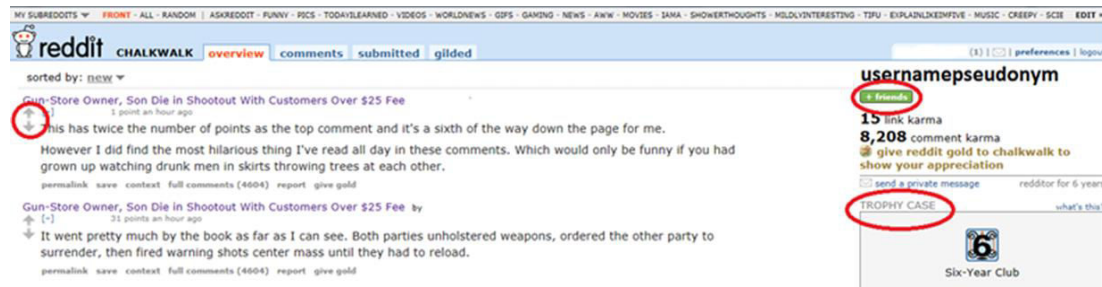
Figure 3   Individual Member Page

Participating on Reddit: Creating a Subreddit & Moderators

Many users choose to create their own subreddit. When a user creates a new subreddit, that user is automatically the first moderator. Moderators are the users responsible for writing subreddit rules and frequently asked questions (Reddit FAQs, 2016), supervising the activity on that particular subreddit, enforcing rules, and settling disputes between users when necessary. Going back to the restaurant analogy, moderators are the servers at the tables, imposing restaurant rules, but also able to decide what activity is and is not appropriate for their particular table. Additionally, the subreddit creator is able to appoint other new moderators.

Any Reddit community member can create a subreddit, write and govern that subreddit's rules. The only stipulation Reddit administrators put on member created subreddits is that the subreddit's rules may not conflict with Reddit's overarching site rules. As Reddit's site-wide rules are minimal (see above), constraints on subreddit rules are also minimal. There is no limit to how many subreddits a user can moderate or create. Creating and moderating subreddits is considered the highest form of community participation (Ask Reddit; Reddit Wiki).

Reddit Gone Wild, the Amateur Pornography Site

Created in 2009, Reddit Gone Wild (RGW) is a self-proclaimed all-inclusive subreddit, which allows individuals to post their nude selfies (photos or GIFs[8]), comment on other's photos, vote on other's comments and photos, and send private messages to other commuinty members. With the slogan "A Fappy[9] Good Time", this subreddit is devoted to adult exhibitionists and has a NSFW tag, indicating that there is pornography on the site. The Reddit alien mascot, Snoo, is featured as a white, redheaded female taking a risqué selfie (See Figure D). RGW is considered a metareddit[10] and, as of April 2016, has nearly 1,000,000 users subscribed, with daily site traffic in excess of 1,000,000 viewers from non Reddit members and Reddit members (those with user names) (Reddit Gone Wild). Here, I will discuss particular site rules and features that differ from the overall structure of Reddit.

Figure 4   Reddit Gone Wild Homepage Banner

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[8] GIFs are short videos with repeating clips; typically, the video is between three and fifteen seconds and repeats until stopped.

[9] Fappy or fapping refers to masturbation, particularly males masturbating their penises.

[10] Metareddits are Reddit's few largest and most active communities

Voting, Heavy Moderator Regulation, Site Rules, & Verification

Unlike the majority of subreddits, site moderators on RGW have disabled the downvote option for submissions and allow only upvoting (only the upvote arrow is displayed above the Karma score). Moderators explicitly state disabling the downvote feature is an attempt to discourage negativity and shaming the site's posters (Reddit Gone Wild Wiki). Users may still downvote comments made on the posts; but, though comment hierarchy is affected by Karma scores (remember, hot comments rise, cool comments sink), the specific comment Karma scores are not available.

The removal of the downvote feature is a facet of RGW's moderators' inclination for heavy content regulation. Unlike Reddit's overall site rules, where nearly anything goes and free speech is championed, negative comments on RGW are heavily policed, both by site moderators and other community members. Therefore, negative or trolling comments are either removed by site moderators or downvoted by community members to the point that they are hardly visible (Reddit Gone Wild Wiki).

Additionally, spam messages and monetary exchanges or compensation for the porno-selfies are prohibited on RGW. According to Reddit Gone Wild FAQs, the absence of payment for user images is intended to insure the subreddit remains a non-exploitive environment, where users post their nude images simply for the thrill of it. Likewise, spam posts and messages meant to elicit money or be used as advertisements for pay-for-porn sites are prohibited in an attempt to keep the space for pure exhibition (Reddit Gone Wild FAQs).

Another deviation from Reddit itself, Reddit Gone Wild mandates that you include your self-identified sex in the posting caption. This is done by posting, in brackets or parentheses, F for female, and M for male (Reddit Gone Wild). Captions

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are often creative and include this denotation as part of it. For example, the following porno-selfie caption uses the F as part of the words:

Artist Photo Caption: "[f]appy friday everyone! get a little wild tonight!"

As the final site rule explains (Reddit Gone Wild):

Please add a [male] or [female] tag in the title of your submission(s). Feel free to be creative and play with this tag. A [CD] (cross dresser) tag, [t] (transexual) tag, or simply a [?] are also admissible, with the understanding that if someone clicks on a [?] they don't mind a surprise. :)

Because the subreddit is devoted to porno-selfies, the site moderators created a feature to ensure the photos being uploaded are supplied willingly and knowingly. *Verification* is upheld by many members as a rite of passage on Reddit Gone Wild. On the site, verification is used as a safeguard to ensure that a user is posting of their own accord, and is in fact the person featured in the photo.

To become a verified artist, a user must submit a series of three porno-selfies (preferably fully nude) with the caption designating the images as verification photos. As with other photos on Reddit Gone Wild, artists are not recommended or required to show their face in verification photos. Each of the three photos are taken from different angles and include a handwritten sign with the artist's user name and date written on it. To reduce the possibility that the sign has been Photo-shopped (added into the photo using a photo editing software), the paper sign must first be crumbled up and re-opened. Moderators are then able to scan the images through Photo-shop detection software. If, after viewing a user's verification photos, moderators conclude there is nothing suspicious, verification is awarded and that user will have a special Snoo emblem next to their username when they post on RGW.

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While this is a safeguard against involuntary or revenge porn, verification is optional and not demanded by moderators unless an artist's age or consent is questionable. However, Reddit Gone Wild FAQs explain that becoming a verified contributor is a valuable achievement for artists (Reddit Gone Wild FAQs), and community members often request artists become verified regardless of moderators' suspicion. Many frequent contributors voluntarily go through the moderator guided process as a show of good faith for the community (Reddit Gone Wild FAQs).

Verification photos are posted directly to the subreddit in the same way other porno-selfies are posted. Exceptions to this occur when a user has been temporarily banned from posting or a moderator has requested verification of the artist's age to ensure only those over the age of 18 are posting. In these instances, artists send their verification photos directly to site moderators through private messages. In the case moderators request verification due to age concerns, that user may be required to show proof through an identifying document which will be kept confidential by moderators.

Chapter 3

ART, PORN, SELFIES, & THEIR CONVERGENCE

The earliest known nude art dates back 20,000 years. Simple and utilitarian, these small fertility goddesses are believed to have been common household items, used by women to bring prosperity in childbirth. Throughout history, nude art has been created in practically every medium (The Nude in Art, 2000). Nudity in art has also carried a variety of purposes—showing social inferiority, invoking gods or religious teachings, recording historical events, inciting sexual pleasure, teaching sex education, and appealing to sheer aesthetic value (The Nude in Art, 2000). With changing cultures and styles, nude art has been received differently over time (Beisel, 1993; Armstrong & Weinberg, 2006). Debated or praised, censored or proudly displayed, our fixation with reproductions of the nude human body remains persistent, and nude bodies continue to be a central focus of art (The Nude in Art, 2000).

There is controversy almost inherent to public displays of the nude body. At the heart of this controversy stand two socially constructed categories that are seemingly incongruent—art and pornography (Dennis, 2009). People and groups of people may disagree on what constitutes art (Becker, 2008; Bourdieu, 1977). Likewise, people and groups of people may disagree on what constitutes pornography. Abstract art, though appreciated by many contemporary critics, may not be considered art to classical artists. Michelangelo's statue *David*, though appreciated by many contemporary artists, may be considered pornography by some Evangelical Christians (as was the position of my private, Southern Baptist high school administration).

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When it comes to deciphering the difference between the two, prevailing arguments leave much clarity to be desired (Eck, 2001). As Justice Stewart notoriously said of pornography in his dissent of the 1964 obscenity case *Jacobellis vs. Ohio*, "I'll know it when I see it" (Lattman, 2007).

Drawing the line between art and pornography has been a quite taxing undertaking of many scholars, both in and outside the proverbial art world (Jarvie, 2015). Rather than attempt to answer the question "is pornography art?," I will illustrate that studying the pornography on Reddit Gone Wild through an art world frame is immensely useful in understanding it sociologically. Though whole books can and have been devoted to distinguishing between the two, I will briefly sum up the argued main differences here.

Primary is the question of intention—is the piece made for touch or for sight (Dennis, 2009)? Uidhir (2009) attempts a judgement free explanation of purpose through laws of mutual exclusion, offering the following:

1. If something is pornography, then that something has the purpose of sexual arousal (of some audience).

2. If something is pornography, then that something has the purpose of sexual arousal and that purpose is manner inspecific.

3. If something is art, then if that something has a purpose, then that purpose is manner specific.

4. If something is art, then if that something has the purpose of sexual arousal, then that purpose is manner specific.

5. A purpose cannot be both manner specific and manner inspecific.

6. Therefore, if something is pornography, then it is not art.

Art is believed to be a thing made for viewing, and with viewing, to bring about visual pleasure for the senses. Pornography is believed to be a thing made for

touch and to incite visceral pleasure. This distinction hints at what many would consider to be the core difference between art and pornography (Eck, 2001; Dennis, 2009; Uidhir, 2009). However, the boundaries between the two are constantly blurred, and always exist on a subjective continuum.
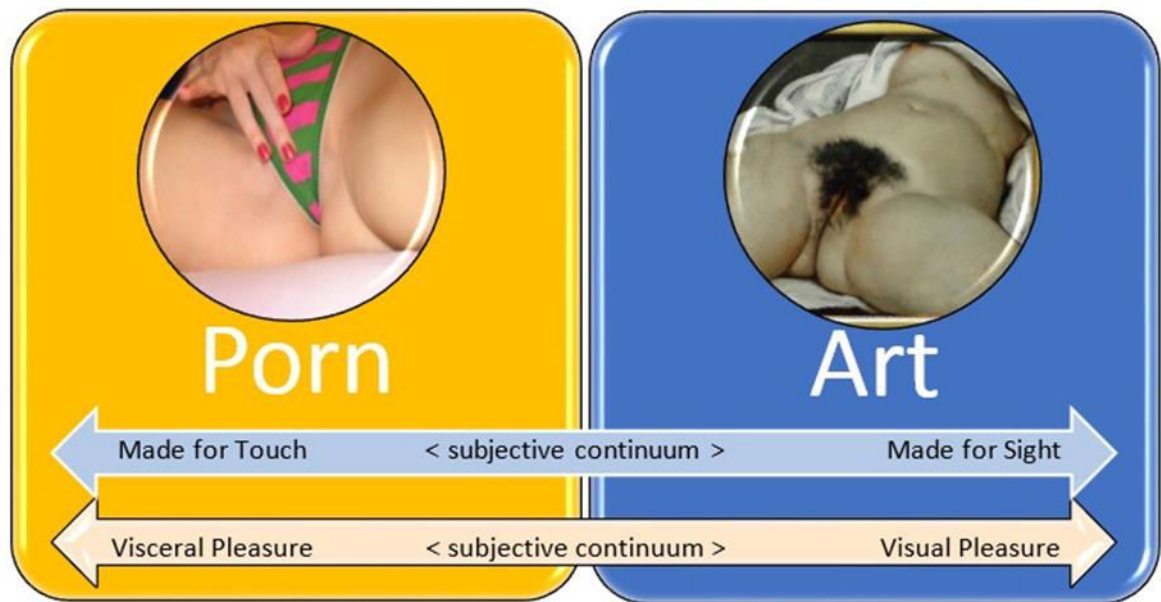
Figure 5   The Art/Porn Continuum

In Figure 5 above, the picture to the right is Gustave's 1886 *Origin of the World*. To the left, is a publically available image of a professional pornographer, very similar to many of the images found on Reddit Gone Wild. The two pictures side by side, it can be said that they are not very different. Yet, still, most would recognize the image on the left as pornography and the image on the right as art. Though even today the *Origin of the World* is often censored and the photo of the pornographer is empirically less naked, the photo with underwear could be said to be more suggestive

than Gustave's (The Nude in Art, 2000). The hand placement is a visual representation that the photo was made for touch and to be enjoyed viscerally.

Sorting between pornography and art is not a meaningless categorization; rather it carries with it a loaded connotation. To interpret a thing as either art or pornography is to make a moral judgement call, for art is considered honorific and creative, while pornography is considered obscene and debased (Becker, 2008). Therefore, the notion of visceral enjoyment is also fundamental in the moral arguments that abound regarding pornography.

The relationship nudity and sex expresses some elasticity, waxing and waning with the religiosity of the period. With the Renaissance came what some scholars consider to be a sexual dark age, brought about by vigorous Christian teachings (The Nude in Art, 2000). And under the reign of dominant Christian ideals, images intended to sexually excite are deemed immoral; they are judged and categorized as pornography. This judgement of erotic material has been met with resistance through the ages; and in many instances, this resistance turned into the production of nude images used as political statements regarding the naturalness of sex and erotic intimacy (The Nude in Art, 2000).

Interwoven with the moral debacle surrounding pornography, the exploitation of women continues to be questioned. From the classical through modern times, the female body has overwhelmingly been the subject of nude images (The Nude in Art, 2000). History has shown us images of nude women created by men and for men's enjoyment. Women were not even permitted to draw nudes or be in sketch classes until the middle of the 19th century (The Nude in Art, 2000). Effectively, half of the population was disempowered while the other half were empowered to celebrate the

female erotic and sensuality (The Art of the Nude, 2000). The power in the pornography industry has continued to be male dominated, inviting an exploitive frame for the women who work in pornography (Kernsmith & Kernsmith, 2015).

Taking the medium of photography into consideration further complicates the matter when it converges with art and the nude body. Invented by French painter and sculptor Louis Daguerre in the 1820s, photography had contested beginnings in the art world (The Nude in Art, 2000). Photography's revolutionized representations of the human body left debate whether it should be considered an art or a science. The precision of photography in replicating the natural world pushed artists working with traditional mediums, such as clay and paint, to develop new styles of representation of the nude body (impressionist, surrealism, and so on). Still all photos, and some may argue most, are not considered art (Saltz, 2014; The Nude in Art, 2000).

Think back to the 35mm and Polaroid cameras of the 1980s and boxes of pictures from family vacations and holidays. These photographs, while encapsulating sentimental memories for many, are rarely deemed art, or considered for their potential artistic value. These photos were not made for the public, but for small circles of families or friends. In the instance of photography, the question of art is often answered by the audience for whom the photograph was taken (Saltz, 2014).

However, even private photographs become places of contention and public concern when the nude body is the subject (The Nude in Art, 2000; Senft & Baym, 2015). In fact, it is because of nude photography that art and the human body have become so fragmented. Photography brought the nude image into the homes of common people, hitherto such a luxury was the reserved privilege of the elite rich. Shortly after the invention of photography, nude photographs, what we today call

pornography, came to be blamed for the general spread of vices of all natures—violence, mental illness, sexual aggression, and sin. In the 1880s, the Society for the Suppression of Vice initiated a massive sweep of 'obscene' prints from British homes, collecting over a quarter million private nude photos (The Nude in Art, 2000). Viewing nude prints as obscene has had lasting repercussions as nude images continue to be heavily regulated, especially those of or intended for minors and young adults (Stroud, 2014; Stone, 2011; Rubin, 1984). Most recently, the concern has been not over private print and film photographs, but those created and publically disseminated with the newest media form of digital photography.

With the advent of digital photography and social media, the lines of public and private, art and mundane, are once again blurred. The photographic selfie genre arose from technological advancements in digital phone photography. Self-portraiture has always had a presence in art. However, the selfie distinguishes itself from earlier forms of self-depiction with its unique style. Selfies are almost always taken at arm's length or with the use of a mirror (Frosh, 2015). As such, selfie photos are cropped at odd angles in comparison to more traditional self-portraits and often actually include the arm of the photographer as well (Frosh, 2015). The inclusion of the photographer's arm lends to the idea that selfies are 'gestural images' and serve both aesthetic and communicative purposes (Frosh, 2015).

Not only is the selfie unique in the visual properties, but in its production and distribution as well. Specifically, selfie photographs are stored digitally and distributed instantaneously. Differing from older forms of home photography, selfies are created with the intent of sharing with the public (Saltz, 2014). With a few clicks, a selfie is on

display for the world (Frosh, 2015). Selfies combine the visual and the visceral to "say not only 'see this, here, now,' but also 'see me showing you me'" (Frosh, 2015).

Mass public sharing of digital images is now commonplace in 2016 as social networking sites make connectivity easier than ever before (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). While still debated, most individuals do not consider the majority of selfies to be art (Frosh, 2015). However, a great many do consider them narcissistic self-promotion. Selfies have been named as both an indication of narcissism and a cause of it (Bergman et al, 2011; DeWall et al, 2011; Malikhao & Servaes, 2011). As such, selfies remain in dispute, both as pieces of an art genre and as an indications of mental health status.

