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The Effects of Instagram Influencers and Appearance Comparisons on Body Appreciation, Internalization of Beauty Ideals and Self Esteem in Women

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by

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Abstract

The current study investigated how exposure to thin bodies on different (social) media platforms affect body appreciation, internalization of beauty ideals, and self-esteem in female and non-binary participants. The participants (*N*=116) were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: exposure to content from a) Instagram influencers, b) models in magazines, or c) peers. Participants completed an online survey, answering questions about their feelings towards the women depicted in the media content as well as appearance comparison tendencies, body appreciation, self-esteem, internalization of body ideals, and BMI. Overall, significant differences between groups were found for the internalization of body ideals and how attainable participants believed the body of the depicted women to be. No significant differences between conditions were found for self-esteem, appearance comparisons, or body appreciation.

Keywords: influencer, models, body appreciation, appearance comparison, self-esteem, internalization of body ideals

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With over one billion monthly active users, Instagram has become one of the most popular social media platforms in the world (Instagram, 2019). The app allows individuals to share images as well as interact with content posted by their family, peers, and celebrities (Myers & Crowther, 2009). Similar to traditional media (e.g. magazines), in which models are frequently photoshopped (Reaves, Hitchon, Park, & Yun, 2004), individuals can edit images of themselves before posting them on Instagram, thus presenting an idealized version of themselves (Fardouly, Willburger, & Vartanian, 2018; Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008). Research has shown that exposure to such idealized images can lead women to engage in appearance comparisons, which have been linked to body dissatisfaction (Levine & Harrison, 2009; Vartanian & Dey, 2013) and negative body image (Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2015). Appearance comparisons made on Instagram can be harmful to the mental health of its user's, especiallgy to that of young women (Fadrouly, Pinkus, & Vartanian, 2017), a demographic particularly susceptible to feelings of body dissatisfaction (Bearman, Martinez, Stice, & Presnell, 2006).

Appearance comparisons made on social media and the influence of idealized images on body image can be conceptualized using social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954). Differentiating between upward and downward comparison, social comparison theory posits that in the absence of objective standards, individuals evaluate various aspects of their lives by comparing themselves to others (Festinger, 1954). While downward comparisons are made with others who are perceived to be worse off, upward comparisons are made with individuals

perceived to be better off or superior (Festinger, 1954; Wills, 1981). Comparing one's appearance to images of attractive strangers on social media platforms, a form of upward comparison, has been found to have negative effects on body image (Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2015) as well as create feelings of envy in women (Chae, 2018). In general, comparisons are most frequently made when the comparison target is perceived to be similar to oneself (Festinger, 1954).

While most research examining the relationship between social media and body dissatisfaction, self-esteem, and appearance comparison tendencies, has focused on peers and celebrities on Facebook and Instagram (Fardouly et al., 2018; Fardouly et al., 2015), little work has been done differentiating between types of celebrities on Instagram. Specifically, few researchers have distinguished between posts from traditional celebrities and social media influencers, a new type of microcelebrity on Instagram (Chae, 2018). Influencers attract a large follower base by posting images that broadcast a luxurious lifestyle, to which their followers can only aspire (Chae, 2018; Marwick, 2015). Moreover, influencers who post images of their bodies generally fit the thin-ideal, which has been associated with more negative body image in women (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008). Therefore, it is important to examine the role of Instagram influencers within the relationship of appearance comparisons on body image related outcomes. Given that appearance comparisons with different comparison groups (e.g., models, peers) are thought to influence women's body image concerns and dissatisfaction differently, it is important to investigate how comparisons made with Instagram influencers differ from those made with one's peers and more traditional models (Carey, Donaghue, & Broderick, 2013; Fardouly et al. 2017).

Chae (2018) argues that women perceive themselves to be more similar to Instagram influencers than to traditional models featured in magazines. Part of what makes influencers more relatable than traditional models or celebrities is the connection they establish with their followers by sharing various of their lives (Abidin, 2016; Chae, 2018). Moreover, many influencers on Instagram are high school or college students (Marwick, 2015), making their everyday life more relatable to their young followers.

