

#SelfCare: Perspectives from Instagram

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INTRODUCTION

Broadly defined, **self-care** is any action intended to improve one's health and wellness. This includes actions that promote optimal health, prevent illness, detect symptoms of illness early, manage chronic illness, or promote any of the six dimensions of wellness recognized in public health.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In reaction to the rise in popularity of #selfcare on Instagram, the researchers asked the following:

1. How is self-care portrayed on Instagram?
2. Do #selfcare posts promote the health and wellness themes previously established in clinical definitions of self-care"

METHODS

Using search term **#selfcare**, researchers sampled the top 200 Instagram posts on February 2nd, 2020.

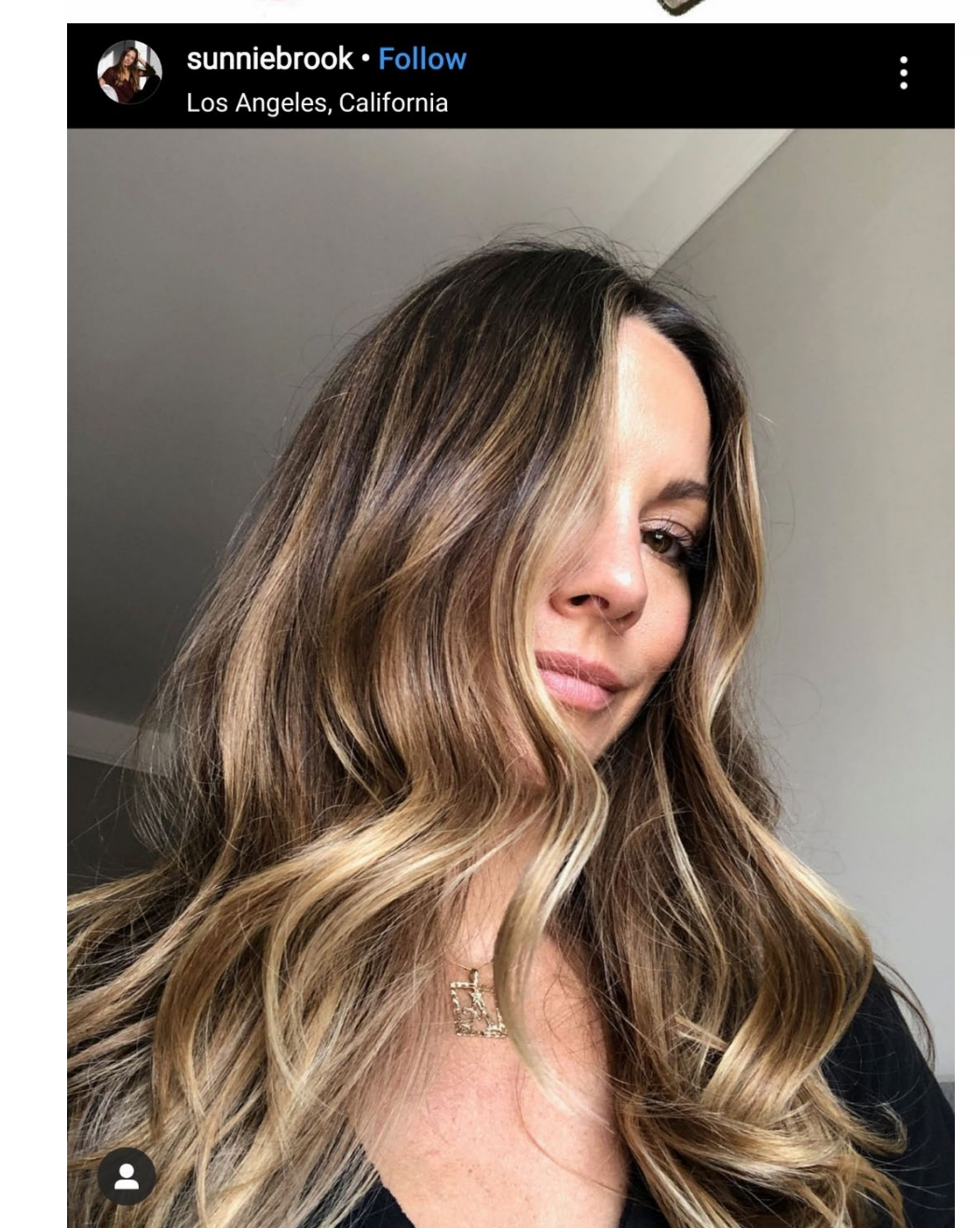
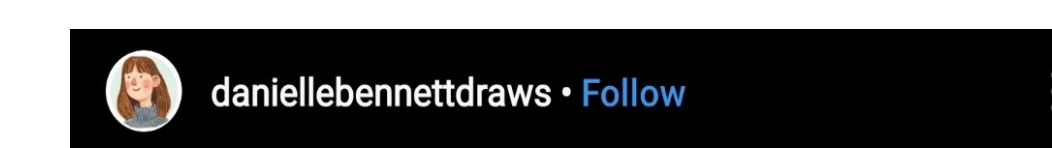
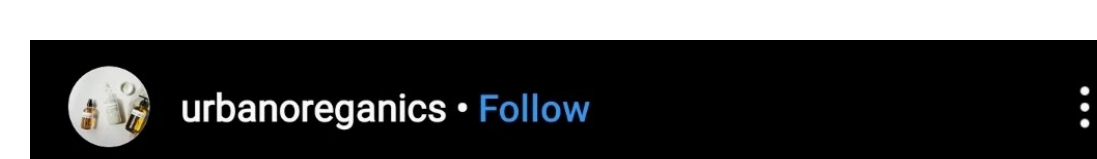
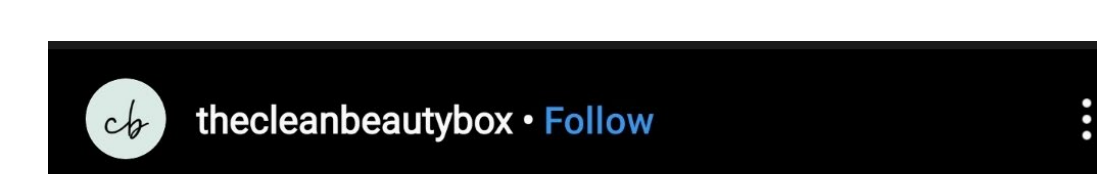
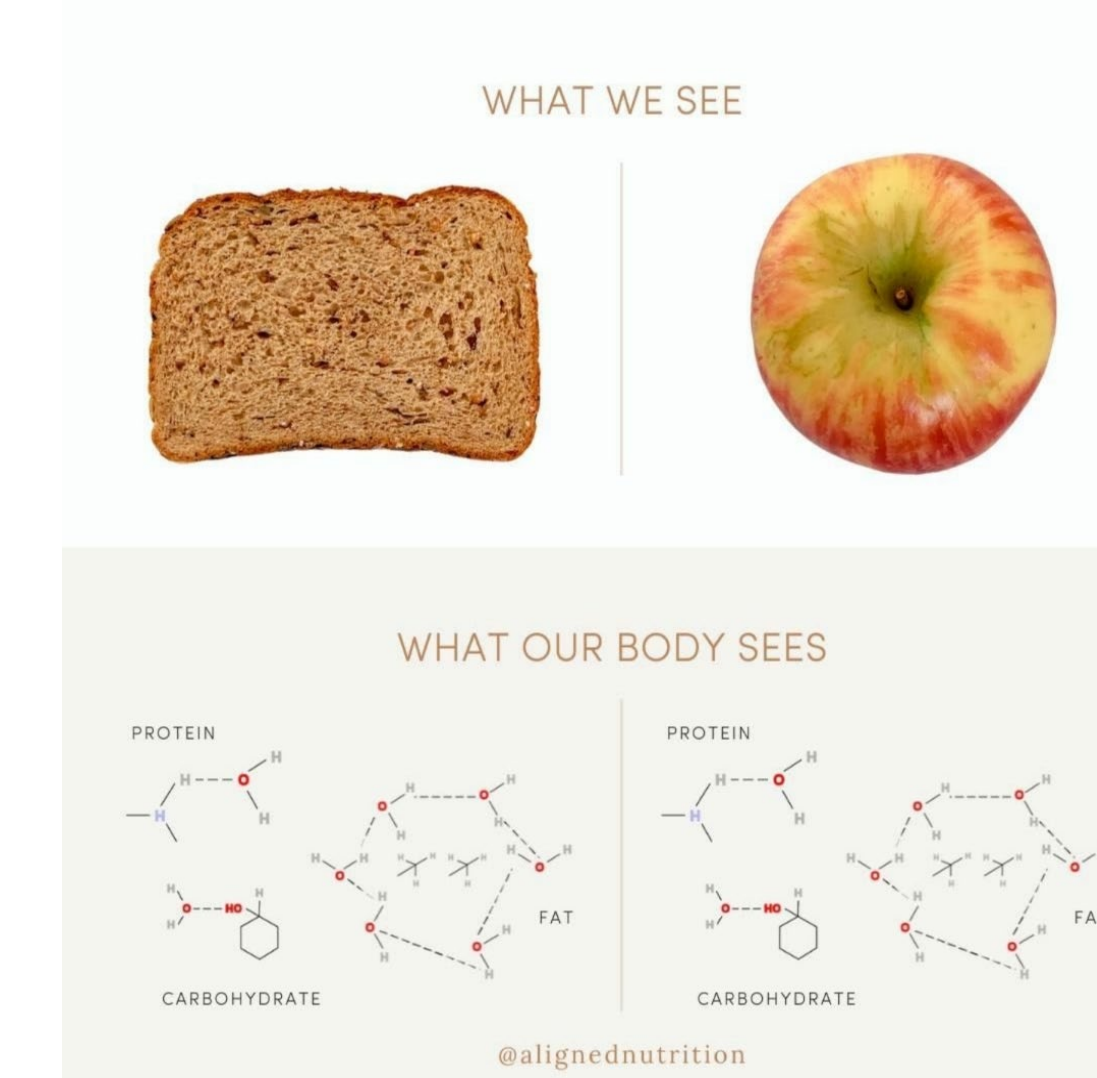
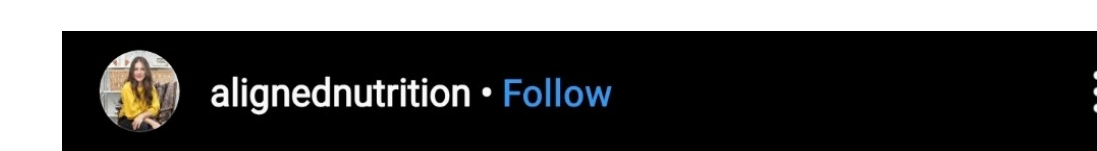
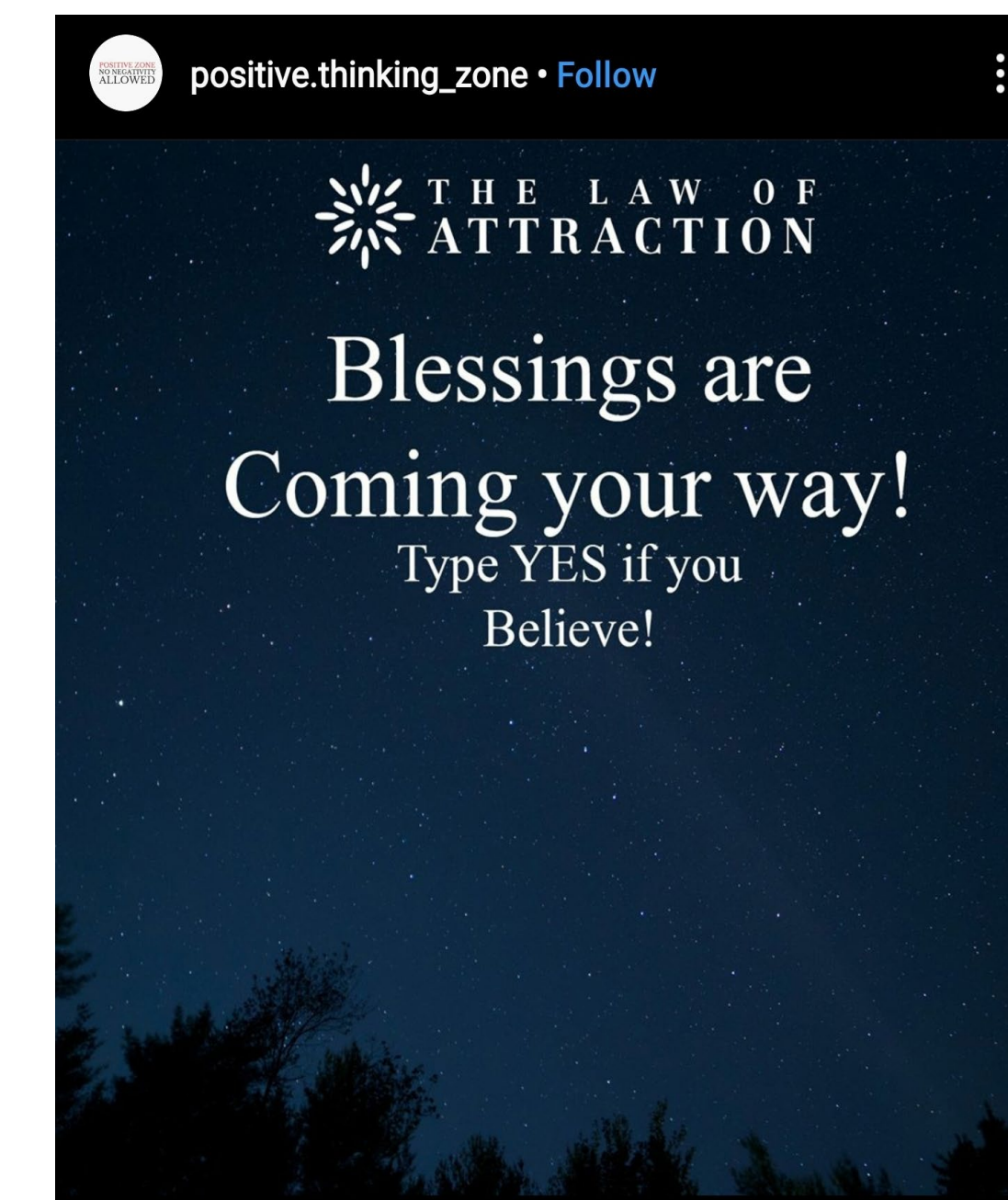
A codebook was developed, pilot tested, and used to code posts.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Preliminary analysis of #selfcare posts (n=75) reveals that

- 71% of posts targeted a female audience
- Only half (48%) of the posts including explicit health or wellness themes.
- The most common dimensions of wellness represented were mental or emotional wellness (32%) and physical wellness (19%).

SAMPLE POSTS



CONCLUSION

The emergence of public self-care dialogue is reflected in patterns of social media use, particularly on Instagram where #selfcare has amassed more than 25 million posts. Images from Instagram may help in understanding public use of the term self-care and should be included in the discussion of health promotion through social media.

Future discussions should include:

- What steps can be taken to make self-care practice more appealing to men? Why are men currently less likely to engage with self-care content?
- How can the popularity of the hashtag be used to disseminate valuable public health knowledge, such as illness prevention tips and how to detect symptoms of illness early?
- What steps can be made to expand public understanding of self-care to include other dimensions of wellness, such as social and spiritual?

DISCLAIMER

It is important to note that posts were sampled before the COVID-19 outbreak, and do not reflect the public's heightened concern with health and wellness. In this unprecedented time, we recognize that social media is being used to disseminate health information differently than before the pandemic. A follow up to this study may be necessary.

#selfcare

25,349,581 posts

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