Controversy surrounding selfies grow when they merge with pornography. Through self-porning (Garrison, 2011), or porno-selfies, pornography is once again a growing area of public concern as courts and law makers grapple with regulating digitally shared nude selfies (Franklin, 2014; Levendowski, 2014). As photography brought nude images into the home, digital photography has been responsible for bringing them to the public view through the internet.

The relationship between art, pornography, and selfies is illustrated in Figure 6 below. As art, pornography, and selfies overlap, the categories of nude art, self-portraiture, and porno-selfies are made. As these three converge, we see a central gray area and site of debate. This center piece is perfectly represented by the blended interaction between art, pornography, and selfies found on Reddit Gone Wild. In the proceeding chapters, I will discuss this area of contention as Reddit Gone Wild is explored as an art world birthed from the culmination of self-portraiture, nude art, and porno-selfies.
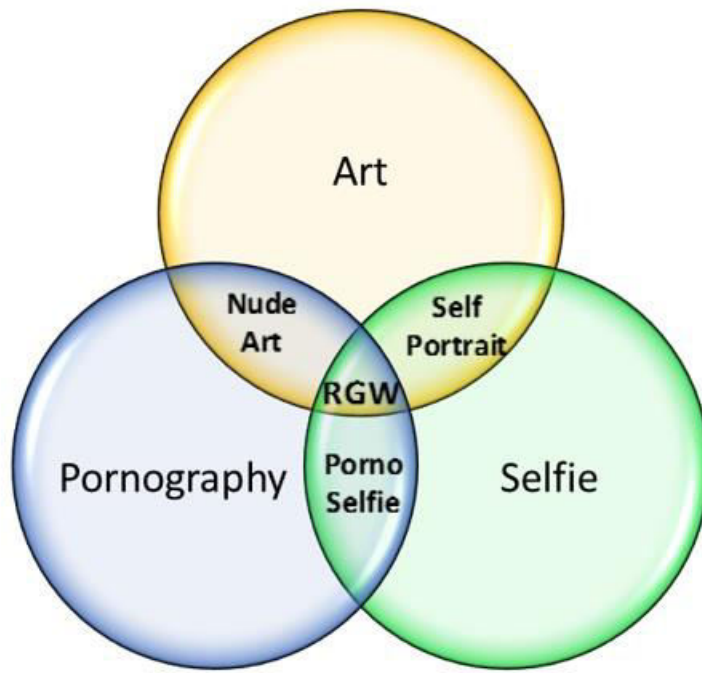
Figure 6   Art, Pornography, Selfies, & Their Convergence

Chapter 4

THE PRESENT STUDY

Why Reddit Gone Wild?

My interest in Reddit Gone Wild as a site of research began in the fall of 2013 while still pursuing my undergraduate degree. Being aware of my interest in the field of sexuality, during a break from a study session, a friend asked me if I had heard of Reddit Gone Wild. I had minimal knowledge of Reddit, but none of the subreddit Reddit Gone Wild. She proceeded to tell me about the site, typed in the web address and showed me the subreddit. I was astonished at the number of women who participated on the site. As I began my graduate studies the following year, my mentor and I discussed the possibilities for inductive ethnographic research on the site.

When choosing online sites appropriate for study, Kozinets, author of Netnography, laid out six key traits to seek in a site: 1) relativity to the research question, 2) active membership, 3) interactivity between members, 4) substantiality, 5) data-richness, and 6) heterogeneity. Reddit Gone Wild hosts over 1,000,000 active community members (non-voyeurs who participate by posting photos or comments) with daily site traffic often quadrupling that (Reddit FAQ).

As the genesis of selfie inspired amateur interactive pornography, numerous 'copycat' sites attempt to replicate Reddit Gone Wild's appearance and theme; most notably, Xvideos.com, the world's first and largest pornography website, has introduced a tab devoted to this style (Wiesman, 2015). RGW is unique in its available information, offering in-depth histories that make it possible to trace individual user careers as well as the ability to watch site assimilation and interaction in real time.

Because no log-in information is required to access the full content of the public site, it can afford researchers the luxury of having no interaction with community members while being able to observe all of site participants' online exchanges. Reddit Gone Wild exceeds suggested expectations for the first five of the above traits. However, as the artists on Reddit Gone Wild are primarily young, white females, the site is not as heterogeneous as would be preferred for research. This will be discussed as a limitation in the conclusion section of this manuscript.

Viewers, Users, Members, Artists, Commenters, & Moderators

Within Reddit Gone Wild, there are several actors with distinct roles. Although those roles interact and often overlap with others, they also represent hierarchical levels of involvement with the site. To aid in distinguishing between these actors and their roles, I use the terms *artists, users, members, viewers, commenters,* and *moderators*.

Viewers are simply anyone who views content on Reddit or Reddit Gone Wild; this includes those who actively participate and contribute to the sites as well as those who take a voyeuristic role, never leaving a digital footprint on the sites. The terms *users* and *members* are used interchangeably throughout this thesis and refer to those who have created a Reddit username and password, and therefore have the capability to vote on content, post content, and interact with other members. The term *artists* is used to define solely those users who post their porno-selfies to Reddit Gone Wild. The term *commenters* refers to members who have commented on content posted to Reddit or Reddit Gone Wild. Moderators denotes users who are in charge of regulating content on subreddits, such as Reddit Gone Wild; moderators still have all other posting and voting privileges as well.
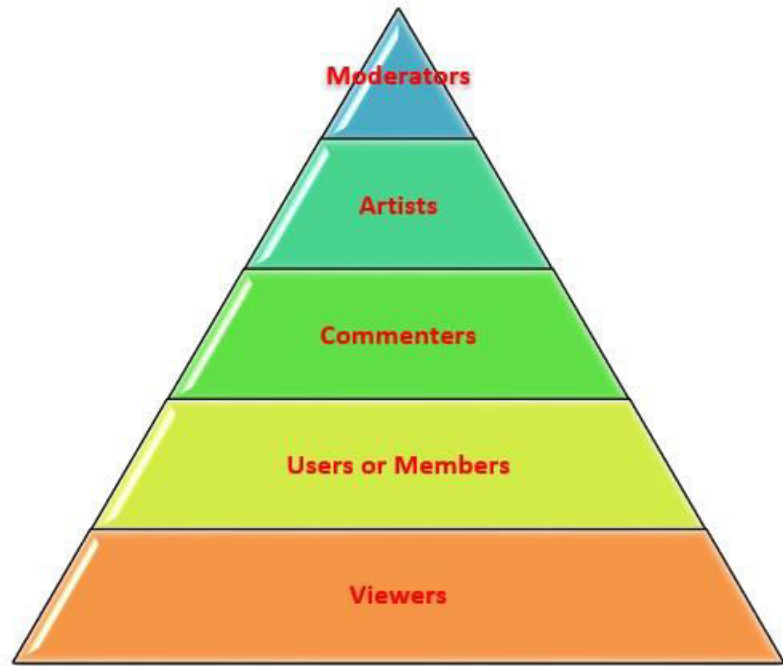
Figure 7   Reddit Gone Wild Actors by Level of Involvement

Data Collection, Analysis, & Coding Overview

The data upon which this thesis is based, was collected through an in-depth, online content analysis that traced artists' assimilation to the site by gathering their full site history and active posting for seven months. My primary concern while conducting this content analysis was the individual artists themselves. By collecting their porno-selfie posting histories on the site—which included every photo they uploaded to the site, each caption they assigned to them, and any interaction with viewers in the comments—I was able to access their entire artist careers on the site, less those photos which had been individually deleted prior to collection. Using purposeful sampling for 90 artists, I captured the number of porno-seflies posted, the captions attached to those photos, Karma scores for each photo, comment totals for

each photo, the artist's individual Link Karma and Comment Karma, my description of each photo, and the actual text comments attached to each photo.

Visual sociology descriptions for each photo and first cut field notes were recorded in real time while collecting data. Coding was done through multiple platforms in waves, both during and following data collection. First, descriptive codes were used to sort and categorize key words and phrases repeated throughout photos, captions, and comments, both within and between users. Next, a round of analytic coding giving meaning to the initial descriptive codes, often became the "parent" code for the descriptive "child" codes. Field notes were continuously taken during data collection and coding. As I further read the related literature, my field notes developed into memos guided by theory and past research. The finished product here, was completed in stages over the course of a year.

My research began exploratory and inductive, informed by grounded theory, with efforts focused on artist's posting activity. Data from all four stages of collection was thematically analyzed to understand the social organization of the site. By recording details of porno-selfie dissemination, how artists' photos or posting trends changed overtime to assimilate to the site, and how users interact regarding them, I established patterns of organized interaction and began to apply appropriate theoretical concepts.

Sampling & Recruitment

My sample is limited to female posters as pilot study data revealed that over 99% of RGW posters self-identify as female (using [f] in their photo captions). Thus, the phenomenon of amateur interactive pornography on Reddit Gone Wild is primarily a female phenomenon.

From the 90 artists, my sample included 3,454 individual photos for analysis; the mean number of photos posted by artists in my sample is 26.7; the mean length of membership is 9.4 months; the mean Karma score for each photo is 212.2; the mean number of comments per photo is 23.10; 56.2% of the artists are verified members; and 25.4% of them are gilded. Because typical users are visually identified to be white females, I intentionally over sampled for users of minority races and ethnicities (determined by descriptions in user captions) to attempt to more closely match national race statistics. Even with this oversampling, matching national race statistics could not be achieved as self-identified minorities make up so little of the Reddit Gone Wild population that matching national statistics runs the risk of making the participants identifiable. For this reason, race is not identified for any specific cases.

Table 1   Artist Descriptives (Adjusted for Outliers)

Mean # of Photo Posts	Mean Membership Length	Mean Karma per Photo	Mean Comments per Photo	% of Artists Verified	% of Artists Gilded
26.7 Range: 1-308	9.4 Months Range: 0-60	212.2 Range: 0-12417	23.10 Range: 0-297	56.2%	25.4%

Pilot study data drew my attention to the variation of user account ages (membership length[11]) and experience (amount of photos posted under an individual account). Artists' integration on Reddit Gone Wild is presumably also varied accordingly. Therefore, as I culled my sample from the pilot study for Stage 2, I intentionally sampled users at different stages of interaction on the site to obtain a

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[11]   Membership Length was determined by the length of time in months since first post on Reddit Gone Wild.

more representative sample. These stages were divided by the participant's membership length in months and also by the amount of photos they had posted; participants were chosen evenly from the normative, high, and low thirds from both membership length and posting experience.

To determine these ranges, from the pilot study data, artists' number of photos posted and age of account were sorted in ascending order then divided into thirds to establish a normative, upper, and lower range for each. The average age range for artist accounts was between 4 and 11 months; the oldest accounts were 12 or more months; the youngest accounts were 0 to 3 months. The average experience range for artist accounts was between 21 and 49 photos; the highest experience accounts had 50 or more posts; the lowest experience posts had 20 or fewer posts.

Stage 1: Pilot Study

Data collection, and subsequently coding, took place in a series of stages. Stage 1 of data collection, the pilot study, began in 2015; from January 2015-April 2015 I collected pilot study information, limited to the user names of those posting photos (artists), the age of the account (how many months since the first recorded post), and how many photos they had posted. Comments, Karma scores, photo captions, verification status, and gilded status was not captured during the pilot study, as I aimed only to get a general sense of the artists' posting behavior.

During Stage 1, user names and the number of photos posted under a user name were collected both retrospectively and in real time. In the beginning weeks of data collection, user names were collected from those who had posted in the several months prior to January 2015 by working through the posts in reverse chronological order (retrospectively). When sorting posts by the new tab, the most recent posts

appear at the top of the page, and older ones appear after, causing a viewer to scroll down through the posts to view older ones. Therefore, posts that appeared during actual data collection times, as well as posts that occurred prior to collection or between collection times were captured. During the pilot study, I recorded over 1,000 unique user names who had contributed photos to Reddit Gone Wild. In so doing, I established that Reddit Gone Wild was robust enough to be an appropriate site of study.

Coding Pilot Study Data

Field notes were collected on potential trends and general observations noticed during pilot study data collection. However, coding and analysis was not completed at this stage as only broad themes were notated across photos, captions, and users. The initial user names, age of accounts, and the number of photos posted under them over the pilot study period were recorded using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Emerging themes and initial questions were hand written or typed as field notes to investigate further during the next stages of data collection and analysis. Examples of early questions include, *why are the women posting- what do they get out it?*

Issues Considered During Pilot Study

The pilot study provided not only foundational data, but also served to identify potential collection problems early on in the study. In the first week of pilot study data collection, it became apparent to me through observing artist activity that not all photos remain online indefinitely. As I continued to return to the site, I noticed that many artists had deleted all or some of their photos fairly quickly. In some instances, entire user account names had been deleted either by the individuals responsible for

the accounts or by site moderators. The erasure of accounts was especially frequent for those artists who had seemingly posted once or few times, achieved little Karma from posts, or had newly created accounts.

In an effort to capture the artist user name prior to their user name or photo possibly being deleted, I collected data retrospectively a minimum of 3 days a week, and typically 5 to 6 days a week. Each time I visited the site, I recorded the artist user name and number of new photos posted in reverse chronological order until I reached where I last recoded data. For example, if on Friday, January 2nd at 5pm I recorded data posted from midnight on Thursday, January 1st until 5pm on that Friday, the next time I collected data on Monday, January 5th at 8pm I would record all data posted between then and Friday, January 2nd at 5pm.

Stage 2: Real Time Activity for 90 Users

Ending Stage 1, I became interested in the social organization of Reddit Gone Wild, asking *how is Reddit Gone Wild socially organized and what are the typical characteristics of the art and the artists' posting careers in that art world*? In Stage 2, to answer my research questions, I began actively collecting data from a subset of 90 user names recorded during my pilot study, across the upper, middle, and lower ranges of account age and photo posting experience.

Between April and August 2015, I collected the following content from the 90 artist user names: artist user name, the number of porno-seflies posted from each artist user name between April and August 2015, the captions attached to those photos, Karma scores for each photo, comment totals for each photo, the artist's individual Link Karma and Comment Karma, my description of each photo, and the actual text comments attached to each photo. Using information obtained during the pilot study, I

again collected data retrospectively, a minimum of 3 days a week, and typically 5 to 6 days a week. From Stage 1 observations, I estimated that saturation could be reached by collecting data on the artists' posting activity over a four month span.

During each visit to the site over the four month period, I used Reddit's search tool, typing in the user account name for each artist, to bring up the individual artist's posting history. This history of posts to Reddit Gone Wild was cross referenced with my data since the last collection time for any new photos and their captions, Karma points, and comments. Repeatedly checking the site multiple times a week provided me the opportunity to record photos before they were potentially deleted. Additionally, it allowed the necessary amount of time for photos to accumulate Karma points and comments.

Coding Stage 2 Data

Data was recorded for individual artists using Microsoft Excel. A running collection of field notes was used at the top of the spreadsheet. An example of the spreadsheet layout for an artist is provided below.

Table 2   Coding Stage 2 Spreadsheet Example

Artist #	Photo #	Photo Caption	Visual Notes/Description	Karma Score	Comments	Comment Total
32	2	"[F]irst full body, what do you think?"	Laying on side, length-wise on white bed sheets. Appears to be taken with right hand, showing the chin down. Fully nude, no toys/props.	35	"girl you can take it off for me anytime!"	1

For coding of the qualitative columns, the Excel spreadsheets were imported into NVivo 10 for Windows. Descriptive codes were used to sort and categorize key words and phrases repeated throughout photos, captions, and comments, both within and between users. For example, in the above sample, the photo caption would have been coded to "fully body", the descriptive notes to "laying down" and "fully nude", and the comment to "sexual flirtation". Analytic coding was also done to pull out the meaning from the larger social context of the photo, caption, and comments. In the above sample, the caption would have been coded to "approval seeking", "feedback request", and "audience question" as an example of captions being used both to solicit interaction with viewers, and therefore gain Karma and comments, and to seek approval for their representation on the site.

To code user photos, I employed visual sociology methods using field notes to record in-depth descriptions. Modeling my method after the proposed best practices set by the International Visual Sociology Association (IVSA Code of Ethics, 2009), I used sets of key words or phrases, such as "full autonomy, no face", "artistic appearance, black and white photo, partial nudity", and "red room, matching lingerie, heels" to describe particulars of each photo. Using this method, I tracked visually noticeable changes in user photos as they attempt to assimilate to the site's ideal normative post and recorded such changes in field notes. Likewise, noticeable increases or decreases in Karma points earned for each photo and number of comments were also noted to understand site and artist trends. Field notes were taken at each data collection interval regarding general posting trends on Reddit Gone Wild for that day, i.e. how many posts, any moderator intervention, certain times of day with high website traffic, overall trends (weight loss, breakup, holiday, vacation),

public bulletins, etcetera. Full photo comments were captured and managed using NVivo software and Microsoft Excel. Main elements of comment threads were coded in a similar key word and phrase capacity as photos and photo comments; however, due to the limited nature of comments, there was little variation in themes.

Field notes collected along with data were not coded, but used as a source to distinguish what codes would serve to be the most useful. Additionally, they helped to provide a short hand way of keeping track of emerging themes, and most memorable characteristics of each artist's posting activity over the four months. Field notes were later developed into memos, and ultimately sections of this thesis, which used the coded data as evidence for conclusions drawn from my site observation. Further, Stage 2 data was workshopped during an intensive advanced qualitative methods course between August and December 2015.

