

She's Funny Looking: Appearance, Humour, & Internet Memes

Jessica Drakett
Leeds Beckett University

Twitter: @JessicaDrakett

What Is An Internet Meme?

- Biological metaphor (Dawkins, 1976; Blackmore, 2000)
- Idea or concept propagated via the Internet
- Several forms – hashtags, videos, quizzes, image macros
- Blend an image and text
- Easily created and shared, sites such as memegenerator.com
- Easily remixed and reworked



Rationale & Aims

- Current literature on memes explores spread – fields of mathematics and networking (e.g. Bauckhage, 2011; Coscia, 2013)
- Bridge the gap and expand on “traditional” humour research (e.g. Billig, 2001; Shifman & Lemish, 2010)
- Image macros only due to ease of creation and sharing
- Explore if and how women are represented in popular Internet memes
- To see if memes are being used to marginalise groups, as seen in other studies of Internet humour
- Probe the content of this as yet untouched, contemporary source of Internet data

Methodology

- Devised purposive sampling strategy based on popular search engines, popular sites (with specific criteria) and then popular memes from those sites
- Downloaded 240 image macro format Internet memes total
- Coded using NVivo – allowed easy demographic coding and sorting of data
- Analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) from a feminist standpoint

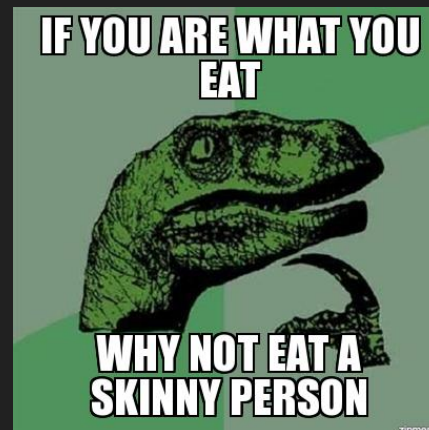
Appearance & Memes

- Not limited to women – handful of memes featuring men, but not proportional to sample (139 men/boys, 39 women/girls)
- Anything not traditionally attractive
- Weight



Fat Memes

- Obesity one of few stigmatized conditions that is “fair game” (Burmeister & Carels, 2014)
- Disparagement theory of humour (Martin, 2007)
- Fat being constructed in variety of ways
- Traditional tactics/devices for humour still used in this format



fat memes - Google Search

https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=fat+memes&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ei=YpfkVljcKsLC7Ab664C4Aw&ved=0CAgQAUoAQ&biw=1920&bih=967

Google

fat memes

WebImagesShoppingVideosNewsMoreSearch tools

Cookies help us deliver our services. By using our services, you agree to our use of cookies.

[Learn more](#)[Got it](#)

YOU CAN HAVE A SLICE OF YOUR PIZZA

YOU CAN HAVE A SLICE OF YOUR PIZZA

EAT'S WHOLE PIZZA

EAT'S WHOLE PIZZA

Girl

THINKS HE'S BIG

ACTUALLY JUST FAT...

Gym

DAFUQ

IS THIS SHIT

Asian

DO YOU KNOW WHAT I GOT FOR CHRISTMAS

FAT I GOT FAT

DO YOU KNOW WHAT I GOT FOR CHRISTMAS

FAT I GOT FAT

Animal

I EAT, BECAUSE I'M UNHAPPY

I'M UNHAPPY BECAUSE I EAT

I EAT, BECAUSE I'M UNHAPPY

I'M UNHAPPY BECAUSE I EAT

Bastard

They say, "You are what you eat!" That's funny. I don't remember eating a sexy beast this morning.

your words

your words

Eating

YOU'RE FAT

DON'T SUGARCOAT IT CAUSE YOU'LL EAT THAT TOO

THEY SAW ME ROLLING

MOAR

CHUCKEN!

"LIFE IS LIKE A BOX OF CHOCOLATES."

IT DOESN'T LAST AS LONG FOR FAT PEOPLE

THEY CALL ME

OH UR NOT FAT

YOU'RE JUST EASY TO SEE

CALL ME FAT...

ONE MORE TIME

TORTURE

FOR FAT PEOPLE

I CANT EAT BECAUSE I BITE MY CHEEK

I BITE MY CHEEK BECAUSE I EAT

YOLO

YOU OBVIOUSLY LOVE OREOS

AWWW SHIT

I ATE MY DESK AGAIN

YO DAWG SO I HEARD YOUR FAT

WE HOOKED UP YOUR LAPD WITH FOLDS ON FOLDS SO YOU CAN BE FAT WHILE YOU'RE FAT WHILE BEING HELLA OBESE

How many pizzas do you want?

YOU GONNA EAT THAT CHAIR?

I CHOKED REOPARD/RIKE DIS

HE DIE I MAKE PANTS

You're Fat.