It has been suggested that the connection and relationship influencers have with their followers falls somewhere between that of distant friends and celebrities (Chae, 2018). Thus, it could be hypothesized that women are more likely to compare themselves to influencers than to traditional models. This would be in line with social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) which suggests that individuals have higher tendency to compare themselves to someone if they feel they are perceived to be more similar to themselves. Therefore, I hypothesize the following:

H1: Participants looking at images of women fitting the thin ideal are more likely to compare themselves to their peers or influencers on Instagram than to models in magazines.

Moreover, Fardouly et al. (2018) suggested that if the appearance of women reflecting the thin ideal is perceived as more personally attainable, the exposure to images of these women could have a greater influence on body image. Based on Fardouly et al. (2018), I hypothesize that:

H2: Participants exposed to posts from Instagram influencers are more likely to believe the physical appearance of the women depicted to be more personally attainable than that of models in magazines. Overall, participants looking at images of their peers are most likely to find the physical appearance of the depicted women to be personally attainable.

H3: The more attainable the participants believe the physical appearance of the women depicted to be, the higher their internalization of beauty ideals and the lower their levels of self-esteem and body appreciation will be.

Method

Participants

As social media use is popular among young women (Kimbrough, Guadagno, Muscanell, & Dill, 2013), who experience higher levels of body dissatisfaction than young men (Tiggemann, 2005), the study focused on female-identifying and non-binary individuals, ages 18 to 32. Additionally, participants recruited for this study were required to be students (college or high school) to make the women depicted in the peer condition appear more relatable. Due to COVID-19, participants were recruited online via social media (Instagram and WhatsApp), email, and links posted on four Portland State University d2l class pages.

Data from 116 individuals was collected and analyzed using SPSS. Participants self-identified as female (n=110), non-binary (n=8), gender fluid (n=1), or did not wish to say (n=1). Due to the small sample size of gender fluid participants, the non-binary and gender fluid groups were combined during the analysis. Participants' median body mass index (BMI) was 23.2, ranging from 15.8 (severely underweight) to 55.8 (obese) (M=25.33, SD= 6.7). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2020), for an adult 20 years or older a normal BMI lies between 18.5 and 24.9.

In terms of ethnicity, 83.6% of participants identified as White (n=97), 5.2% as Black and/or African American (n =6), 6.9% as Asian (n=8), 4.3% as Latinex (n=5), 3.4% as American Indian and/or Alaskan Native, 1.7% as Native Hawaiian and/or Pacific Islander (n =2), and 1.7%

as Middle Eastern (*n* =2). The majority of participants were between the ages of 18-22 (*n* =73),

with 33 participants being between 23-27, and 10 participants between 28-32 years of age. All

but one participant were college students (*n* =115) rather than high school students (*n* =1).

Materials and Design

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the following conditions: exposure to (1)

posts from Instagram influencers, (2) images of models in a magazine, (3) posts from an

Instagram account of a student (peer). The design of the posts in the Instagram influencer and

peer exposure conditions were based on the traditional Instagram layout, excluding the like total,

the caption, and comments section. The images for the influencer condition were selected from

the profiles of a female influencer on Instagram. The posts for the Instagram account of a peer

will be created by the researcher using Instagram posts of college students. Lastly, the images

used for the magazine exposure condition were selected from online magazines and

advertisements. In general, all images used across the three conditions depict women who fit the

thin-ideal body type and are wearing figure-hugging clothing to draw attention to their figure.

The women were chosen to be in their twenties as to appear more relatable to the participants

who are of a similar age. Moreover, the women in the images were chosen to have white or

white-passing skin for consistency across the images.