Issues Considered During Stage 2

By using a subset of established artist accounts from my original pilot study, I had hoped to reduce the number of artists who may delete their accounts during my study. Despite my efforts, 2 artists deleted their accounts within the first two weeks of data collection. Because data collection had just begun and both artists were new accounts with less than 5 pictures, they were replaced with other artists of the same experience and age category from my pilot study. Any posts made by the new artists during the first two weeks of Stage 2 was captured at the time they were added to my sample. Following the replacement, I encountered no other issues during Stage 2 data collection. However, coding data became difficult as time passed and my data set grew.

While NVivo proved useful for coding of initial data, as the collected data grew, NVivo was no longer able to function properly. Creating and saving new codes, as well as adding new text sections to older codes, began to cause the program to freeze or abruptly shut down. These technical difficulties led to loss of work, and the need to recode several sections of collected data. As these problems continued to occur, I made the decision to export all spreadsheets for Stage 3, and work solely with them in Microsoft Excel.

Toward the end of July 2015, I realized I had reached saturation as creating new codes became rare. Captions and comments were often identical to past photos from other artists, or at times, even repeated by the same artist. I continued the collection of data from participants' new posts until mid-August 2015. While saturation had been reached from the data collected during this stage, I realized it told me little about how individual artists may change over a longer time length to adapt to site norms, gain more Karma, or exit participation on the site. For this reason, I felt it was necessary to again return to the site for a third stage of data collection to record my participants' full site history.

Stage 3: Full User Histories

In order to answer my research questions, I needed the fullest story I could obtain about how users' interact on Reddit Gone Wild, how its organization impacts that interaction, and to what extent porno-selfies are the focus of interaction. As such, during Stage 3 I began collecting the entire user histories for my 90 participants, adding to the activity collected during the previous 3 months of Stage 2.

I collected full artist porno-selfie post histories between August 2015 and November 2015. Data was again collected retrospectively, a minimum of 3 days a

week, and typically 5 to 6 days a week. During each visit, I used Reddit's search tool, typing in the user account name for each artist, to bring up the individual artist's posting history. This history of posts to Reddit Gone Wild was cross referenced with my data since the last collection time for any new photos and their captions, Karma points, and comments. I chose to continue this method rather than simply individually checking each user's history and recording all data prior to the beginning of Stage 2 collection for two reasons. First, this method kept the ending time of data collection for all artists as close as possible; and second, it allowed me to continue collection of new photos (prior to potentially being deleted) while capturing the past as well.

Coding Stage 3 Data

Information gathered from each artist during Stage 3 was added to the original Microsoft Excel document, which used a separate spreadsheet for each artist under the same Excel book. This was used to combat the technical difficulties encountered through NVivo 10 for Windows when using a data set this large. Opening a spreadsheet for a specific user showed that artist's Comment and Link Karma, every posted porno-selfie caption, my description of it, its Karma score, and the comments attached to it. Each spreadsheet in the Excel book was notated with the artist number (1-90). This approach made it easier to study artists' individual careers on Reddit Gone Wild where, for example, analysis of one photo caption could easily be compared both within and between artists. Additional field notes were added to the top of each page, along with artists' user account Comment Karma and Link Karma as it appeared on the last day of data collection in mid-November.

Coding of qualitative fields continued when using solely Microsoft Excel. However, opposed to the in-house coding system utilized by NVivo 10 for Windows, I

used a mixture of hand coding and electronic coding in Microsoft Excel. As saturation of themes had been met in Stage 2, I used the same sets of parent and child codes from my NVivo code book. This hybrid coding took place in two steps. While imputing data into Microsoft Excel during collection times, I used pen and paper hand coding. Rather than using highlighted text, I referred to the text's position on the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet grid and wrote the name of the code beside it. For example, a photo caption from artist referencing a college holiday break would have been hand coded *81: B/39 – college/college break.* In the preceding code path, the number 81 identifies the artist number and spreadsheet number; B/39 is the cell key indicating the text appears in column B, row 39; and the words *college* and *college break* represent the two codes the text falls under. Following data imputation and hand coding, code paths for the new data were entered at the top of the artist spreadsheet for an electronic record kept with data.

Issues Considered During Stage 3

During Stage 3, two artists deleted their accounts (in addition to the two replaced artists in Stage 2). While this ended data collection for those two artists, I chose to keep data from their accounts and include it in my analysis. Contrary to missing data in most quantitative studies, I feel that here, deleted accounts were not problematic. I had established during the pilot study that artists deleting their accounts or pictures takes place often. Therefore, I feel that keeping these two artists in my data set better represents the range of artist behaviors possible on the site. While I chose to replace the two artists from Stage 2, that decision was based upon the very limited amount of data collected from the artists, and the length of time since the study had

commenced. As these artists had participated on the site longer, I felt their deletion offered more information than it took away.

Stage 4: Account Activity Check One Year after Last Data Collection

In mid-October 2016, nearly a year following the last day of data collection on my 90 participants, I again returned to the site to collect final account activity data. In Stage 4, my mission was to collect only the length of time since the last photo was posted to each of the 90 artist accounts. My intent was to discover if the age of artist account (member length in months collected in November 2015), experience of artist account (November 2015 photo post totals), or achievement of artist account (artist average Karma score per photo in November 2015) impacted artists' decisions to continue posting on the site. By collecting the length of time since the last photo was posted by each of the 90 artists, I could better estimate which artist accounts were still active, which were inactive and when they became dormant, and which had been deleted.

I again utilized Reddit's search tool, typing in the user names of my 90 artist participants individually. As I viewed each artist's posting history, I used the chronological sort tool, filtering only posts made to Reddit Gone Wild, to display artist's last post to the site. Reddit adds a form of timestamp tag which displays the length of time in minutes, hours, days, months, or years since a post was made. I used this tag to determine for each most current post, the length of time since it had been created. To sort this data, I created a single Microsoft Excel spreadsheet which contained only the following information for each artist: artist number, length of time since last post, age category of account in November 2015 (old, average, young),

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experience level of account in November 2015 (high, average, low), and achievement level of each account in November 2015 (high, average, low).

I first sorted the spreadsheet by length of time since last post for the 90 artists. I noticed clusters of activities in 5 main ranges, *0-1 month, 2-6 months, 7-11 months, a year or more,* and *deleted accounts*. I sorted the spreadsheet an additional three times, once for age, once for experience, and once for achievement, to determine the breakdown of last posting activity. Each time, I recorded the number of artists who appeared in the five main last posted ranges.

I hypothesized that those in the top third of each category would be more likely to have posted recently than those in the bottom two thirds. For those artists with the oldest accounts, I believed they were more likely to have posted recently than the average and youngest artist accounts due to their level of integration into the site, which would arguably be higher due to the likelihood of increased time spent on the site. I also hypothesized that the greater achieving artist accounts (the 30 accounts receiving on average over 200 Karma points per post) would be the group with the highest percent of artists who were still actively posting a year later, followed by the average achieving accounts (the 30 accounts receiving on average between 51 and 199 Karma points per post), and next by the lowest achieving accounts (the 30 accounts receiving on average 50 or lower Karma points per post) due to appreciation for the overwhelming amount of community positive feedback on their posts. Likewise, I believed that the artist accounts in the top tier of experience would be more likely than the average or low experience accounts to still be posting because they have demonstrated commitment to posting. Table 3 illustrates the breakdown of last posting activity overall, by achievement, by age, and by experience.

Table 3   Artist Involvement One Year after Initial Study

Length of Time Since Artist Last Posted, One Year After Initial Data Collection				
	Overall	**By Karma Achievement**	**By Age of Account**	**By Posting Experience**
		30 Highest Artists		
0-1 Month Since Last Post:	27%	47%	53%	53%
2-6 Months Since Last Post:	11%	20%	17%	13%
7-11 Months Since Last Post:	21%	17%	17%	27%
12+ Months Since Last Post:	31%	10%	3%	0%
Accounts Deleted:	10%	7%	10%	7%
		30 Average Artists		
0-1 Month Since Last Post:	--	20%	20%	13%
2-6 Months Since Last Post:	--	7%	13%	7%
7-11 Months Since Last Post:	--	30%	30%	20%
12+ Months Since Last Post:	--	33%	33%	43%
Accounts Deleted:	--	10%	3%	17%
		30 Lowest Artists		
0-1 Month Since Last Post:	--	13%	7%	13%
2-6 Months Since Last Post:	--	7%	3%	13%
7-11 Months Since Last Post:	--	17%	17%	17%
12+ Months Since Last Post:	--	50%	57%	50%
Accounts Deleted:	--	13%	17%	7%

In each instance, when sorted by achievement, age, and experience, the 30 participants
who fell into the top third were more likely to have continued posting within the last
six months.

Issues Considered During Stage 4

While it appears that age, experience, and achievement are all positively
correlated to continued posting on Reddit Gone Wild, there are several factors to
consider that may not be fully represented by this data. First, it could be that those
who are in the top tier for age, achievement, and experience are actually just less likely
than others to delete their posts. It is possible that artists in other tiers had also posted
more recently than the last displayed post, but had simply deleted those posts. Second,
due to time constraints, I was unable to collect data on all photos posted since

November 2015. This means that the last photo displayed is not necessarily representative of continued active posting behavior, but perhaps an infrequent, sporadic post. Third, of the additional 7 artists who had deleted their account since my last data collection in November 2015, it is important to note that I do not know when account deletion occurred. Therefore, these artists may have continued posting for some time past November 2015, but are now deleted[12].

Further, it should be noted that account deletion in itself is a misleading term. When an artist deletes their account, only their user name and ability to vote, post, and edit or deleted posts is removed. Deleting an account separates the user from the ability to control previously posted content, but does not remove that content along with the user name. To clarify, unless an artist deletes all of their posts prior to deleting their account user name, all of their posts remain visible on Reddit Gone Wild—but, those posts are untied to the artist who created them. Because I did not capture information that would allow me to track photos unlinked to artists, such as a photo URL link, I am unable to tell how many artist photos from the 9 deleted accounts are still visible on Reddit Gone Wild.

Salient Rationale Themes across Artists

While several themes and narratives are discussed in this thesis as important contributions to the culture of RGW, across all stages of data collection, three salient themes appeared in artists' photo captions to which they attributed the reason for their

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[12] I did also recheck the account names of the previously 2 deleted artist user names to ensure the same user account was not used by the same or a new user. Neither of the 2 deleted account user names were in use on Reddit.

post: relationship changes, weight changes, and boredom. Apart from obvious and expected sexual overtones, artists frequently attributed particular posts to one or more of these three events. Boredom was habitually listed as an initiating factor for a single photo or whole album. Artists also recurrently cited the ending or change of a relationship as the reason for a post, though other relationship changes were also mentioned. Likewise, artists' photo captions regularly stated the actualization of or strive for weight loss or gain inspired their shoot. Below, the frequency of occurrence of these themes within artists' posting history is listed.

Table 4   Distribution of Prominent Rationale Themes across Artist

	Relationship Changes	Weight Loss	Boredom
# of Artists	22 (24%)	16 (18%)	44 (49%)

Ethical Considerations for Minimization of Harm

As my research here was purely content analysis, I had no interaction, either direct or in direct, with community members, and, it was therefore granted IRB exemption. This voyeuristic approach made both the risk of harm and possible benefits to my participants minimal. In keeping with the International Visual Sociology Association's Code of Ethics, consent does not need to be obtained when data is not collected from "any form of communication, interaction, or intervention" or when the behavior of the participants is not taking place "in a private context where an individual can reasonably expect that no observation or reporting is taking place" (IVSA; 2009).

As a publically available online site requiring no log in information to access its content, Reddit Gone Wild is intended for anonymous voyeurism (Reddit FAQs; 2015). Therefore, my data collection has had no positive or negative impact on community members, as I did not study members themselves, but the virtual artifacts they left behind, i.e. photos, comments, and Karma points. As Kavanaugh and Maratea (2015) note, "unobtrusive approaches are especially advantageous when studying sensitive topics or stigmatized groups, as researchers can observe persons interacting in their natural setting without directly impacting or leading subjects in a manner that might artificially impact the data due to social desirability effects."

In addition to having no contact with my participants, no photos were stored anywhere on any of my devices. User names were captured and coded to de-identified case numbers for online referencing and the coding key is stored in a password protected Microsoft Excel spreadsheet on an encrypted laptop. There were no copies or distribution of this code key to any other device, network, drive, or shared file (on or offline) and all electronic notes and data files are stored in a separate secure file from the code key.

Despite these best efforts to reduce the risk of harm and maximize benefits, there are potential harms and benefits to the community members beyond the data collection phase if my research is published. Though, to be clear, absolutely no photographs from the site were downloaded, copied, published, or stored in any way. Photographs were only accessed through Reddit Gone Wild itself, with written descriptions of the visual photograph recorded as part my data collection.

Though my data collection will not have any foreseeable effect on community members, it is possible that any subsequent publications could potentially harm or

benefit site members. With future publications using this data, I aim for a more public sociology to reach a broader spectrum of readers beyond the academic realm. New attention garnered to the site may be unwelcomed by existing members; however, Reddit Gone Wild FAQs advertise a "more the merrier" environment that actively seeks out "fresh bodies" and viewers.

Community members may also disagree with my eventual interpretation of behaviors and theoretical perspectives. As is the nature of anonymous content analysis, site participants will not necessarily be able to address their concerns over my interpretations. As such, I understand the responsibility to portray the site and its happenings as accurately as possible to capture the perceived feelings of members regarding their community.

Due to the sensitive nature of the material on Reddit Gone Wild, I have taken added measures to protect my participants' anonymity. As Stein (2007) notes, a more public sociology increases necessary precautions for ethics and maintaining participant anonymity. Though Reddit Gone Wild boasts an impressive active membership of over 1,000,000 individuals, exposure to the site through publication may increase the already progressively rising site traffic. Therefore, the risk of identifying users increases as well.

In an effort to minimize these risks, the highest attention was paid to protecting user anonymity to prevent others from identifying particular screen names. User's comments and artist's photo captions are frequently quoted throughout this thesis. Unless otherwise noted, the comments and captions quoted were pulled directly from the data collected from my sample of 90 users. I have chosen not to give specific pseudonyms to any user, and simply denote that user's role in the context of the quote

(commenter, moderator, or artist). I have made this decision due to the sheer amount of Reddit usernames, as any pseudonym assigned could very likely duplicate or be near enough to an actual Reddit username that readers may suspect my pseudonym to be a reference that real Reddit user.

Despite screen names already being anonymous, identification through exposure is still possible, especially as site traffic increases. Potentially identifying tattoos, jewelry, and backgrounds can be found in many photos, whether or not an artist chooses to reveal her face in photos. Further, artist photo captions and comments often alluded to or named identifying information such as city of residence, occupation, and place of work or school.

Such descript unique identifiable markers or characteristics were omitted or altered here to de-identify the quote, while still maintaining its essence. Any unique features in photos such as specific tattoos, birth marks, and room surroundings are also absent or altered to protect participants. Likewise viewer comments are not referenced in a manner that may link particular comments to certain user photos.

Further, Reddit Gone Wild also often configures its algorithm to display Karma scores as slightly higher or lower (See Chapter 2), I too altered the Karma score for some photos to make them less identifiable. When coupled with the photo caption, the Karma score can help to identify the artist account with which the post was associated. Karma scores were altered to remain within the distinguished achievement frame (50 and below for low, 51-199 for moderate, above 200 for extreme) which it originally fell. Posts which achieved extraordinarily high Karma scores were drastically reduced to fit the norm for the level. This was done for two reasons. First, the photos on the site can be filtered by "top" or those which have

received the most Karma points. This filter makes those who have top performing accounts visible and therefore, more identifiable. Second, posts with exceptionally high Karma scores (in excess of 3,000) are rare. Therefore, by noting such high scores, the actual artist posts and user accounts responsible for them are more easily found and identified.

Limitations

Most demographic characteristics of artists are hidden from the site and not expressed openly by users such as age, socio-economic status, race, religion, and region. Though porno-selfies in general could be studied from a different method by sampling a human participant pool, my particular research applies to porno-selfies in relation to anonymous online upload and free pornography. While these unknown demographics are typical of this pool and nearly impossible to gain access to without human interaction, it raises issues of representation and generalizability. This is especially true given my sample is comprised solely of female posters, almost all of whom are white. Without access to data on male artists and artists of underrepresented races and ethnicities from similar sites, results are not generalizable.

An additional problem arises from the anonymity provided by Reddit Gone Wild. Though the terms artist, user, member, commenter, and moderator are individualistic, connoting activity arising from a single person, it is important to note that this may not necessarily be the case. Due to the anonymous nature and lack of restrictive registration to the site, one person can easily be responsible for creating and maintaining multiple user IDs. Likewise, individuals may choose to share an account, meaning that two or more separate people may post content under one user name. While this is possible for many other social networking sites as well, the absence of

provisions requiring a linked email address and name coupled with the promotion of throw-away accounts make the duplicity of accounts easier and perhaps more likely on RGW. Therefore, for clarification purposes, here the terms artist, user, member, commenter, and moderator are signifying activity associated with a particular username on the site, not necessarily the holistic activity of single individual.