Don't try and sugar coat it because you'll eat that too.

I'M ON A SEAFOOD DIET

I SEE FOOD, I EAT IT!

Anorexia

sometimes when I'm sad I like to cut myself ...

another slice of cheesecake.

QUESTION...

CAN FAT PEOPLE GO SKINNY DIPPING?

GUESS WHAT I GOT FOR CHRISTMAS

FAT

Your ass...

It's on backwards

AH WHAT THE FUCK MAN

IT'S FUNNY BECAUSE HE'S FAT!

LOL

FAT

I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE

That Awkward Moment When Your Legs Cant Support Your Body Anymore

MOM SAID YOU STILL

I'M GONNA START MY DIET

ITS JUST BABY FAT

SO YOU'RE TELLING ME

VAP LOTION

I'M SO FAT!

Windows

Chrome

Edge

PowerPoint

Skype

Firefox

Taskbar

13:45

18/02/2015

fat memes - Google Search

https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=fat+memes&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=YpfkVljcKsLC7Ab664C4Aw&ved=0CAgQAUoAQ&biw=1920&bih=967

Google

I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE
BUT I WILL FIND YOU AND I WILL FAT YOU

That Awkward Moment When Your
Legs Cant Support Your Body Anymore

MOM SAID YOU STILL
I'M GONNA START MY DIET
EVENTUALLY

ITS JUST BABY FAT

SO YOU'RE TELLING
ME
SOME OF YOUR PEOPLE DIE BECAUSE
THEY'RE TOO FAT?

YOUR FAT!

wow! nice computer.

I'M SO FAT!
WAIT FOR
COMPLIMENTS

FRIEND SUGGESTS DIET
JEALOUS BITCH

NOW I CAN GET FAT

NICE TRY
FAT BITCH

No

OM NOM NOM

MR POLICE MAN...
I THINK I ATE MY
FAMILY

CALORIES
GOTTA CATCH 'EM ALL

WHAT IF YOU
EXERCISED?
AS MUCH AS YOU COMPLAIN ABOUT
BEING FAT

'IM FAT BECAUSE OBESITY RUNS IN MY FAMILY'
NO ONE RUNS IN
YOUR FAMILY

OH MY GOD, I'M LIKE
SOO FAT...

AND THIS...
IS WHERE I KEEP MY GENETICS

THE NOTORIOUS
DEPENDAPOTAMUS

MCDONALD'S

IS IT JUST ME...
OR DID THIS BAR STOOL JUST
GET SHORTER

Has spent months in the coldest part of
westerns with barely something to eat
STILL FAT

Now give me
back my bra

Herro 911?
It seems I have eaten my
family

HEY GIRL
DOES THIS MEME MAKE ME
LOOK FAT?

YOUR MUM'S SO FAT

FIRST THINGS FIRST
WHERE'S YOUR SHITTER?

DOC SAYS I'M DUE A MASSIVE HEART ATTACK
AT LEAST IT'S NOT DICK CANCER

NOT A SINGLE CALORIE
WAS BURN'T THAT
DAY

USED TO BE BATMAN
IS FAT NOW AND DOESN'T CARE

wat

HEART ATTACK ON A BUN?
SHORTCUT TO HEAVEN

that's not fat.

NEED LOVE TOO

TEMPLE OF GOD
CROWN OF GOD'S CREATION

I WILL EAT YOU OUT
OF HOUSE AND HOME

Cropping

LOL SHLOKA
YOU'RE FAT

I DON'T SMOKE
WEED...
I DEEP FRY IT!

MOM BAKES CUPCAKES
FOR BAKE SALE
EATS ON BUS BEFORE
SCHOOL

EPIC FAIL
When the gaffers in behind you

SHE BE LIKE
BABE, WHY YOU DON'T
PICK ME UP ANYMORE?