Procedure

The study consisted of an online survey hosted on the survey platform, Qualtrics. After

consenting to participate in the study, participants were asked to answer demographic questions

before being randomly assigned to one of the three conditions using Qualtrics' randomization

function. All participants were asked to view the images presented to them with the assumption

of having to answer questions about them later on. After participants had finished viewing the

images presented in their condition, they were asked to state what stood out to them about the

images, the women in the images, and how the images made them feel. This assured that

participants spent enough time engaging with the visual stimuli. They were then asked how

attainable, desirable, and edited they believe the physical appearance of Instagram influencers,

magazine models, and peers to be. Moreover, they are asked to compare their body to that of the

women in their condition. Next, they responded to items addressing their internalization of body

ideals, appearance comparison tendencies, body appreciation, and self-esteem. Moreover,

participants were asked about the frequency and type of media content they usually engage with.

Lastly, participants were asked to report their height, weight, and ideal weight which were used

to calculate participants' actual and ideal BMI.

Internalization of Beauty Ideals

Six items from the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-3

(SATAQ-3) (Thompson, Van den Berg, Roehrig, Guarda, & Heinberg, 2004) and SATAQ-4

(Schaefer et al., 2015) were used to assess the internalization of beauty ideals and the ideal body

type. The items were modified to fit the context of each condition (e.g "I feel pressure from

Instagram influencers to look thinner"). Each item was scored on a 7-point Likert scale (1=

"Strongly Disagree" to 7= "Strongly Agree"). A reliability analysis was conducted,

demonstrating good internal consistency, α=.80.

Appearance Comparison

Six items from the Upward and Downward Appearance Comparison Scale (UPACS and

DACS) (O'brien, 2009) were used to measure participants appearance comparison tendencies

and their direction. All items used a 7-point Likert scale (1= "Strongly Disagree" to 7= "Strongly

Agree"). The three items from the UPACS has a Cronbach's alpha of .89 while the three items from the DACS had a Cronbach's alpha of .82.

Body Appreciation

Seven items from the Body Appreciation Scale (BAS) (Avalos, Tylka, &Wood-Barcalow, 2005) were selected to assess the appreciation participants had for their bodies. The scale items were scored on 7-point Likert scale (1= "Strongly Disagree" to 7= "Strongly Agree") and had a good internal consistency, α=.82.

Self-Esteem

Five items from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) were used to measure participant's self-esteem across all three conditions. The items did not vary across conditions and were responded to on a 7-point Likert scale (1= "Strongly Disagree" to 7= "Strongly Agree"). The Cronbach's alpha for with the study sample was .88.
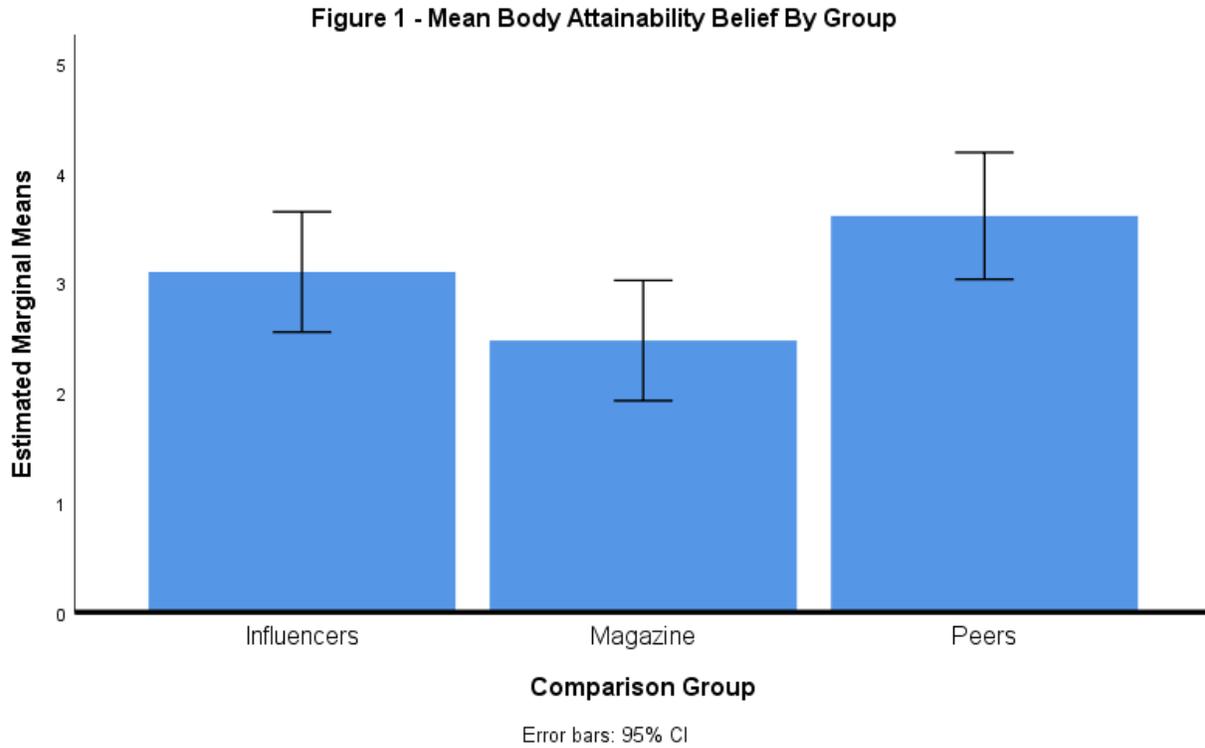
Results

