

## Ugliness, selfies and self-deprecation: Old wine in new bottles?

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In this paper, I analyse the identities and interactions that emerge from posting ‘ugly’ images to social media sites. Ugly images include a range of visual genres, including selfies and memes, which can be playful or serious in their nature. The data I analyse includes posts published on two hashtag threads (#ugly and #uglyselfie), from two social media sites (Instagram and Tumblr). I analyse the verbal content of the posts (e.g. captions and hashtags) using corpus-assisted discourse analysis. The preliminary results show that verbal forms of gender positioning occur more often in the Instagram posts than Tumblr posts, and more often in relation to posts that are characterised as #ugly rather than #uglyselfies. More importantly, the types of gendered identity vary, with different kinds of intersectionality indicated by the n-gram analysis. In Instagram, the modifiers associated with the lemma *girl* foreground ethnicity (in #uglyselfie captions) and concerns with the size of the body (in #ugly posts). In contrast, the lemma *boy* is more often modified in relation to sexuality (in #uglyselfie captions) and ‘emo’ identities (in #ugly posts).

A multimodal analysis of the #uglyselfie Instagram images compared the use of camera angle, interpersonal distance and eye gaze in relation to the politeness strategies found in the comments. The results suggest that a playful form of self-mockery occurs in some #uglyselfie posts, and that this is more frequently used in representations of women than of men. The comments to these posts suggest that they were interpreted as humorous and rapport-enhancing. In contrast, the visual positioning of men in the #uglyselfie images used greater interpersonal distance and comments included face-threatening forms of criticism which seem to be interpreted as a form of banter. I argue that these patterns show how older stereotypes persist in social media interactions (for example in the use of ‘banter’), even whilst other stereotypes (such as feminine beauty ideals) are open to playful critique.