

https://dspace.org/

Believe in yourself(ie): a study of young, ordinary, South African women who share selfies on Instagram

Pereira, Jessica De Aguiar

2016

http://hdl.handle.net/10539/22628

Pereira, Jessica De Aguiar, (2016) Believe in yourself(ie): a study of young, ordinary, South African women who share selfies on Instagram, University of the Witwatersrand, <http://hdl.handle.net/10539/22628>

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Abstract:

This research study essentially sets out to explore the practices of young, ordinary, South African women who take and post selfies on social media platforms, like Instagram. The general commentary surrounding selfies is typically negative, and tends to frame the selfie-taker as a narcissistic, self-absorbed individual. Therefore, this study is interested in understanding what this very particular smartphone-enabled photographic technique means to this group of women, and in doing so, aims to determine whether or not there are underlying significances to such practices. This research study adopts a vast framework of literature in order to conceptualize and contextualize selfies in contemporary culture, by drawing on the rich history of self-portraiture and snapshots as well as concepts of mediation and the representation of the self online; in addition to describing the role that mobile technologies and social media platforms have played in contributing to cementing selfies as a cultural hallmark in today's society. This study is additionally grounded upon three dominant theoretical themes, namely: narcissism, self-exploration, and self-regulation; and Christopher Lasch, Michel Foucault, Angela McRobbie and Rosalind Gill's theoretical contributions are predominantly referred to in an attempt to explain such principles adequately. Through the responses that were yielded by interviewing 14 young, ordinary, South African women, this research study essentially established that the practices of selfie-taking do in fact play a significant role in the lives of these young women, from empowering them and teaching them to learn to love and accept themselves again, to inspiring personal growth, capturing special moments and memories, and allowing them to feel accepted and as though they belong and have a fixed placed in society. Therefore, this study argues that selfies are not necessarily only about narcissism and self-obsession, but rather more about the notion of self-love and acceptance (for this group of participants at least).

Keywords: selfie, self-portraiture, photography, South Africa, women, smartphones, self-promotion, beauty, youth, Instagram, self-love, acceptance, feminism, postfeminism, self-regulation, self-exploration, narcissism, empowerment.