Demographics

A series of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to determine whether mean scores on the BAS, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, UPCAS, DACS, and SATAQ varied by age, gender, or ethnicity. No significant differences between age groups were found for the BAS, $F(2,111)=1.12$, $p=.33$, partial $\eta^2=.02$, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, $F(2,111)=.782$, $p=.46$, partial $\eta^2=.01$, UPACS, $F(2, 109)=.60$, $p=.55$, partial $\eta^2=.01$, nor SATAQ, $F(2,111)=.451$, $p=.638$, partial $\eta^2=.01$. However, significant differences between age groups and the DACS were found, $F(2,11)=4.32$, $p<.05$, partial $\eta^2=.07$. Post-hoc Tukey HSD analysis found that participants between the ages of 28-32 (M= 4.78, SD=.48) reported making significantly

more downward comparisons than participants 23-27 of age (M=3.24, SD=.25). The downward

comparison scores of the participants 18 to 22 (M=3.79, SD = .17) were not significantly

different from those of the participants 23-27 nor 28-32 years of age. Moreover, significant

differences between female and non-binary participants were found for the SATAQ,

$F(1,112)=7.87$, $p<.01$, partial $\eta^2=.07$, BAS, $F(1, 112)=4.94$, $p<.05$, partial $\eta^2=.04$, with female

participants (M=4.63, SD=3.46) having significantly higher a mean internalization of beauty

ideal score than the non-binary participants (M=3.46, SD=.40). No significant differences

between female and non-binary participants were found for the UPACS, DACS, or Rosenberg

Self-Esteem Scale. Lastly, no significant differences across the ethnic groups and the scales were

found.

Experimental Condition

To test whether how attainable participants believed the body type of the women depicted

to be varied by experimental condition (exposure influencer, model, or peer images), a one-way

ANOVA was conducted. The analysis demonstrated significant mean differences between the

three experimental groups, $F(2,113)=4.02$, $p<.05$, partial $\eta^2=.07$. Figure 1 below provides these

results graphically. Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests show significant differences between the model

(M=2.48, SD=.28) and peer (M= 3.61, SD=.29) condition but not between the influencer

(M=3.10,SD=.28) and peer nor magazine condition. No significant between-group differences

were found when asking participants the extent to which they wished their body looked like the