Currently it is difficult to conjecture why users stop posting. First, this is due to nature of Reddit and Reddit Gone Wild. When a user discontinues posting, they typically delete both their photo(s) which they have posted as well as their user name. This is most likely to occur in users who post under 10 photos because the more one posts, the more tedious the task individually deleting photos becomes. This became apparent in the pilot study for this research, where it was determined that roughly 10% of new posters delete their photos and accounts within several weeks of first posting. However, it is also possible that these users have made new accounts and began posting under different user names as some photo captions suggested. Secondly, the limitations of the content analysis style of this study do not allow communication with users (whether active, dormant, or extinct). Without being able to speak directly to users, it is not possible to know whether users' true reasons for posting content to the site match the motives they display in their photo captions. Were participant voices polled, they may express inconsistent motivations and solidarity. Therefore, future research will attempt to interview the users

Chapter 5

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF REDDIT GONE WILD'S EROTIC ART WORLD

In this chapter, Chapter 6, and Chapter 7, I will provide an analysis of my findings. Here, I will begin to discuss the particular aspects of Reddit Gone Wild most relevant to its distinction as an art world. The facets of its social organization serve as a backdrop for appropriately understanding the subsequent interactions taking place on the site. First, I will briefly discuss the function of porno-selfies as art, followed by a lengthy conversation on the particular art conventions and style adapted by Reddit Gone Wild. Next, I will detail how RGW interacts with and is informed by mainstream pornography, evolving its traditional convention through technological advancement. I will end with an overview of the interaction and collective activity in which RGW members engage.

Utility Art

When thinking about art worlds, "we look for groups of people who cooperate to produce things that they, at least, call art" (Becker 2008; pg 35). I will not pretend here that I believe all of the artists on Reddit Gone Wild consider their porno-selfies art; however, this does not mean that RGW is not an art world. While we generally look for artists to name their products art, it is not necessary for the artists or even others initially cooperating in the art world to call its products art (Becker 2008).

There are items produced necessary or supplemental to everyday life that come to be known as art. Take for example, early American quilts. These blankets served a

very practical use; yet, they have become appreciated for their beauty and intricacy, and now are aesthetically recognized as art and belonging to a specific art world (Becker 2008; Shaw, 2009). Likewise, erotic nude paintings that may have been considered obscene at the time of their creation, are now, in light of modern day film and photographic erotica, considered art. Those who are producing art while not necessarily thinking of their products in that manner, can in a sense be thought of as unintentional artists[13].

For our purposes here, it is perhaps best to think of the former products along with porno-selfies on RGW as utility art. I define utility art as items produced for a purpose beyond the aesthetic value. Art work often elicits an emotional response from viewers and emotion from the artist is often involved in the production of that art (Becker, 2008). Pornography is viewed for its sexual aesthetic value; but, it also holds a utility value in the sexual excitement it is meant to induce.

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[13] Unintentional artists, as used here, differs from the self-taught, unconventional artists researched by Fine (2004) in Everyday Genius: Self-Taught Art and the Culture of Authenticity in that unintentional artists tend not to think of their products as art and are not concerned with making money from their work, while self-taught, unconventional artists believe themselves to be artists, working through unconventional means, who wish to exchange their products for money. I understand there is difficulty in considering pornography an art form, as it has long been framed as an obscenity and a cause of moral corruption. So, if it makes this thesis more palatable, you may wish to consider those producing the photographs on RGW unintentional artists. Becker (2008; pg 37) elaborates,

"Art is an honorific title and being able to call what you do by that name has some advantages, people often want what they do to be so labeled. Just as often, people do not care whether what they do is art or not (as in the case of many household or folk arts—cake decorating, embroidery, or folk dancing, for instance) and find it neither demeaning nor interesting that their activities are not recognized as art by people who do care about such things."

Convention

Reddit Gone Wild's blended social organization of traditional social networking sites and amateur pornography sites set it apart as a venue with a distinct *convention* that is not used or available on other sites, or other current media forms. Becker (2008) explains, "art worlds typically devote considerable attention to trying to decide what is and isn't art, what is and isn't their kind of art, and who is and isn't an artist (p. 36)." These decisions and the spoken and unspoken rules behind them, determine an art world's convention.

RGW too is organized around sets of rules, seemingly making their convention exceedingly easy to determine by reading their sub-reddit rules. For example, if too much clothing is on, the selfie is not art—or at least not by the site's standards. If you are a minor and post a porno-selfie, this is not their kind of art. If you doxx someone or post revenge porn, you are not an artist. Other erotic art worlds have different rules.

For example, Kavanaugh and Maratea demonstrate how ZooTown, an online community of zoosexuals who exchange animal porn, draw lines between insiders and outsiders with its site rules and the use of 'othering' (2015). Through the use of these lines, the community makes their initial expectations of artists, art, and viewers clear and concrete. Moderators in this art world, and RGW, have the role of distinguishing when rule breaking is and is not occurring. This can lead to disagreement among artists, viewers, and moderators. Often, the comments thread under a selfie in question will reveal the thoughts of the artist, viewer, and moderator in deciding whether the selfie or artist belong in this art world.

Art worlds depend upon conventions to understand what is appropriate for that art world. However, conventions are not limited to express written or spoken rules. Conventions rely on past rules and styles to effectively replicate and reproduce a piece

of art fitting to a particular art world (Becker 2008). The amateur artists of RGW's online erotic art world began shaping their own convention by relying on mainstream, online, professional, paid-pornography convention before morphing into its own world (Paasonen, 2012). Therefore, the art found on RGW is emblematic of forms and bodies favored in traditional mainstream pornography (hetero, white, thin, culturally attractive women). Likewise, online paid pornography before that emerged as a new industry from the video and print pornography art world giant firms of the 70s and 80s (Slade, 2006; Wiesman, 2015). In this way, we can see how art worlds beget each other and follow a genealogy.

Breaking convention does not always or even usually lead to a new art world with conventions and spaces of its own. There are risks involved such as community backlash and audience fallout. However, breaking with convention may also provide freedom of expression and a way to bypass barriers to the creation of art that exist under current convention (Becker, 2008). For example, artists who wish to exhibit their bodies to a crowd of people may find inflexible barriers or fundamental disagreements with the convention of professional paid pornography, and therefore find the streamlined access to mass display and self-authorship on RGW more appealing.

Reddit Gone Wild uses the term on-topic to describe posts fitting of the convention of the community (Reddit Gone Wild FAQ, 2016). Describing a submission as on-topic connotes that the photo personifies the essence of the community, both its written and unwritten rules. Likewise, photos that are described as off-topic are seen as inappropriate for RGW by moderators and other community members. Photos that are extremely off-topic can be deleted by moderators and can

even result in the banning of the user name, as well as that user's IP address (this reduces the possibility of that user returning under another name) (Reddit FAQ; Reddit Gone Wild FAQ).

These types of off-topic photos may include ones that explicitly break written site rules, but also those that are indicative of what might be considered extreme sexual taboo by mainstream society. However, mostly, photos that are off-topic are simply not well received by the community, acquiring little or no Karma or comments. As such, these porno-selfies appear frequently on the Controversial Tab, disappearing from the common thread of artist photos altogether. The deeper implications of off-topic art and the Controversial Tab will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

As artists break into the community, they often experience a learning curve to understand RGW's conventions. Artists may post photos that are off-topic through breaking particular written site rules, such as not applying the appropriate gender tag, or not revealing enough of or the correct areas of the body, or for not appealing to unwritten site norms and viewer preferences, like using suitable lighting and excluding out-of-focus shots. Artists reveal their difficulty learning the convention in the following porno-selfie captions:

> Artist Photo Caption: "Had to delete cause ive been a naughty girl not [f]ollowing the rules and such but everyone liked this one so much I wanted to give it back! XoXo" 335 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "Learning the rules... Repost of my [F]irst post. Like my new bra? ;)" 54 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "Still learning solo lighting and poses, so have a veri[f]ication post while I practice!" 22 Karma

The artists above, though breaking or struggling with RGW's convention, were not severely penalized by the community and their art still garnered attention and

appreciation. Typically, the community members are willing to express some level of flexibility and patience with new artists as they adapt to convention. Community members, including other artists and moderators, will often point out when convention has been broken and offer suggestions to correct the deviation.

> Comment on a close up photo of an artist's vagina: "that's real good girl but a little too close up, you gotta get back a bit"

> Comment on an out of focus photo: "can't tell if just fuzzy or pubs, needs to be more in focus please"

> Moderator comment before the photo was removed: "needs gender tag; see rules"

While moderators and community members are quick to point out when convention has been broken, they are slow to implement extreme measures, such as site expulsion which is reserved for more blatant and intentional rule breaking. This type of grace period is helpful in maintaining a welcoming environment for new artists.

Interaction between Worlds

Though RGW uses its convention to set itself apart from the mainstream pornography world from which it grew, it still shares many of the same convention aspects (Paasonen, 2012; Wiesman 2015). Becker (2008) notes, "Art worlds typically have intimate and extensive relationships with the worlds from which they try to distinguish themselves. They… adopt ideas that originate in them and compete with them for audiences and financial support" (36). The relationship between new art worlds and the ones that came before them can be thought of as a feedback loop. The feedback loop relationship is not only illustrative of convention transference and

exchanges, but also extends to the interchange of the consumers and the financial gains they supply.
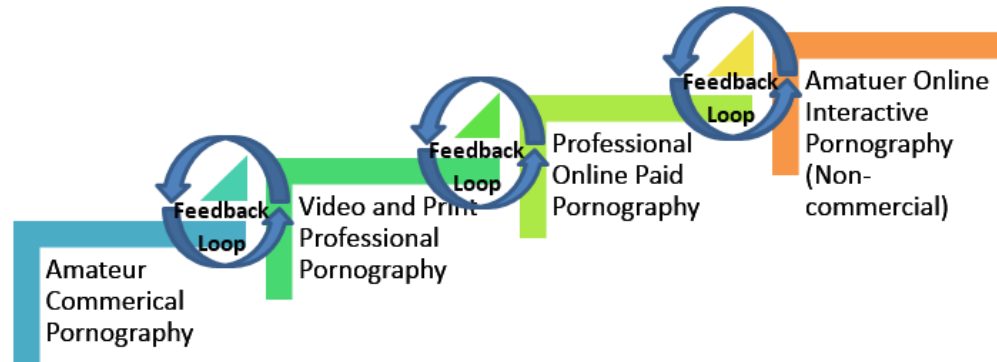
Figure 8   Brief Genealogy of Post Modern Erotic Art Worlds

Many RGW artist efforts are therefore focused on the reproduction of mainstream pornography convention, but filtered through new media and technology. This brings to RGW the same hegemonic body representations that have long made mainstream pornography so exclusionary. As posts are predominantly of white, thin, young, and culturally attractive females, there is little that can claim to be for all body types, challenging the dominant conceptions of mainstream beauty, as RGW's FAQs proclaim (Reddit FAQs 2014).

RGW itself notes how its convention has changed over time from a truly all-inclusive site, promoting all genders and bodies, to one that strongly favors the female form (RGW FAQ). However, in this acknowledgement, RGW does not address its favoritism for *specific* culturally attractive female forms. Nor does it recognize its

complacency in not only encouraging the ideal, model body posts, but discouraging the display of actual, authentic, archetypal bodies (see Chapter 6).

Paasonen (2012) notes that the poses of the authentic bodies displayed in amateur porn are often encouraged by mainstream pornography. Likewise, mainstream pornography has begun to emulate the amateur feel through *selfie-esque* photoshoots. This can be seen through the replication of selfie style photos and videos produced commercially by mainstream pornography studios, much in the same way that amateur online pornography mimics the poses and styles of mainstream pornography.

Hustler Magazine's June 2015 issue titled "Super Slutty Selfies" offered a taste of the selfie style (Hustler, 2015); while it's online presence boasts access to "thousands of amateurs" (Hustler Online, 2016) (See Figure 9). Additionally, many professional porn stars promote their brand through porno-selfies and professional shots on the photo-sharing social networking sites Instagram and Tumblr (BroBible, 2016; Pornstar-Selfies Tumblr, 2016). The Playboy website features a twenty-two picture album of the iconic Playboy Bunnies' "hottest belfies" (butt-seflies) (Playboy, 2016). Even risqué fashion magazines and lingerie retailers have turned to the porno-selfie in a show of current erotic tastes (Victoria's Secret, 2016) (See Figure 10).

Figure 9   *Hustler*'s Online Advertisement for Amateurs
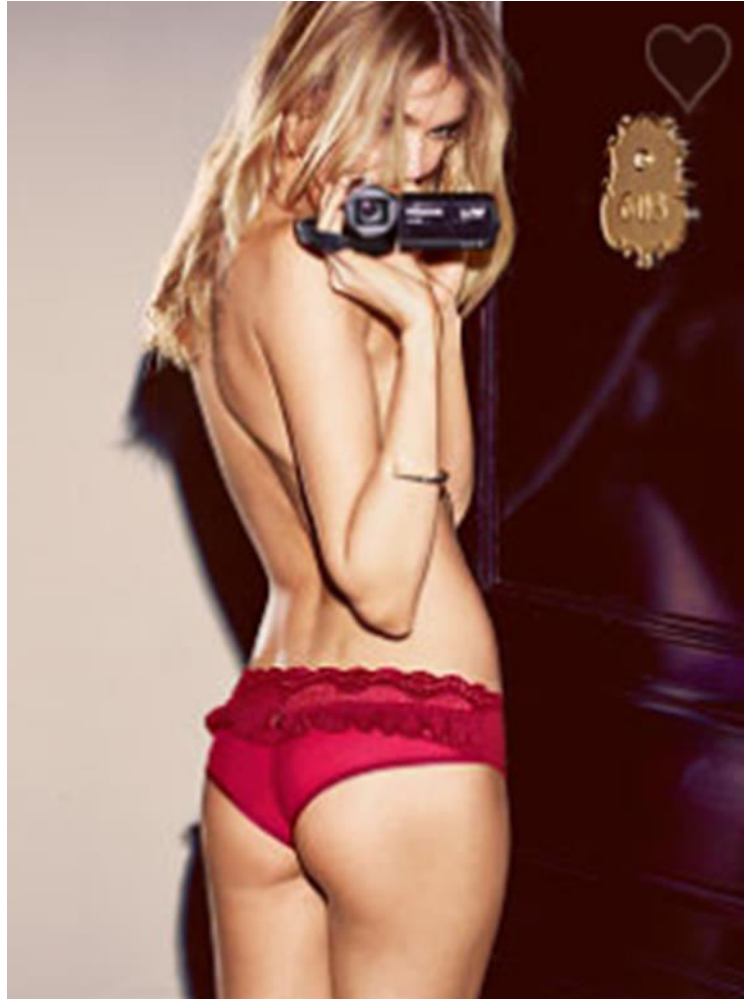
Figure 10   *Victoria's Secret* Catalogue Faux Selfie

Further, the influence of the online erotic art world of amateur interactive pornography has been named partially responsible for the end of *Playboy Magazine*'s fully nude photo features—a move intended to slow the loss of money from the company. In 2015, Playboy declared it will no longer feature naked women in their

magazines and that they are going *normcore[14]*. Playboy CEO Scott Flanders says about the decision, "You're now one click away from every sex act imaginable for free. And so it's just passé at this juncture… That battle has been fought and won (Chicago Tribune, 2015)." Reddit Gone Wild contributed greatly the surge of free online pornography and in a sense allowed women to take back a portion of the porn industry. The women may not be making money off their photos, but the giant firms of the pornography industry are no longer able to continue doing so in the same capacity as the golden era[15] of paid pornography either (Wiesman, 2015; Slade, 2014).

Technological Advancement

Much of the shift away from the traditional paid pornography industry in favor of free amateur pornography has to do with technological changes in the dissemination of sexually explicit photos. In the same way that many point to the automobile as contributing to a sexual revolution beginning in the 1920s (Greenwood, 2009; Reiss, 2006), technology is also behind this new online erotic art world. The movement has been powered primarily by the increased accessibility and affordability of smart phones featuring a high quality camera, and the increased access to the internet.

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[14] Normcore stands in opposition to the term hardcore; it is meant to express that the photos featured will not be out of the ordinary from the level of nudity and eroticism that might be encountered on suitable-for-work, non-pornographic media outlets.

[15] The Golden Era of pornography refers to the early 1970s through the early 1990s. The early 1970s saw bans lifted on obscenity laws, allowing the production and distribution of pornography with lessening legal threats. The early 1990s brought an end to that era as the internet pornography industry took off and introduced digital pornography.

When new media arenas arise, they are quickly used for pornography and erotic interests, often beginning new sexual trends (Barss, 2010; Becker, 2002). This was the certainly the case for photography, and digital photography coupled with social media, as the pairing brought a mass influx of amateur pornography into the world. And, like many social trends, the self-porning of young Americans through the amateur pornography movement has gained prominence on college campuses and in dorm rooms (Garrison, 2011; Taylor, 2006). New sexual trends tend to start amateur and move into the realm of professionalism after the arena has been better established. However, amateurism itself as an erotic trend has trumped the popularity of traditional, professional erotica (Gorman et al, 2010).

This popularity is in no small way linked to the availability, affordability, and accessibility of technology that has made resource mobilization extraordinarily easy for the RGW art world community. With that ease, artwork fitting of the genre can be quickly mass produced and displayed by countless artists. Having the resources handy (they are literally in the hands of the artists), distribution of the selfie becomes the next step. The ubiquity of smart phones and data plans, coupled with low prices and easily accessible knowledge for millennials has all but eliminated resource mobilization as a problematic issue for disseminating the art (Choi & Behm-Morawitz, 2016).

