

A Deleuzean Feminist Analysis of the Everyday, Gendered Performances of Teen Femininity: A Case Study on Snaps and Selfies in East London

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Abstract : This paper contributes to research on gendered, digital identities by exploring how selfies offer scope for disrupting and moving through gendered and racial ideals of feminine beauty. The selfie involves self-presentation, filters, captions, hashtags, online publishing, likes and more, constituting the relationship between subjectivity, practice and social use of selfies a complex process. Employing qualitative research methods on youth selfies in the UK, the author investigates interdisciplinary entangling between studies of social media and fields within gender, media and cultural studies, providing a material discursive treatment of the selfie as an embodied practice. Drawing on data collected from focus groups with teenage girls in East London, the study explores how girls experience and relate to selfies and snaps in their everyday lives. The author's Deleuzean feminist approach suggests that bodies and selfies are not individual, disembodied entities between which there is a mediating inter-action. Instead, bodies and selfies are positioned as entangled to a point where it becomes unclear as to where a selfie ends and a body begins. Recognising selfies not just as images but as material and social assemblages opens up possibilities for unpacking the selfie in ways that move beyond the representational model in some studies of socially mediated digital images. The study reveals how the selfie functions to enable moments of empowerment within limiting, dominant ideologies of Euro-centrism, patriarchy and heteronormativity.

Keywords : affect theory, femininity, gender, heteronormativity, photography, selfie, snapchat

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