LOOK IM GOIN THROUGH A FAT
PHASE
JUST GIVE ME MY ONION
RINGS

Windows Taskbar

13:47 18/02/2015

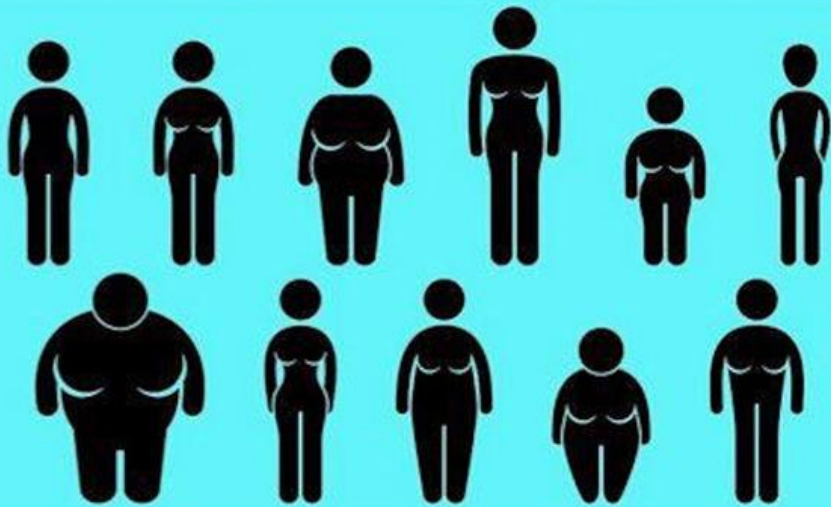
Reworking Memes

- Memes sometimes flipped around and reworked for positive impact
- Feminist Nazi meme – recaptioning
- Kelly Martin Broderick picture “this is what a feminist looks like” stolen to fat-shame – viral Tumblr project in response
- Definitely see memes and viral content working to promote body positivity



Body Positive Memes

How to get a bikini body: Put a bikini on your body.



YOUR MAMA'S SO FAT



I REALLY ADMIRE THAT ABOUT HER

"SHOULDN'T YOU BE TRYING TO
HIDE YOUR FAT?"



SHOULDN'T YOU BE TRYING TO
HIDE YOUR IGNORANCE?

"I FEEL SO FAT AND GROSS"



THAT'S FUNNY, I FEEL
FAT AND SEXY!

MARINA LOVES HER STRIPED DRESS,
BUT THE FASHION MAGAZINES SAID HORIZONTAL
STRIPES DIDN'T FIT HER BODY SHAPE.



DON'T YOU CARE ABOUT THOSE MAGAZINES,
MARINA. THE IMPORTANT THING IS FOR
YOU TO WEAR WHAT YOU LIKE,
AND TO FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH YOUR OWN
BODY.

Carol Rossetti

AFTER 5 YEARS OF FIGHTING AGAINST
HER BODY, JOANNA MANAGED
TO WEAR A BIKINI AT THE BEACH.



JOANNA
HAD A REALLY GOOD TIME
AND REALIZED SHE DOESN'T NEED TO
CHANGE HER BODY TO FEEL
GOOD!

Carol Rossetti

YASMIN SUFFERS FROM BULIMIA,
BUT MANY DON'T TAKE IT SERIOUSLY BECAUSE HER
BODY DOESN'T MATCH THE IMAGE SOME
PEOPLE HAVE OF WOMEN WITH EATING
DISORDERS.



YASMIN,
THE FACT THAT YOUR BONES ARE NOT SHOWING
DOESN'T MEAN YOUR PROBLEM SHOULDN'T BE TAKEN
SERIOUSLY. YOU DESERVE HELP REGARDLESS
OF HOW PEOPLE THINK YOU SHOULD LOOK.

Carol Rossetti

Final Thoughts

- Memes are another vehicle for the same kinds of disparagement humour, and specifically fat stigmatization we see in other forms of media (e.g. TV, magazines, YouTube videos)
- Risks of framing something as humour?
- Latner, Rosewall & Simmonds (2007) – media exposure and weight stigmatization in children
- Gendered aspects of weight related humour
- Potential for humour/Internet memes to do some good?

References

- Bauckhage, C. (2011, 2011). *Insights into Internet Memes*. Paper presented at the The Fifth International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media (ICWSM-11), Barcelona, Spain.
- Billig, M. (2001). Humour and Hatred: The Racist Jokes of the Ku Klux Klan. *Discourse & Society*, 12(3), 267-289. doi: 10.1177/0957926501012003001
- Blackmore, S. (2000). *The meme machine* (Vol. 25): Oxford Paperbacks.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Burmeister, J. M., & Carels, R. A. (2014). Weight-related humor in the media: Appreciation, distaste, and anti-fat attitudes. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 3(4), 223.
- Coscia, M. (2013). *Competition and Success in the Meme Pool: a Case Study on Quickmeme.com*. Paper presented at the Seventh International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media (ICWSM-13), Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.
- Dawkins, R. (1976). *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hussin, M., Frazier, S., & Thompson, J. K. (2011). Fat stigmatization on YouTube: A content analysis. *Body image*, 8(1), 90-92.
- Latner, J. D., Rosewall, J. K., & Simmonds, M. B. (2007). Childhood obesity stigma: association with television, videogame, and magazine exposure. *Body Image*, 4(2), 147-155.
- Martin, R. A. (2007). *The psychology of humor: An integrative approach*. Burlington, MA: Elsevier Academic Press. doi:10.1016/B978-012372564-6/50020-4
- Shifman, L., & Lemish, D. (2010). BETWEEN FEMINISM AND FUN(NY)MISM. *Information, Communication & Society*, 13(6), 870-891. doi: 10.1080/13691180903490560
- Memes sampled from <http://memegenerator.net>, <http://quickmeme.com>, and <http://weknowmemes.com/memegenerator>