Interaction & Collective Activity

As social interactions are mediated through the social organization of the realm or venue in which the interaction takes place, it is of the utmost importance that the organization of Reddit Gone Wild as an art world not be overlooked, as the pornography is, by its nature in this space, interactive. When porno-selfies enter in this public arena for exchange, they become products of the online erotic art world. Reddit

and Reddit Gone Wild are uniquely organized, possessing special characteristics that set them apart from other social networking sites and other amateur pornography sites. Specifically, Reddit's legitimate news aspect, the comprehensive archival history of posts, collective activity, and strong community solidarity built through anonymity and autonomy allow Reddit and Reddit Gone Wild respectively to operate in new territory among large scale social networking and amateur pornography sites (Bergstrom, 2011).

Reddit's home page proudly proclaims its site slogan "The Front Page of the Internet". This proclamation is more than just hype. Many breaking news stories have been published to the home page of Reddit before television news sources have reported them (Reddit CNN, 2014). This information often originates from Redditors with police scanners who post information as they hear it. The internet more broadly has also become a prime source of news (Diddi & LaRose, 2006). While much of the nation relies on popular TV news networks to inform them, many have also turned to the internet for what they consider to be rawer, less biased information (Diddi & LaRose, 2006; De Zuniga et al, 2009), this includes Reddit viewers.

Millennials are more likely than any other age cohort to use internet sites as their prime news source. This could be a big appeal for Reddit and subsequently Reddit Gone Wild as the same age group also comprises those most likely to be viewing pornography frequently (Beaver & Paul, 2011; McNair, 2002; Malikhao & Servaes, 2011). Of the top ten most visited social networking sites, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Google+, Tumblr, Instagram, Reddit, and VK, only YouTube and Reddit are considered to house legitimate news sources (The eBusiness Guide, 2016). Arguably, YouTube operates as a fringe social networking

site where users are not nearly as interactive with one another as are the users of other top SNSs. This is certainly the case when comparing the interactive nature of users on Reddit and YouTube.

To make SNS content more accessible, many sites have various methods available for users and the public to view a history of posts made by a particular user or from a particular page on the site. These histories operate with varying degrees of usefulness, completeness, and ease, depending upon the site. Reddit's archival history of posts and searchable database make it one of the simplest to navigate. By clicking on a user name, the entire history of posts made by that person is available in chronological order. This information can even be filtered to display only posts a user submitted to a given subreddit. In the case of Reddit Gone Wild, this allows those viewing the site to display the entire porno-selfie portfolio of a particular artist who appeals to them. Large professional pornography sites often have pages devoted entirely to star artists, however, this is a new feature for an amateur pornography site as most amateur sites only have the ability to filter content by theme, not artist. Reddit and RGW's archival history system is a prime example of the blended advantage of a SNS and amateur pornography site. The ease of use adds to its appeal and popularity.

The news and archival history features work together to draw people to Reddit Gone Wild. Once there, the collective activity of participants give art its aesthetic value through voting and commenting on porno-selfies. In so doing, there is a shared sense of worth in what the community collectively produces. This mutual appreciation builds support for and within the RGW community (Becker, 2008).

But it is not around artists alone that collective activity in the art world is built. Becker (2008) explains that cooperation is necessary in art worlds among all its

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participants, including those peripherally involved. With a constant changing roster of participants, there is much coming and going on RGW. This goes beyond the obvious flurry of changing artists and viewers; tech suppliers change as new image hosting services[16] arrive on the scene; moderators alter when shifts end and also as users are newly promoted to the role; and RGW users adapt when services are added or subtracted by site administrators[17] from Reddit itself. However, all continue to understand what is needed of the replacements and what services are expected of replacements.

Makers of new phones know that the general public demands photo taking and upload capability; innovative image hosting sites aim to provide user friendly services; new moderators want to preserve the atmosphere of RGW to keep its patrons happy; new artists seek to sexually satisfy the audience with their selfies; new viewers look to RGW for arousal; and administration changes aim to minimally disrupt the current

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[16] Image Hosting Services – Reddit and Reddit Gone Wild do not store user's photos directly on their sites. Instead, only thumb nails are visible. When a viewer clicks on the thumb nail image to enlarge it, the viewer is directed to the full sized photo being "hosted" on another website, an image hosting site. Reddit and RGW users who wish to post a picture first upload their photo to an image hosting site. The image hosting site will display a link for the thumb nail photo to be posted to other sites, such as Reddit and RGW. The most popular image hosting service site used on RGW is Imgur as it gives added protection and anonymity that other image hosting sites do not.

[17] Reddit makes broad, sweeping changes to their available features from time to time. As subreddits are an extension of Reddit, the features and functionality of subreddits can be affected by these changes. For example, in 2015 Reddit released a beta version of a smart phone app, which, for the first time, allowed subreddits (including RGW) to be viewed with ease from a smart phone. Prior to this addition, the incompatible layout of Reddit made viewing and participating on Reddit from a smart phone very difficult, if not impossible at times.

happenings of their many communities. Despite the coming and going of participants, cooperation continues, and life goes on, so to speak.

It is the collective activity of the participants that is at the heart of the art world's existence (Becker, 2008). Even so, the degree of cooperation and ease of attaining that cooperation in an art world can change over time (Becker, 2008). As a growing number of would-be artists have access to smart phones, data plans, and other necessary technology and skills, the amount of cooperation needed between participants in the online erotic art world has decreased; thus, creating and displaying one's art has become easier.

But, before people can come together in an art world, there must be more than just economic and technological freedom to do so (Becker, 2008). Political and social freedom are also required. RGW provided a platform for this art world where none was previously available through anonymity and skirting the traditional paid labor associated with pornography, thereby avoiding regulation. RGW was, to the best of my research, the first site devoted to selfie porn that promoted autonomy and protected anonymity. As such, anonymity and autonomy work together in different ways to produce the atmosphere RGW needs to sustain longevity by building attachment to the site.

Chapter 6

ANONYMITY & AUTONOMY

Chapter 6 will outline the vital nature of anonymity and autonomy to the functionality of Reddit Gone Wild. Reddit Gone Wild is dependent upon continued posting from artists to remain relevant. As such, I explore the role of anonymity in encouraging artists to post. Following, I explain how anonymity is linked to two key forms of autonomy on RGW, the freedom to self-generate content and the freedom from coercion, and how those freedoms work to the advantage and disadvantage of community members.

Anonymity

Solidarity is integral to the organization of Reddit and Reddit Gone Wild. Features of both sites work together to produce solidarity, building an inviting environment for artists. Though face to face, real world solidarity has arguably declined in our late capitalist society (Adorno, 1987), it often flourishes in online communities (Cook, 2001; Bouchillon, 2014; Golan & Stadler, 2016). Pornography in late capitalist societies has previously been conceptualized as fulfilling sexual instincts in an illusory fashion, without real connection (Cook, 2001; Adorno, 1987). Alternative findings here suggest a connection to the site beyond the sexual experience through shared community solidarity in the online erotic art world.

Separate from other amateur pornography sites, on Reddit Gone Wild site visitors and community members not only have the ability to view women's porno-

selfies, but also are able to interact directly with the women featured in them. Social capital is gained here through interactivity by contributing to the community, as an artist, commenter, or moderator and can even be quantified by viewing members' Comment Karma and Link Karma (Mo & Leung, 2015; Ringrose, 2011).

As in many art worlds, the solidarity described above is not linked to interactions with specific individuals operating on the site, but to the site itself and the roles different actors step in to fill. For example, recall the commitment to collective activity discussed above. Viewers of the site may appreciate a particular artist who posts, however, should that artist choose to cease posting, another will gladly take the place and fulfill what the viewer seeks. Likewise, artists appreciate the feedback viewers give in the form of Karma and comments; however, should any particular viewer no longer vote or comment, there are many others who will step in to fill this role. In this way, we see how anonymity on the site may deter users from forming lasting bonds with each other, but encourage attachment to the community at large and what it is able to provide its members. Rhee et al (2010) explains, "Using the internet has acquired a new and more personal dimension. People increasingly rely on it to provide them with societal and communal structures that were hitherto the remit of their families and work-groups" (154).

Anonymity is important on RGW for a number of reasons—concealing personal information from potential hackers, granting freedom of expression, and neutralizing the potential stigma artists and viewers may feel from the mainstream public were their identities known. Further, through anonymous online interaction, solidarity is created by lifting societal sexual constraints that would otherwise deem the happenings on RGW deviant (Reiss 2006).

However, both the degree to which the deviant label would be applied and the alleviation thereof, are differential based upon the sex of the participant and their role in the erotic art world. For example, though intentionally disseminating sexually explicit photos of oneself is typically considered a deviant activity for both males and females, the social penalties to women known to exhibit would be undoubtedly higher. Likewise, viewing pornography may be considered deviant, but to a lesser extent than producing it. In either scenario, community members of RGW value their anonymity to shield their physical realm selves from the social consequences of what might be considered deviant online activities.

On RGW, the artists and non-artists may live out one or multiple personas. Members may keep a single user name, or may choose to create one or more 'throw-away accounts'. Each account is able to embody the particular representation of the self the individual behind it chooses. Presumably, artists also feel they decrease the chance of revealing their "real life" identity by limiting the amount of information associated with a single account and may use throw-away accounts merely as a measure of privacy. This is especially made clear, as artists frequently create and delete accounts in an attempt to preserve their anonymity. The captions artists have given their porno-selfies below are illustrative of this.

> Artist Photo Caption: "Sometimes I wish I didn't delete [my old account], but it's done... I missed you, gw, so I'm back (f)or a little bit! :)" 657 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "Had to delete my last account, but i'm back! [f]" 101 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "Had to delete my account because it was getting too easy to find my personal in(f)ormation. But now I'm back! Recognize me? ;)" 62 Karma

In the final caption above, we see that artists value the anonymity afforded to them by the site, and do their best to keep it. They may seek fame and notoriety for their online self (or selves) through their nude images acquiring Karma; however, consistent with previous research on anonymous SNSs, most users do not seek this sort of fame for their offline selves (Stroud 2014).

As mentioned above, both gender and role on RGW impact the importance of anonymity. Community members who do not post porno-selfies but only participate on the site by commenting and voting, often choose not to be anonymous to the same extent as artists. Though artists can comment on other artists' photos and respond to comments on their own porno-selfies, most often photo comments come from non-artist community members.

For example, those who do not post porno-selfies, but rather only vote and comment, are more likely to use their standard user name so that their user history reveals interaction on numerous subreddits, not just RGW; thereby, leaving a larger digital footprint to piece together relevant identifiable information. This is in contrast to artists who often use only throw-away accounts as their user histories reveal interaction solely on RGW. This is especially true for male commenters who are more cavalier with their personal information, often alluding to physical locations, such as cities in which they live. While commenters are not required to use a male [m] or female [f] tag, it seems that the majority of commenters are males.

Commenter on Artist Photo: "Fapptastic!"

Commenter on Artist Photo: "holy shit girl, your lips makin my balls explode!"

Commenter on Artist Photo: "I don't think I've ever been this hard in my life"

Though some feminists and LGBTQ women appropriate the above terminology referencing male erections and masturbation, the prevalence and repetition of these forms of comments lead me to believe that the commenters are in fact, primarily males, and presumably, heterosexual.

This self-diminished measure of privacy for men reflects a societal attitude that viewing pornography is more permissible than making pornography—an attitude intrinsically tied to the assumption of the sex of producers and consumers. Pornography is primarily thought of as heterosexual, made by women, and for men (Lerum & Dworkin, 2015; Tolman, 1994). And, due to viewing pornography being more permissible than making it, male commenters likely have far less at stake socially were they to be discovered. In this same vein, internet trolls bent on cyber bullying and causing social and emotional harm are also less likely to be interested in attempting to link a commenter's user name with their real life identity.

Still, the anonymity of online spaces produces sexual freedom for the artists by allowing individuals to create and live out multiple personas, some incongruent with the self displayed in the real world. Online, these personas are chiseled into being by the social interactions and everyday norms of each online community. But offline, users may choose to show the world a very different version of the self. Particularly for the artists on RGW, anonymity allows women to live out the paradoxical virgin/whore dichotomy, should they wish to do so. In the captions below, artists describe themselves as fitting of the *good-girl* label in their everyday lives while relishing in the hidden online *bad-girl* persona they have created for themselves on RGW.

Artist Photo Caption: "Respectable mom here. My husband and daughter are at church right now. I'm "unwell" at home, playing with myself. {F} Video." 500 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "[F] I was meant to be studying, but I started looking at GoneWild and got a little distracted ;)" 2,783 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "I wonder what people at my Christian college would say... (f19)" 777 Karma

For the artists above, their sexuality is seemingly duplicitous—abiding both within and without societal constraints. However, artists recurrently make known that the representations of themselves through their art, is very different from the self they display in the real world.

Artist Photo Caption: "[F]irst post on gonewild. I am normally very shy in real life. Like it? :) (Verification) – repost" 2,064 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "Would anyone look at me on the street and think I post here I wonder? [F]" 5,036 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "I don't do this in real life [f]" 586 Karma

The above captions demonstrate that artists often showcase a different version of themselves offline. Some artists seem to imply that the self-representation on Reddit Gone Wild is more true to their nature than that displayed in everyday face to face life. Others present an opposite opinion, that what is displayed here is not their truest nature.

Autonomy: Freedom to Self-Generate Content

Just as anonymity is central to the experience of RGW, autonomy too has a prominent placement. Autonomy on RGW comes in two forms, freedom to create and post art (self-generate content) and freedom from coercion. However, as was demonstrated above with the self-diminished levels of anonymity male commenters

employ, both the freedom to create art and the freedom to do so without coercion or misrepresentation is double edged.

When thinking about the way the majority of popular Social Networking Sites' content is created, most are self-generated, giving users a certain degree of autonomy to control the content with which they most directly interact. Site creators and administrators often exercise a moderately hands-off approach to the individual page management of sites hosted by its main platform, but censor content, and changes to the look and feel of the site. Users of SNSs like RGW, upload content for others to view and comment, often prompting interaction between the original poster and those who view it. Moderators censor (by blocking user names and deleting posts) content that they feel is extremely off topic as described in their written rules.

Self-generating content is a common theme across most SNSs. There are few, if any, true differences between the way Reddit's and other popular SNSs content is self-generated. Perhaps the limited site administrator intervention, moderator involvement, and sheer size potential could be arguable points of contrast. However, these are not integral differences. The real importance of Reddit's autonomous self-generating content as a point of interest is, first, that Reddit Gone Wild is perhaps only true SNS that is also a pornography site—amateur or otherwise. And second, unlike most other sites, RGW gives sole ownership of self-generated content (including comments, captions, and photos) to the creator. Together, this makes RGW one of the only pornography sites in which those featured are also the sole owners. The freedom for artists to create and exhibit entire portfolios of porno-selfies which they get to control is of extreme importance to site solidarity. This allows artists to foster a relationship of trust with the site itself (the administrators and moderators) as they

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permit the explicit photos to remain under the sole ownership of the artists. But that autonomy is not for everyone in the community.

Trolling, while prominent on many social networking sites, does not have a high presence on Reddit Gone Wild. Commenters therefore have a reduced autonomy to self-generate content. This can be attributed to three main aspects of Gone Wild. First, research has suggested that Reddit in general has higher volumes of felt member solidarity than other social networking sites (Kimball, 2015), which reasonably would reduce hateful or rude comments. Secondly, research has suggested that "virtual communities centered on deviant behaviors typically attempt to avoid sustained negative or abusive interactions with fellow members" (Maratea and Kavanaugh, 2012), meaning they are less likely to engage in divisive behavior amongst themselves. Thirdly, Reddit Gone Wild particularly claims to foster an environment of body positivism and its moderators and community members swiftly retaliate against trolling and negative comments.

As discussed in Chapter 2, each subreddit is governed by its own community moderators who are empowered to create and enforce whatever rules they wish. In the case of the RGW's erotic art world, moderators reduce commenter's freedom by restricting negative or offensive comments to preserve the community atmosphere of body positivism. Recall the affirmative nature for interaction among artists and viewers on RGW.

If an artist's selfie is berated by a viewer, other community members swarm support through awarding Karma points (upvotes) and making positive comments, and by downvoting the negative comment. In a show of solidarity, site contributors (whether they be primarily viewers or artists) are quick to squash what could be

perceived as hurtful comments to artists by overrunning the post with positive messages regarding the original post, such as "Keep going, you look amazing", "Get it sexy!", and "Love yourself, who cares what this guy thinks!". Moderators may also delete the hostile post, and threaten to or actually delete the viewer's account.

Through the collective action of community members, the worth of the artist and appreciation for their art are reinforced through validation and support. This encouragement helps to nurture positive views of the self for the artists (Gentile et al, 2009; Mesch, 2009). At the surface level, this is a good practice which presumably allows artists' freedom of expression in their art displays, while reduces the autonomy of viewers to post negative, shaming, or otherwise trolling comments. But despite the spoken inclusive and body positive mantra of the community, it also subtly promotes body policing to ensure the art displayed is fitting of the model convention through withholding Karma and comments for art outside of the idealized aesthetic.

Amateur Pride & Authenticity

Part of self-generated content is the assumption that it is amateur and authentic. On RGW, there is much pride taken in the label of amateur due to its meaning on the site. Amateur means real, pure, authentic sexuality and a desire to exhibit for the sake of exhibition itself; its perfection lies in its flaws. This is in contrast to what the community thinks of professional pornography. Community members see professional pornography as a strategic reproduction or imitation of sexuality in an idealized format, where exhibition occurs solely for monetary compensation. While it can be easily said that many artists on RGW have reached what society would consider a professional level, drawing the line between amateur and professional is not what is important here and so I will not attempt to thus categorize. The important idea is that

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the community actively thinks of themselves as amateurs and that they believe there are inherent differences behind the motives of amateurism and professionalism.

> Artist Photo Caption: "Oh come, and we will celebrate the things that make us real (f)" 3,667 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "(F) Gonewild, this is the real me. I'm a 19 year old active, healthy girl who still struggles with stretch marks and cellulite. I could bend and arch and make it all go away here, but this is my raw body." 1,688 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "May not be per[f]ect, but its real :)" 494 Karma

The artists above celebrate their amateur art and authentic bodies. Showcasing themselves as "real" and imperfect stands in opposition to an erotic world they believe to be idealized and fake, namely mainstream professional pornography. But recall from above that art worlds engage in feedback loops with those that came before. The convention of RGW grew out of professional pornography and much of the poses and art styles seen on RGW replicate mainstream convention for stylized bodies and sexuality.

This is not to say that the art displayed on RGW is not authentic, raw, or otherwise real. However, it must be pointed out that the majority of artists' depictions and narratives of real sexuality are constructed around mainstream pornography's fanciful convention. So while the amateur bodies on RGW may be *authentic*, being mediated through the evolved convention of mainstream pornography could suggest the art is less *original*.

As a second consequence of sharing much of the same convention with professional pornography, the viewers of RGW also carry the same tastes of the viewers of mainstream online pornography. Though RGW claims to be body inclusive, and community voices do not degrade those posts unfitting of the ideal,

there is a noticeable presence of silent, institutionalized body policing where the ideal are encouraged to post and others discouraged from doing so.

In the ideal, an artwork's aesthetic will be responded to with appreciation; however, many works can go unappreciated (Becker 2008). On Reddit Gone Wild, the art not fitting of its convention (off-topic) often times goes unappreciated. Art's aesthetic here is directly responded to through Karma points and comments, though notably, members primarily interact through Karma, not comments (Smith, 2016). As Karma points are tallied they constitute a ranking system, with those photos gathering the most at the top of the hierarchy, and those with none or few at the bottom. Artwork with many Karma points, has been well received by the community and its aesthetic appreciated. Viewers can sort the gallery to display artwork that has received the most Karma first, presumably placing the highest quality art (as decided by community members) first.

But what about the artwork that falls at the bottom of the hierarchy? While RGW supports participant solidarity by discouraging negative comments, there is little that can be done to encourage community members to appreciate art that they do not find aesthetically pleasing. RGW abides by the adage, 'if you have nothing nice to say, then don't say it at all'.

> Keep comments light, friendly, and positive. This will foster a happy community with lots of new contributors, and that means more and more content for us all to enjoy! Your kindness will be rewarded (Reddit Gone Wild FAQs, 2016).

Any artwork of body-types not becoming of the norm—overweight bodies, disabled bodies, trans bodies, intersex bodies, and so on – is often relegated to the lowest status of the forum—even set outside of the actual forum and found under the

Controversial Tab (DailyDot 2013; Reddit Gone Wild 2014). These photos constitute the slew of unappreciated artwork found on Reddit Gone Wild.

Autonomy: Freedom from Coercion

Artist authenticity is also closely tied to the freedom from coercion and misrepresentation. Becker (2008) explains, "Because the artist's position as artist depends on the production of art works which embody and express [her] special talents and gifts, participants in art worlds worry about the authenticity of art works (pg 22)." This authenticity is of the utmost importance on RGW and is tied to the site rules regarding monetary exchanges being banned and Reddit's site rules prohibiting involuntary pornography. Again, this rule is double edged. At the surface, this autonomy is to preserve purity and authenticity of the art, safeguarding the artists' reputations from claims of coercion and plagiarism. However, in so doing, RGW also avoids a plethora of federal regulations that traditionally closely monitor sex work, and increasingly revenge porn as well. This indicates that perhaps the real intention with such a rule, is to continue to avoid regulation.

But authenticity matters not just because its absence or presence contributes to the extent to which we judge and appreciate an art work, but also because, collectively, the authenticity of an artist's art pieces constitutes a large part of that artist's reputation (Becker, 2008). Artist authenticity refers to the idea that the artist is who they say they are, namely, the subject of the photo, an amateur real body. In art worlds, plagiarism almost always evokes negative reactions. Photos uploaded without the consent of the subject or those pretending to be someone else are judged harshly on RGW as they tarnish what the community claims to represent.

As artists gain experience and prominence on Reddit Gone Wild, verification becomes a way to solidify their place in the erotic art world. Verification is upheld by many members as a rite of passage on Reddit Gone Wild. Once a user has posted a few times, or when a user's erotic art products receive moderate attention within the community, site members will often call for that user to verify themselves. After a successful verification, moderators reward artists with a special Snoo emblem which appears after their user name on all their posts to RGW. As verification is optional, artists who proceed with the process reveal a level of commitment to the art world and its community members. Moreover, verification provides an added measure of artist authenticity. Below Reddit Gone Wild's FAQs explain their strong commitment to artists' freedom from coercion and misrepresentation:

> While the word "consent" isn't exactly sexy, the concept certainly is! In fact, it's the cornerstone of the greatest parts of human sexuality. No one is sexier than the people who want you back. No picture is sexier than those of people who want you to look. The best posts on Gonewild are those made by honest, genuine people that share interests with you, engage you, and want you to see them naked. In fact knowing that they're "real" in this way and that they consent is such a big deal around here, that we have an entire system dedicated to ensuring that submitters are who they claim to be, and that they consent to being posted. This is called verification. The most-liked posters are verified, and the readers demand it of anyone who achieves a certain amount of popularity.

Whether the site rule above carries the hidden intent of avoiding regulation or not, it certainly aids in understanding the position of the community. The members here seek ethical pornography and will not tolerate anything less.

When consent to post a photo is not given, it often constitutes revenge porn. On RGW, revenge porn can be thought of as plagiarism as the site is explicit about authorship—artists own their photos and the copyright, "Copyright is inherent and it

belongs to you, the creator of the content" (Reddit Gone Wild FAQ, 2016). Expressing that artists have sole ownership over their work is not only beneficial for solving disputes within the RGW community, but also outside of it as revenge porn is most effectively fought in court using copyright laws (Franklin, 2014; Levendowski, 2014). Below, an artist's authenticity is called into question by viewers:

> Artist Photo Caption[18]: "{F} I am such a deep sleeper that I can take a facial in my sleep and not even wake for the camera flash. Here's last night. I wonder how many nights are not on the camera ;)" 0 Karma

> Comment: "That's pretty damn cool if you are ok with it....what reaction did you have when you woke up?"

> Comment: "I'm fairly certain that is sexual assault."

Ultimately, with the questionable nature of the photo and the artist's unverified status, authenticity for the artist could not be established by community members and the photo was relegated to the controversial tab with no Karma points. Important here is the collective activity of the community in deciding not to award Karma to a photo for which they could not establish consent. This illustrates the community's demand for ethical pornography.

Most often, when authenticity comes into question, moderators use their power to remove photos and ban users. However, those photos and comments are also no longer accessible and therefore cannot be used as case examples here. In cases of potential revenge porn, it is typically the posting artist's authenticity that is most readily questioned (like above). But RGW members want to be sure not only that the artist submitting the photo had permission to use the image, but also that the body

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[18] This Particular artist was not included in my sample of 90; this photo caption and comments were noted in my site observations.

displayed in the artwork is one of an amateur Below, a second scenario of

questionable art authenticity occurs with a photo seemingly lifted from a mainstream

pornography site:

> Artist Photo Caption[19]: "[F]ucked in a club at [m]y bachelorette party
> this weekend - thought you all would like ;)"

> Comment on Photo: "My bullshit detector is going off, this is a
> screencap from a porno. In the VIP or some shit like that."

> Comment on Photo: "Fake tits, fake pics. If the story be true, then fuck
> you."

The attention paid to art authenticity indicates that the community is certainly

not without scruples. In art worlds, who makes the art and when it is made affects our

judgement of the art, and therefore, of the artist as well. On RGW, maintaining

authenticity serves to protect the judgement of the art, the artist, and the viewer.

More than this, protecting artists' freedom from coercion means ensuring they

were not persuaded to post through monetary incentive. This measure aids in Reddit

Gone Wild artists making distinctions between themselves and traditional sex workers.

However, incentives for posting do still exist outside of monetary gains in the form of

Karma, Comments, and Reddit Gold.

Reddit Gone Wild expressly prohibits the exchange of monetary goods for

artists' photos. The art on Reddit Gone Wild is free for all and site moderators make

known this rule (Reddit Gone Wild FAQs). RGW even suggests that artists who sell

their erotic products elsewhere on Reddit take advantage of anonymous throw-away

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[19] The artist photo caption and subsequent comments quoted here were captured
during general site observations from the Controversial Tab and were not included in
my core sample

accounts by making an account solely for RGW to avoid co-mingling transactions.

Reddit Gone Wild FAQS (2016) explain,

> "If you use reddit to sell panties, fetish items, cam shows, or anything similar, and wish to post to Gonewild, please do so under a separate account. We wish to remain separated from all money-making endeavors, so that Gonewild remains a purely exhibitionists [sic] subreddit where people post for absolutely no other reason than the thrill of it"

It is my position that this also has a stigma mitigating effect, as much of the narratives surrounding sex work exploitation name monetary incentives as culpable in producing a harmful environment for women (May et al, 2000). The nature of the environment on Reddit Gone Wild is very important to moderators and community members alike, and moderators work to ensure it remains comfortable for their artists.

> We want to foster safe, mature, low-pressure environment for true exhibitionists that are out for nothing other than to show off their naked bodies. We don't explicitly state everything that is and is not allowed, so please don't try to skirt the rules. Thank you! (Reddit Gone Wild FAQs, 2016)

Without the motivation of cash or other tangible prizes, exhibiting artists are less likely to be assumed to have been coerced into doing so. In spite of this, there are non-monetary incentives for artists to post.

Karma, though it cannot be exchanged for any prize whether tangible or digital, has some similar properties to currency on Reddit Gone Wild. Because monetary exchanges or compensation is prohibited, the universal worth scale of the art posted is achieved through Karma points (I will further discuss below in the section, Labors of Love: Gaining Reputation through Experience). While Karma is certainly not money, Ringrose et al's (2013) sexting research found that "akin to adult 'postfeminist' media cultures, for teen girls, being asked for an image of one's body

carries value, even constitutes a new norm of feminine desirability" (Ringrose et al 2013:319)—a sentiment echoed in RGW's online erotic art world. Receiving Karma, or getting love as it's often called on RGW, is a sign of viewer appreciation as well an indication of wanting more.

> Artist Photo Caption: "I've been quite lonely since the b[f] broke up with me. Show me some love? Here's a school uniform" 409 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "All the love [f]rom my last post got me so hot. Any more for this?" 88 Karma

Above, artists show their longing for as much Karma as they can get. Artists will also acquire additional labor through commissioned requests as a way to please their fan base and elicit more Karma.

Artists often fulfill these commissioned pieces, and even make known their desire to take on more. The photo captions below are illustrative of artists' willingness to fulfill commissioned work at the request of viewers:

> Artist Photo Caption: "Peaking [f]rom under a t-shirt, per request..." 3,530 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "A request album as big as my ass and tits ;) (F)" 2,607 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "I need requests so all my posts aren't mirror selfies. 😫 (F,19)" 3,687 Karma

Commissioned requests are part of RGW's symbiotic relationship between viewers and artists. Artists seek as much Karma as they acquire, and viewers seek as many pictures as the artists are willing to supply. Asking artists for a particular kind of photo or pose, can make the artists feel appreciated and sexually desirable (Ringrose et al, 2013; Albury, 2015; Tiidenberg, 2015).

Outside of comments and Karma, viewers have found another way to show their appreciation to artists. Though RGW is adamant that the artwork displayed on the site is free to view and post, there is an exception to this rule. As professional pornography sites often offer some free pornography and full access with upgraded, paid accounts (PornHub, 2016), Reddit and by extension RGW have their own upgrade expansion, and the benefits of purchase often go directly to the artists.

Recall from Chapter 2, the Gilded Tab displays posts only from members who have purchased Reddit Gold or been gifted Reddit Gold. Reddit Gold, available in one-month subscriptions for $3.99 or annually for $29.99, gives users additional features which enhance their experience on Reddit, such as turning off advertisements and access to special gilded only subreddits. On Reddit Gone Wild, viewers frequently reward their favorite artists with Reddit Gold subscriptions. The commenter below offers a deeper insight:

> Viewer Comment: "I got the dollars to pay bitches to get naked for me all day but you really wantin to is so much hotter. Stead of given them my dollars im given you my gold."

The viewer above touches on the same preferences that RGW highlights in their consent statement. In the RGW community, an artist that really wants to show themselves is more sexually enticing than an exhibitionist motivated by money. Precisely because the artist above did not ask for or expect it, the viewer believed her to be more authentically sexually excited and more worthy of his reward.

While the dollar proceeds from the viewer's (and all) Reddit Gold go toward funding Reddit, it is the artists who directly benefit from the purchases gifted to them. Purchasing Reddit Gold as a gift for artists is 100% optional and viewers have the same access to an artist's photos and portfolio regardless of their contribution.

Presumably, viewers could feel that gifting Reddit Gold to an artist increases their chances of private messaging or fulfillment of special request photos. However, surprisingly, no viewer comments or artists captions alluded to this taking place[20]. Regardless of this, it is very common for viewers to compensate artists in this manner.

Labors of Love & Gaining Reputation through Experience

While artists use the lack of monetary compensation as a distinction between themselves and sex workers[21], there is still labor involved in the production of artists' artwork. And, with RGW's strict rules for compensation, that labor goes unpaid. For almost all SNSs, members' dedication to the site is expressed through unpaid labor and the rewards are intangible. Reddit Gone Wild, being maintained by the unpaid labors of love of its site participants (Paasonen, 2010), facilitates a sense of community solidarity around the shared interests of the members (Bouchillon, 2014; Choi & Park, 2014). The primary shared interest on RGW are the art products themselves, the porno-selfies.

Communities built upon unpaid labor often establish their own social hierarchy, with those who have invested the most time and effort in the community at the top as either moderators or top contributors (Paasonen, 2010; Hugh-Jones &

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[20] This is not to indicate with any level of certainty that this does not take place; but, rather, to make known that there is currently no available data to support this possibility.

[21] Despite RGW moderators' best efforts, there are still artists who attempt to covertly sell various sexual services on RGW by private messaging seemingly interested commenters. When this becomes known, moderators are quick to ban the artist from the site. It is difficult to assess the prevalence of this rule breaking. However, during data collection and site observation, this only became the apparent case for two artists, neither of whom were in my participant pool.

Littlewood, 2015; Kimball, 2013). In the art world of Reddit Gone Wild, a hierarchy of the art aesthetics is made when viewers respond to artists' labor, their porno-selfies, through Karma, requests, comments, or Reddit Gold subscriptions.

Though there is not much work *necessary* to exhibit on RGW, artists with the strongest reputations are also typically those who have invested a good bit of time in the creation of their art. This time and effort is unpaid in the conventional monetary sense. While there is a degree of unpaid labor inherent to most hobbies, numerous artists outside of RGW make art with the hope of being paid for their labor. In many art worlds, it is this wish to make money from their art work that drives artists to pursue arenas to exhibit their work so that others may purchase it. But perhaps just as often, artists make art for the sheer enjoyment of doing so, or for practical individual uses without potential buyers in mind (Becker, 2008).

As artists continue with their careers on Reddit Gone Wild, they gain posting experience and build their reputation as an artist through their growing portfolios. An artist's reputation is evaluated on RGW through their Link Karma and Comment Karma, the collective expression of individual photo karma and comment karma. It is easy to judge an artist's reputation in these terms; when such a value is assigned to all artists in the market, it is straightforwardly known who has the most solid reputation and who is most well-known in general. Reputation is tied to the aesthetics hierarchy on RGW, and artists with the most appreciated porno-selfies are also the ones who have the strongest reputation.

As artists do not seek money for their artwork, they take on the burden of unpaid labor out of love for the exhibitionist experience on RGW. Producing art here requires labor from the artists to maintain the art world. Artists, enjoying their art

being appreciated, want to keep exhibiting their artwork on RGW. And, as artists' reputations grow on the site, they often pour additional labor into their art, creating full albums rather than single photo shoots. In these instances, there is a considerable amount of work that goes into creating the porno-selfies that the community will appreciate. Not every photo comes out perfect or is to the artist's liking. Further, fulfilling commissioned requests takes time and effort to acquire what was asked. For artists in college and sharing dorms, many need to wait to create their art until they can ensure a reasonable amount of privacy to do so. Special lingerie, shoes, and toys all take time, effort, and even money to procure.

Through experience, savvy artists have found a way to maximize their efforts by taking several porno-selfies during each shoot and releasing them slowly over time. The artist captions below describe slowly releasing pieces of their art editions:

Artist Photo Caption: "[F]inally have time to post more from my last shoot!" 2,083 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "I had a good day at work GW, and I want to reward you [f]or it! Some extra pics from my last shoot □" 137 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "My [f]avourite pics from my woodland shoot :)" 72 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "I LOVE getting [m]y ass [f]ucked!(album) I have more really naughty shots from this shoot, lemme know if you wanna see them ;)" 820 Karma

Slowly releasing photos not only mitigates the effects of market-flooding, but allows artists a broader window of time to create more art while still gaining the benefits of regular posting through growing their reputation. This savviness tells us that for the artist the most important aspect of posting is not the creation of the art itself, but the display of it, and the response to that display. The last post above

introduces a power dynamic, demonstrating that the women feel in charge in this community. They have the power to reward or to punish—flirting by offering to give their photos, but only if their viewers really want to see them. This power dynamic is a reversal of traditional pornography outlets (Kath, 2003; Whisnant, 2016). This again shows the importance of interaction in the community; it is not displaying photos alone that appeal to the artists, but the feedback they receive.

Chapter 7

PORNO SELFIES: ART & ARTIST ON REDDIT GONE WILD

In this chapter, I will focus on detailing the lifespan of artist careers on Reddit Gone Wild. In the first half, I will discuss how artists discover RGW, why they choose to post there, how their careers begin, and how it ends. In the second half, I will identify typical characteristics of artists, their rationale for posting, and how they frame their experiences on the site.

How Artists Find Reddit Gone Wild

While many other behaviors that are considered deviant by dominant cultural ideals begin within an individuals' social circle, that is likely not the case for the porno-selfies exhibited on RGW. Would-be artists are less likely to know of real offline friends, family, or acquaintances who openly admit to posting nude selfies due to the stigma associated with public displays of nudity. This is not to say that no artists came to Reddit Gone Wild through the suggestion of a face to face person who also posts, but that the design and nature of Reddit Gone Wild coupled with artists' own origin stories depict other, more likely scenarios.

Artists are often already part of the larger Reddit community when they learn about Reddit Gone Wild from another redditor. As Reddit Gone Wild is one of Reddit's most popular subreddits, it is often discussed on a number of other subreddits. Newcomers to Reddit learn about Reddit Gone Wild while viewing or participating in other Reddit discussions. RGW is promoted by veteran Reddit

members as a place for potential artists to visit and look, and also as a place for them to directly exhibit. The posts below exemplify how some artists came to know about RGW:

> Artist Photo Caption: "[f] I was on another subreddit and someone suggested I check out gw. So now I'm suggesting that gw check me out too" 122 Karma

> Artist Photo Comment: "My boyfriend told me about Reddit today so I decided to check it out and stumbled upon Gone Wild- UhOh new fav thing! [F]" 29 Karma

> Artist Photo Comment: "Heard about gw from a [f]riend today and now here I am" 97 Karma

In this way, many artists come to find RGW. For those who do not learn about RGW directly from the Reddit community, non-virtual friends, significant others, and family often share information about the site(s) with the potential artists colloquially.

While many artists hear about Reddit Gone Wild from persons in their offline social circle, this is in no way indicative of knowing of real others who post as well. The posts below illustrate that those closest to artists are rarely aware of their exhibition. As such, it is difficult to imagine that artists would trust casual acquaintances with such potentially sensitive information but leave out those closest to them.

> Artist Photo Caption: "My friend found out my username. I love GW so reposting [f]ull album under different name :)f " 75 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "My b(f) broke up with me after he found out about my prev posts. So more nudes yay!" 181 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "It's my [f]irst time, and he doesn't know, shh! ;) Do I keep going?" 172 Karma

Above, we see that many artists prefer to keep their secret. Seemingly, upon being discovered, two of the artists here were judged harshly resulting in creating a new account and ending a relationship respectively.

While it seems that most artists do not know of non-virtual persons who also exhibit, some artists do choose to share their exhibition experience with real world others. Most often, this is a significant other or sexual partner. Even so, there is frequently a coyness in sharing the information as the bulk of photos are anonymous, without faces, and instigate a 'guessing game'. Below, artists reveal their flirtations through revealing to others that they post to RGW:

> Artist Photo Caption: "told my FWB[22] that I post here, think he can guess which is me? [f]" 63 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "casually leaving this up on laptop… maybe hubbie will [f]ind it and know its me ;-)" 870 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "told him he'd get a special treat i[f] he could find me on here – catch me if you can!" 481 Karma

These online flirtations are meant to illustrate to real world partners and friends that the artist is daring, and perhaps, not as sexually reserved as they are believed to be by those others.

Why Artists Chose Reddit Gone Wild

After artists become familiar with Reddit Gone Wild, the unique aspects of Reddit and Reddit Gone Wild's social organization create the inviting environment for women to showcase their erotic art products. The solidarity felt with online groups,

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[22] FWB is an internet acronym meaning friends with benefits. The term friends with benefits is used to indicate a sexual relationship with a friend without a committed monogamous relationship.

such as those on Reddit, produces the necessary social ties to enable the curious to post. From exposure within the online community, artists are introduced to an online world in which such exhibitionist behavior is not only acceptable, but encouraged. Likewise, the overtly positive space through moderator policing of comments situates Reddit Gone Wild as a 'safe space' for some artists to test their own willingness to participate in the erotic art world.

We live in a McDonaldized, sound-bite society where media is condensed and consumed faster than ever before (Scheuer, 1999; Malikhao & Servaes, 2011). Attention spans are shortened, novelty is fetishized, and activities with easy access and little effort are appealing (Scheuer, 1999; Agger, 2012; Malikhao & Servaes, 2011). Prospective artists understand the pace of Reddit Gone Wild and how long their art will actually be displayed[23]. If an artist's fears are confirmed and the community does not appreciate their aesthetic, they realize it will likely not be displayed very long. On the other hand, if the community appreciates their artwork, then it will likely remain in a prominent place in the art world for long enough that many members can admire it.

This is manifested in the actual posting feeds on RGW. Recall from Chapter 2, "hot stories rise, while cooler stories sink" (Reddit About Page). It is not uncommon for there to be over 500 new photos a day on RGW. Which, for those not

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[23] The average number of artist photo uploads to RGW changes throughout the day and is impacted by other factors such as holidays and school breaks. Typically, a prospective artist could expect their photo to be displayed on the front page of RGW for about 6 hours. However, if the photo is posted during a time of exceptionally high posting volume, for instance during the summer months after 10pm EST on a weekend, the photo may only be displayed on the front page of RGW for 20 minutes. Further, if an artist photo is especially well received and appreciated by the community, the photo could "rise" and stay near to very top of the RGW home page for a number of days, or until the artist herself chooses to delete the piece.

exceptionally well known or favored, gives the appearance of the porno-selfie being

"here today, gone tomorrow" … or at least here now, gone in twenty minutes as it gets

pushed down the feed by newer photos. For those interested in testing the waters of

RGW, this matters. Because the initial effort to create and post on RGW is minimal,

thanks to the technological advancements mentioned above and the fast paced current

on the RGW's posting stream, potential community members feel 'giving it a try' does

not pose a large risk of effort and time lost.

> Artist Photo Caption: "[F]eeling bored tonight...finally decided to try posting here! (first post, so please be gentle)" 127 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "First time, super horny so thought I'd try this out (f)" 1,484 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "Just giving this a try, let's see how it goes… eeeek! [f]" 24 Karma

"Just giving this a try" mitigates risk of 1) being discovered, and 2) wasting

too much of one's time to try something that may not pay off as the artist intended. As

with other markets, artists look for a distribution venue that is most likely to be

frequented by those who will appreciate the style and taste of their art. Likewise, they

seek the most traffic volume to maximize those who appreciate their art, growing their

reputation (Becker, 2008). This rhetoric is also useful in constructing artists'

exhibitionism as a hobby, and not a gateway into paid-pornography, which is viewed

as a less pure expression of sexuality by the community.

For artists, producing art often begins with a hobby, something that the artist

does for fun and enjoyment (Becker, 2008). This is the case for many artists on RGW;

making their art begins as a hobby and part of sexual life. The artists make time for it

in their lives and speak of it both as something that relaxes them as well as excites

them; for some it becomes part of their daily routine. Others struggle with balancing their day job and miss less busy times when they could make more art.

Artist Photo Caption: "Sorry I haven't posted in a while, the boy[f]riend was home from college" 401 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "[f]inally finals are done, now time for some fun" 92 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "work is so stressful… I need a little gw in my li[f]e" 36 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "seems to be my nightly routine [f]" 254 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "took awhile to post, I had a lil too much [f]un taking these" 228 Karma

As seen with the captions above, posting slows during times of high intimacy with a partner or heavy workloads from school or work, and picks up during times with minimal distractions and sexual boredom. Exhibiting in this art world is a sexually gratifying hobby, much in the way viewing porn, masturbation, and kink are.

Beginning a Career in Exhibition

Nearly all new careers begin with those we would consider amateurs, with the top performers rising to become professionals (Becker 2002; Becker 2008). Again, it is not my intent to make such a distinction here, but rather to focus on the artists' interpretation of their beginnings in the art world. Curious first time artists typically hint at a sort of hesitance, shyness, and nervousness indicative of those new to exhibiting. The captions from artists' first exhibits below show the inhibitions artists' face:

Artist Photo Caption: "(F)irst pic for GW! (Resubmitted - deleted first because I was shy/nervous)" 2,706 Karma

97

Artist Photo Caption: "[f]irst post and I've got butterflies! You guess where ;-)" 18 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "[F] wondering what you guys think.. First time a little nervous.. Go easy on me □" 108 Karma

Though there is room for the assumption that some artists use the "shy girl" sex narrative to play up fetishized girlhood innocence, it is also likely that the artists above are indeed nervous displaying their nude body for the first time. Societal expectations regarding female sexuality remain largely influenced by dominant Christian ideals of morality. Morality, as conceived by Christian beliefs, labels the body and natural sexual desire as points of sin, demanding modesty and abstinence (Foucault, 1976; Baumeister & Twenge, 2002). Women therefore may feel shy or nervous exposing themselves in a positive sexual manner for the world to see, as our everyday lives have been constructed around a contrasting notion.

Artists admitting to being nervous and shy also allows the viewers to play an active role in encouraging the artists to post. This interactive aspect is part of what sets this new art world apart from mainstream pornography. Though the artists often frame their early posts around nervousness, the community viewers expect such, and use these captions as signs of the artists' authenticity and freedom from coercion. The women here are assumed to actually be shy about first posting (whether that is true or not) and not just acting or pretending to follow a dictated script. Commenters often reference their preference for the artists and their porno-selfies showcased on RGW, as opposed to more well-known porn stars.

Viewer Comment: "I love watching you, way better than porn, I know you're real"

Viewer Comment: "Your pics > my entire porn stash!"

Viewer Comment: "mmmm you're like a pro! Hell, you're better than a pro!"

Viewer Comment: "so this is that gonewild thing everyone keeps talking about… looks like I just found my new fav porn site"

This preference for RGW artists who are free from coercion is a sentiment repeated by many viewers. Such a preference highlights the importance of ethical pornography to the community—a consideration often dismissed or largely unanalyzed in researching male viewers' pornography habits and potential harms or benefits from such (Štulhofer et al, 2010; Flood, 2003; Whisnant, 2016; Albury, 2013).

Slowing Down & Exiting the Art World

Artists commonly delete artwork after exhibiting it on Reddit Gone Wild. It is difficult to conjecture exactly why this is so common, as most artists opt to delete individual porno-selfies not their entire portfolios. Some artists have given glimpses into their logic for deleting their artwork. The reasons range from body insecurities to continued issues adapting to RGW's rules for posting. Below are some examples of artists' reasons for deleting certain porno-selfies.

Artist Photo Caption: "I should just delete the other, this one's way better ;) [f]" 670 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "I'd [f]uck me: every wonder why girls delete posts? Almost a year of insecurities and bad lighting, here are the ones from my imgur that I didn't keep public." 2,887 Karma

Above, the artists reveal a sense of vulnerability with some of their photos. In the latter, the artist blatantly names her own insecurities as the driving force behind deleting her photos. This illustrates how artists use RGW to work through personal insecurities to improve their self-image.

In another example, the artist below expresses she previously deleted an album because she did not receive enough feedback.

> Artist Photo Caption: "Okay, okay.. I'll try not to delete it this time but I need you guys to kindly give me more thoughts, ideas, and requests on a school girl album [f]or the GW? Thanks so much! Top 5 requests with upvotes guarantee to be in it. <3" 1,670 Karma

Contrasting the first, it is the community's response, not the artist's own inhibitions that led to photo deletion. In this scenario, the importance of feedback and interaction is again reflected. The artist seeks more 'love' than was initially given to her artwork prior to deleting. Hoping to increase feedback from the community, this time she tactically makes known she wants to satisfy commissioned requests, and even promises that the most popular requests will be fulfilled.

Lastly, art world conventions continue to be problematic for some artists. The artist below explains her last photo was deleted per moderator request for breaking site rules.

> Artist Photo Caption: "T is for Titties [F] (sorry, forgot my gender tag and had to delete the other post!)" 643 Karma

The artists above who delete their artwork from time to time remain active artists on the site. However, when some artists choose to exit their careers on RGW, they delete their entire portfolio. This is most common for those artists who have few pieces displayed on the site, as deletion must be done individually for each photo. This makes it challenging to gauge which artists are merely dormant and which artists have exited the art world permanently. Adding to this entanglement, it is not uncommon for some artists to post only a couple of times a year. Sporadic exhibiting is indeed the norm, with few artists able to show stability in their posting patterns for over a six-month span.

Artists on Reddit Gone Wild

While detailed demographic characteristics of the artists on Reddit Gone Wild remain unknown, artists often provide telling information in their photo captions and art itself about who the artists are or claim to be. For the most part, the typical successful artist who posts is someone fitting of RGW's convention, who has been both overtly and covertly encouraged to post there. For example, as stated previously, most of the artists appear to be young, white, females, in keeping with dominant beauty ideals for women. But beyond this, identifying as a college student is another prevailing trend.

Female college artists are openly encouraged to post through the community's transparent preference for artists identifying as such. Site moderators even promote a "back to school banner" where artists can submit their art to be displayed at the top of the front page. Artists themselves habitually allude to college classes or holiday breaks in their photo captions. During data collection for this thesis, US college classes ending for the summer caused an influx of new daily posts reaching over 500. Observations on the site and of my sample revealed college females are the largest known group contributing to the art on Reddit Gone Wild. The photo captions below are exemplary of artists' identifying their status as a college student:

Admin Post: "Get added to the /r/gonewild 'back to school' banner!"

Artist Photo Caption: "Classes started this week. So has the (f)un of college." 1,505 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "A bit of exhibitionism at my college library today ;) [f]" 647 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "It's Bi-[F]ri at our sorority! Hope youre UP for some girl on girl" 829 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "I got horny in my dorm before classes this morning...if I skip class today, will anyone play with me and my cute tits? 20[f]" 2,146 Karma

While artists may in fact be actual college students, their mention of this aspect of their life follows familiar the familiar tropes of fetishized college women's sexuality. The women use this constructed narrative to their advantage, understanding that these kinds of posts reap much attention and appreciation from viewers.

Beyond college students, artists also often choose to connote their group identity as being Asian, red headed or ginger, blonde, MILF[24], and nerdy. Within RGW, these identities are all also fetishized and have spawned smaller interactive amateur pornography subreddits, separated from Reddit Gone Wild, that are devoted entirely to the title identity. These smaller groups dedicated to certain bodies, traits, or sex acts are analogous to the viewing categories available on most professional pornography sites, showing again the feedback loop between art world conventions.

Despite these constructed identities being sexually fetishized within RGW, the site itself remains a greatly homogeneous community. As is the case with Asian, MILF, and ginger, smaller subreddit fetish communities (spin-offs of RGW) are also devoted to Brown, Black, Indian, and Hispanic women, as well as communities for male and trans artists. However, art featuring these bodies is not received well by the RGW community themselves, reflecting the tastes of mainstream pornography convention which uplifts white, hetero, thin, young, attractive women.

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[24] MILF is an acronym meaning "mom I'd like to fuck". On Reddit Gone Wild, women with children use this term to describe themselves, as well as commenters using it to describe artists.

Minority, LGBT+ (with this exception of white, thin, young, feminine presenting lesbian and bisexual women who are also fetishized), and male bodies are unbecoming of the unspoken convention of RGW. When artists post such photos, commenters frequently offer advice to repost on one of the many fetish sites the community believes to be more fitting for that artist's aesthetic. The below comments exemplify this advice:

> Comment on Artist Photo[25]: "I like thick women but I think you'll get more love on big and beautiful[26]"

> Comment on Male Artist Photo[27]: "dude take the meat over to lady boners[28] this aint for that"

The above comments represent the explicit body policing the community promotes. While the comments above are not necessarily shaming of the artists, and in fact the former remains primarily positive, they do insinuate that this space is not for artists of their body type or identity.

Notice how these discouraging comments offering details about the community's convention are quite different from the patient, instructive ones mentioned previously. The community views the artists above as unable to achieve the convention of the site due to their bodies and identities. The commenters have decided

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[25] The user comment and artist photo to which it was posted was noted in general site observations and not included in my sample

[26] Big and Beautiful is a NSFW subreddit for plus size female exhibitors

[27] The user comment and the artist photo to which it was posted was noted in general site observations and not included in my sample

[28] Lady Boners is a NSFW subreddit for male exhibitors

that these artists are either unable or unwilling to adapt to fit convention, and they

therefore, do not belong there. This is not to suggest that no bodies unbecoming of

RGW's convention are (or can be) successful on the site, as some artists with these

identities have become quite popular. More so, it is to illustrate that the majority of

artists who have been told (either implicitly or explicitly) that RGW is not for them,

choose to post elsewhere, or perhaps not at all.

Artists' Rationale for Posting: Constructed Narratives of Sexuality

For those artists who do find themselves fitting of RGW's convention, a large

part of the posting experience is centered on their self-constructions of sexuality.

Artists on Reddit Gone Wild use their gestural porno-selfies coupled with their photo

captions to create a constructed narrative of sexuality. These narratives are also

informed by the feedback they receive from community members, and the mainstream

pornographic art convention that helped shape them. Through artists' narratives, they

tell an erotic story meant to entice viewers to give them feedback on their art products.

Countless constructed narratives can be found on RGW, however, four prove

to be especially pervasive. Particularly, artists most commonly make use of intimate

partner break-ups, weight-loss journeys, boredom, and sexual desire. These stories

frame the artists' rationale for posting the picture, as well as justify why their porno-

selfie is worthy of viewer feedback.

Artists very often use a break-up with an intimate partner as a rationale for

posting. In these cases, their captions detail their need for emotional uplift from

community through appreciation of their artwork. Artists use their exhibition as both

comfort and a way to cut loose after being constrained by relational expectations.

Artist Photo Caption: "Single for the first time in 7 years. Let's loosen up and have some [f]ucking fun, gonewild!" 2,625 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "Just broke up and looking for [f]un -let me know what you think of the goods ;)" 867 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "Quit posting on here because my BF asked me to, but we broke up, so now I do whatever the [F]uck I want :)" 858 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "Just broke up, would love some com(f)ort" 776 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "My boy[f]riend broke up with me. I need reassurance that I'm sexy since he was a boob man. Anybody like big asses?" 1,442 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "My boy(f)riend recently broke up with me. I'm lonely." 406 Karma

From above, we can see two ways artists represent themselves in the wake of a break-up. In the first three posts, artists show the community that they are not hurt, but unchained by parting with a significant other. Whether the artist or their former partner initiated the split is generally ambiguous, and irrelevant. What the artists want to matter to the viewer is that they are free to do as they please, and they intend to— this includes exhibiting on RGW. These devil-may-care representations are meant to communicate the artists' resilience, and ultimately their sexual availability to viewers. This sexual readiness prompts feedback from viewers who are happy to step in and fulfill sex roles the artist's ex-partner previously performed.

The latter three captions show a softer, more emotionally exposed artist. In these narratives, artists almost always indicate the break-up was not their choice and represent themselves as emotionally longing in some way. Artists who frame their break-up in this way, often look for comfort, reassurance, and companionship. Here

too, the construction of their story aids to incite responses from viewers who can accommodate the artist's needs.

Goal achievement is also widely celebrated by artists on RGW. These events can include real-life birthdays, work place promotions, and college graduations. However, most especially, artists exhibit following weight-loss. Artists look to the art world for appreciation and support which motivates them to continue their personal weight-loss journey, as well as inspires them to feel more confident and sexually desirable in their own skin.

Artist Photo Caption: "Lost 40 pounds... Also first post :)" 1,390 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "i may not have the perfect body, but i've lost 45 pounds in the last year, and that feels pretty [f]ucking good. :)" 3,959 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "Recently lost 70 pounds. Still shy, How do I look? [F]" 1,602 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "So I lost 50 pounds and am working on feeling confident with my new body. Taking sexy pics helps! Hope you guys enjoy. :)" 563 Karma

The artists above have constructed their posting experience around a weight loss journey narrative. Cultural body shaming can have lasting impacts on self-image, and it is possible that these women find framing their posts around weight loss more acceptable than posting out of sheer sexual compulsion. At a heavier weight, women may have felt they were unfit to exhibit and show off their bodies, unworthy to feel confident and sexy. Now that they have lost weight, they feel their body is more becoming of the convention of RGW and seek the approval and appreciation from the community hoping to capitalize on the feelings they were denied previously. Despite this being a community which discouraged them from posting until they began losing

weight, the artists look to the site a safe space to build confidence with their new bodies. However, due to RGW's unspoken preoccupation with body image, these women may feel their weight loss is the most important aspect of their bodies to highlight.

Boredom is another prominent theme artists incite as a rationale to exhibit. As their artwork requires time and effort, users take advantage of moments of boredom to facilitate their photo shoots.

> Artist Photo Caption: "College coed bored on break so I took some pics {f}" 3,136 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "[f]eeling pretty bored in my dorm tonite ;)" 76 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "[F]inals are over and I'm bored. Entertain me?" 2,832 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "I'm bored and alone, someone stimulate my mind? (f)" 2,739 Karma

These moments of boredom commonly arise after a change to an artist's schedule, such as a holiday break from college. Boredom narratives are especially salient on RGW and often are synonymous "girls just want to have fun" tropes. In these narratives, artists tend to insinuate that there was simply nothing better to do than post nude photos of themselves. However, they are also often coupled with statements of intellect, allowing viewers to ascertain that the artists are also smart, just currently unentertained by more intellectual pressings. As seen from the above captions, narratives of boredom and self-identifying as a college student go hand-in-hand on RGW. Together, artist tell viewers that they are not only sexually attractive, but also intelligent.

Lastly, artists exhibit on Reddit Gone Wild when they feel sexually compelled to do so. Some artists expressly state the appreciation from the community as contributing to their sexual arousal; others cite the act of exhibition itself.

> Artist Photo Caption: "Got of[f] on your comments from my first post, so here's more as promised!" 2,383 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "something about getin naked [f]or strangers mmmm" 82 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "GW you're driving me crazy! I can't keep my mind o[f]f you or my hands off me!" 43 Karma

> Artist Photo Caption: "had to sneak on before bed, you just make me so hotttt {F}" 124 Karma

The final narratives are very expected of posts in this art world. They clearly tell the viewers precisely why the artist is there, seemingly 'skipping the foreplay' of other less telling narratives. In every case, however, the above narratives are reminiscent of clichéd opening scenes in early video pornography. This displays again the influence of mainstream pornography culture on the happenings in RGW's art world.

As was the case with artists identifying themselves as college girls, redheads, and Asians, these narratives are meant to add to the artists' erotic story on RGW. Likewise, these narratives do not by any means indicate that the artists are lying or being deceitful about their life circumstances. It is without question that many of the artists have in fact been through a break-up, lost weight, been bored, or horny at the time of posting. The important idea here, is that the artists choose to reveal these things, and frame them in such a way to collect Karma and comments from eager viewers.

Artist Voices: Exhibition, Shamelessness, & Technologies of the Self

Perhaps one of the most pressing questions raised when learning about Reddit

Gone Wild is *why*? Some artists are asked "why" directly, through a comment or

private message. Other inquisitive community members post open questions to

subreddits (including RGW), hoping artists will kindly answer.

> Comment on an artist's photo: "I don't mean any disrespect and trust
> me I like what I see, but why do you post here? Just for the love???"

> Reddit member open post to AskReddit: "People of /r/gonewild, why
> do you post those pictures? So, in the highly unlikely case that
> somebody doesn't know there is this subreddit called /r/gonewild
> (NSFW) where people can post nude pictures of themselves. What is
> your motivation to do that? Doesn't exposing yourself to the whole
> world-wide-web creep you out a little bit? How do you deal with the
> fact that by posting those pictures online, you practically lose all
> control over what happens with them from now on. Aren't you worried
> that some real-life acquaintances might discover those pictures? Please
> don't regard this as criticism, I'm just honestly curious. And those are
> just the things that would come to my mind before posting any nude
> pictures of myself ;)"

The above posters demonstrate a persistent desire to understand why the artists

post, and in so doing, insinuate that the artists' exhibitionist behavior is abnormal and

therefore requires explanation. The open post to AskReddit provides incite regarding

why the artists' may be abnormal—there is the risk of being discovered. And while the

site, viewers, and artists are overtly sex positive, it is understood that our culture as a

whole remains rather sexually reserved. Therefore, the risk of linking the online sex

positive, exposed self, with the real world self could instigate social disgrace.

The mere fact that people want to know why artists post their nude images

implies there is social and perhaps physical risk involved in doing so. While cultural

ideals surrounding female (and particularly young women's) sexuality is slowly

shifting away from the slut/virgin dichotomy, it is still understood as a site of risk. In

the physical realm, intimate contact initiates risks that are tied to fears of STIs, sexual violence, and pregnancy (Dobson, 2015). In the virtual realm, as found here on RGW, female sexuality is manifested through seductive posts and risqué photos (Dobson, 2013; Albury, 2015). Here, the risks are associated with revenge porn, doxing, and trolling, with the understanding that these all hold the possibility to seep over into the real world for physical space consequences as well.

The social construction of women's bodies as vulnerable sites of risk dictates that their expressions of sexuality are therefore naïve, as they open themselves up to harm that would otherwise be preventable (Dobson, 2015). It is taken for granted that women who behave shamelessly will be rewarded with disrespect by men at the very least, and sexually violence at the worst (Dobson, 2013; Dobson, 2015; Tolman, 1994). However, this discourse completely discounts the masculinity which is assumed to perpetuate this harm, thereby both ignoring men's complacency in 'risks' associated with female sexuality and giving men a free pass with no 'risks' for their same sexual behavior (Ringrose & Barajas, 2011; Dobson, 2015). But on RGW, both the artists and the male viewers present a challenge to this discourse. Viewers seek ethical porn and continue to treat the artists with respect, and the artists continue to promote shamelessness for their erotic photos and sexuality more broadly.

Though the constructed narratives of sexuality the artists' are meant to elicit feedback from the community, they are also technologies of the sexual self (Foucault, 1988). In the quotations below, artists provide insightful answers to Reddit members who have questioned why they post.

> Artist comment in response to 'why?': "For me there's just something really freeing about it. It's fun and helps me feel confident in my own skin. I used to be more of a self conscious person, but now I embrace

myself and it's my way of saying, hey I'm sexy and not afraid to show it."

Artist Photo Caption: "A lot o{f} people ask me why I post. Well one reason is it gets me off and I love turning you all on.. but another is I'm learning to love my body. They say confidence is sexy, so yay boobies!" 60 Karma

Artist comment in response to 'why?': "All sorts of odd reasons. I wanted to tie in sexuality with humor and art and quirkiness. It's a way for me to explore myself and how to convey who I am in a way that entertains me, feeding parts of my ego and curiosity while embracing who I really am, body and mind. It's a cocktail of experimentation, exhibitionism, and egoism... At the same time I feel so insecure and vain, it gives me confidence and self-acceptance. Mostly, it's a tool of sorts for me to learn more about my weird head. Plus, I like the idea that I can make someone smile by being myself."

For artists, posting to RGW and the self-representations they choose for themselves in this space allow women to learn about themselves sexually (Hugh-Jones et al., 2005). Like those above, many artists in the community profess confidence with their porno-selfies and captions, advocating shamelessness for female sexuality (Dobson, 2013). The artists come to the community hoping to find confidence and a grounded view of themselves through the reflected appraisal the audience provides with Karma and comments. The opinions of viewers help the artists form their sexual self-view, and ultimate develop a positive body-image (Felson, 1985; Evans & Shankar, 2010).

In addition to answering why they exhibit, artists also discuss through their captions how their careers on RGW have made them feel. Interestingly, many artists spoke of exhibiting in terms of addiction.

Artist Photo Caption: "[F]uck you guys have me addicted to posting!" 895 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "[f19] I'm addicted to the love you all are giving me! For today, a different kind on on/off 💔💔"848 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "I'm addicted to exposing mysel[f] for you.." 564 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "Your [F]eedbacks driving crazy and leaving me addicted :*" 278 Karma

As was the case with artists feeling sexually compelled to exhibit, artists name both exhibition itself and the appreciation from the community that leaves them feeling addicted to their career. Artists also express that their careers in the art world leave them feeling sexually fulfilled. Below, artist photo captions show that posting on Reddit Gone Wild has augmented their own sexual life.

Artist Phot Caption: "posting here gets me of{f} every time" 34 Karma

Artist Photo Contest: "Who needs a man? I've got you and my own hand- li[f]e is good" 1,573 Karma

Artist Photo Caption: "I've never wanted or needed this much sex in my li[f]e! Thanks GW!" 59 Karma

Artist Photo Contest: "People ask me why I post and I'm like 'GW just does it for me![29]'" 193 Karma

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[29] On RGW not all artists create throw away accounts specifically for the use on RGW. Rather, some artists keep one username/account that they use for contributing to all subreddits. All posts made to all subreddits under a single username are visible to the public and other redditors simply by clicking on a particular username. When artists do this keep one username for all their Reddit activity, redditors from other subreddits will often notice that the user/artist has contributed to RGW. When this is noticed, it often initiates a conversation from curious other redditors who wonder why a woman would do such a thing. There is even a conversational subreddit devoted to former and current RGW artists to answer other redditor's questions about posting to RGW.

For the artists above, their photo captions reveal a very powerful, positive life experience from exhibiting on Reddit Gone Wild. The artists posting here, use their porno-selfies and captions and as their self-representation. These constructed narratives function as an exploration and technology of the sexual self, where artists learn about their own desirability and desires (Evans & Shankar, 2010; Foucault, 1988). Here, these women give no apologies for their nudity, are boldly shameless, and outwardly thankful RGW provided them with the venue to share themselves.

As seen with the comments and photos captions above, artist understandings of their own careers have been overwhelmingly positive. However, it is imperative that we also take into account the fact that those with negative experiences are unlikely to post about it in this space. First, doing so would require that the artist return to exhibiting again in order to provide the caption to a photo fitting of RGW's convention. Second, with the strong positive environment RGW attempts to foster, community members or moderators may stifle the voices relaying a contrasting experience. Still, artists' praises of RGW have a very prominent placement on the site, and Reddit more largely.

With their exhibitionism on RGW, artists hope to learn about themselves sexually and emotionally. However, as the public continues to ask "why" these artists display their nude bodies, the artists' exhibitions are abridged to little more than risky female sexuality. Tolman (2013) explains, "Cultural contexts that render girls' sexuality problematic and dangerous divert them from the possibilities of empowerment through their sexual desire". So, even though it is true that (as the poster from Ask Reddit points out) artists lose a sizeable portion of control over their image once they post it, we as the audience have control over how we interpret that

artists' image. It is within our control to withhold judgement that might problematize women's sexuality, and cut short their possibilities of empowerment through their displays.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Through online ethnographic content analysis of Reddit Gone Wild, it is made clear that artist contributions to the site do not occur without thought and regard, but are mediated through the overarching social structure of Reddit and Reddit Gone Wild. As each art world has its own social organization, RGW's is made unique through its building blocks of legitimacy, archival histories, and solidarity. Through studying these site features, it is possible to see how they are directly impactful on the art and artists on Reddit Gone Wild. While Reddit's legitimacy undoubtedly aids to its popularity and therefore brings in potential artists to RGW, and its archival histories allow easy connection to multitudes of artist portfolios, it is the site's extreme efforts to promote solidarity that are most influential on artists' posting careers.

The site's stigma neutralizing practices of anonymity guarding and distancing from paid pornography (sex work), along with its true group interactivity, in a free, yet protected, environment create a strong site solidarity. With this group cohesion, artists are genuinely vested in continuing to produce art for the site. The solidarity created as a result of the site's social organization brings together a group of likeminded, sex-positive individuals who are willing to challenge the dominant cultural ideals both toward sex and the assumed exploitation of women that accompanies the traditional paid pornography industry.

Further, the norms of Reddit Gone Wild's art conventions act as the impetus for its response to modern body censorship and mainstream paid pornography,

allowing females to reclaim their own body aesthetic through the authorship of their own sexually explicit photos (Tiidenberg, 2014). This control adds to the empowerment and confidence brought about by exhibition, in ways that more traditional pornographic art worlds have not (Fotopoulou, 2013; Nguyen, 2013; Tiidenberg, 2014; Wurster, 2013).

Studying the manner in which the communities like RGW come together and the norms with which they self-author pornography, reveals not only changing social attitudes towards sex and nudity, but also changing, technologically fueled, forms of mass and instantaneous communication. Therefore, and perhaps most unique about this art world, is not simply the artists' willingness to exhibit, but their ability to do so through the technological advancements in global connectivity, spawned through digital communication (Malikhao & Servaes, 2011).

Still questions remain as answers to artist careers (and ending thereof) are limited by the voyeuristic nature of content analysis. It is obvious that artists do leave Reddit Gone Wild; sometimes erasing all their art when they do. With only positive career experiences left displayed on the site, it is imperative to further research the phenomenon, through actively seeking out current and past artists for a richer analysis utilizing qualitative interviews. Additionally, Reddit Gone Wild's sister sites, dedicated to subject specific porno-selfies, offer a far more diverse look into the over-arching porno-selfie art world. As artists of all genders, races, ethnicities, body sizes, abilities, and sexualities have representation on these spin-off subreddits, future research would be well served by including voices from these artists to gain a more representative participant pool.

Art worlds have always been filtered through the social organization around which they are arranged. In this manner, art worlds are also a response to the dominant culture from which their organization grew. As our globalized society continues to push the levels of connectivity and the amount of information we comfortably share—or overshare—with the public, online erotic art worlds situated around the production and dissemination of porno-selfies will increase in numbers (Agger, 2012; Malikhao & Servaes, 2011). Studying amateur interactive pornography like that found on RGW through an art world frame offers an alternative to traditional methods of pornography research studies. Future studies of porno-selfies should continue to seek out fresh methods of study that take this new media (selfies) and their dissemination into account, looking beyond reductive narratives of female disempowerment and exploitation.

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Appendix A

IRB EXEMPTION LETTER

DATE: August 11, 2015

TO: Nicole Lloyd, BS
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [778918-1] Impacts of Technological Advancement on the Dissemination of Sexually Explicit Media

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: August 11, 2015

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category 2

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM the federal regulations applicable to the protection of human subjects in research.

We will put a copy of this correspondence on file in our office. Please remember to notify us if you make any substantial changes to the project. If you have any questions, please contact Maria Palazuelos at (302) 831-8619 or mariapj@udel.edu.

Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.