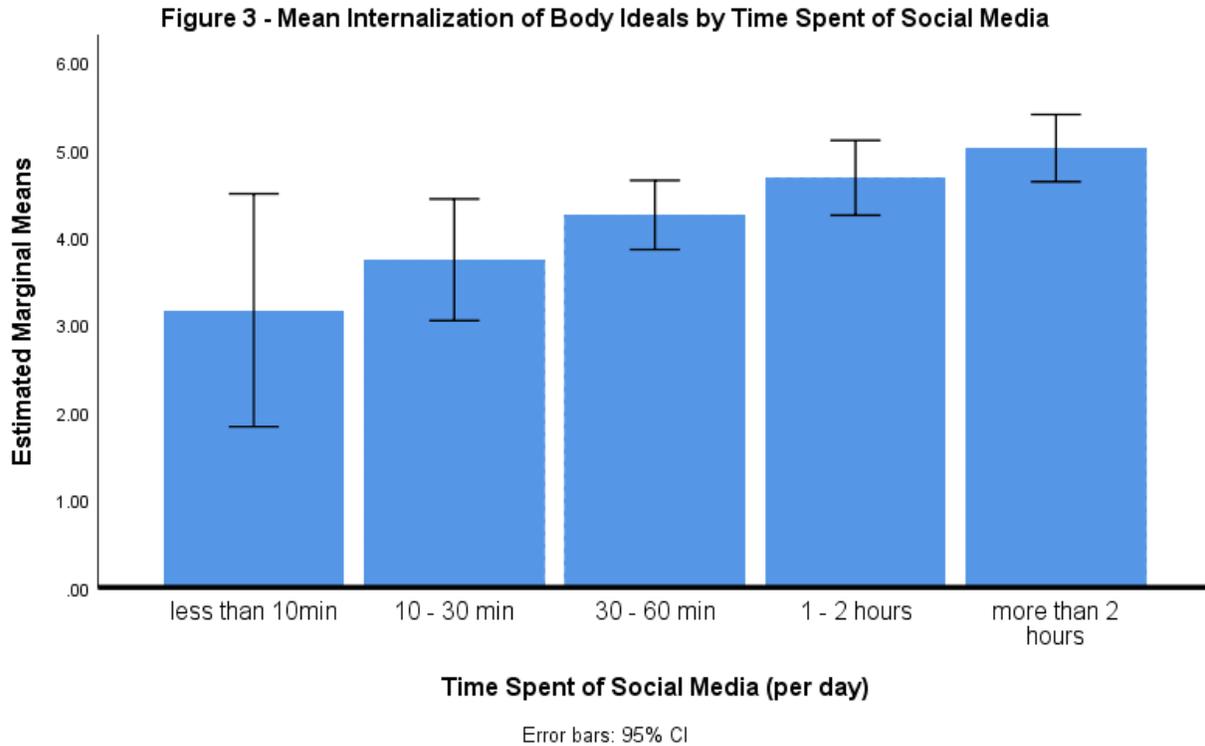women in the images, $F(2, 113)= .974$, $p=.38$, partial $\eta^2=.02$.

Figure 1 - Mean Body Attainability Belief By Group

Error bars: 95% CI

Internalization of Body Ideals

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to evaluate whether mean differences in internalization of body ideal scores varied as a function of what group participants were assigned to. Figure 2 presents the results of this analysis. Significant differences between the three group means were found, $F(2,111)=3.50$, $p<.05$, partial $\eta^2=.06$. Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests indicated significant lower mean internalization in the peer group (M=4.10, SD=1.01) than in the model group (M=4.78, SD=1.24). No significant difference between the influencer and the peer group nor the influencer and model group were observed. Moreover, a linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether the difference between participants' actual and ideal BMI predicts internalization of beauty ideals. The reported difference BMI (M=1.29, SD=1.08) was significantly and positively related to mean internalization of beauty ideal scores (M= 4.59,

SD=1.23), *B*= .27, *t(100)*= 2.41 , *p* <.05, and accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in internalization of body ideals, R^2=.06, *F(1,100)*=5.82, *p*<.05.

Figure 2 - Mean Internalization of Body Ideal Scores by Group

Error bars: 95% CI
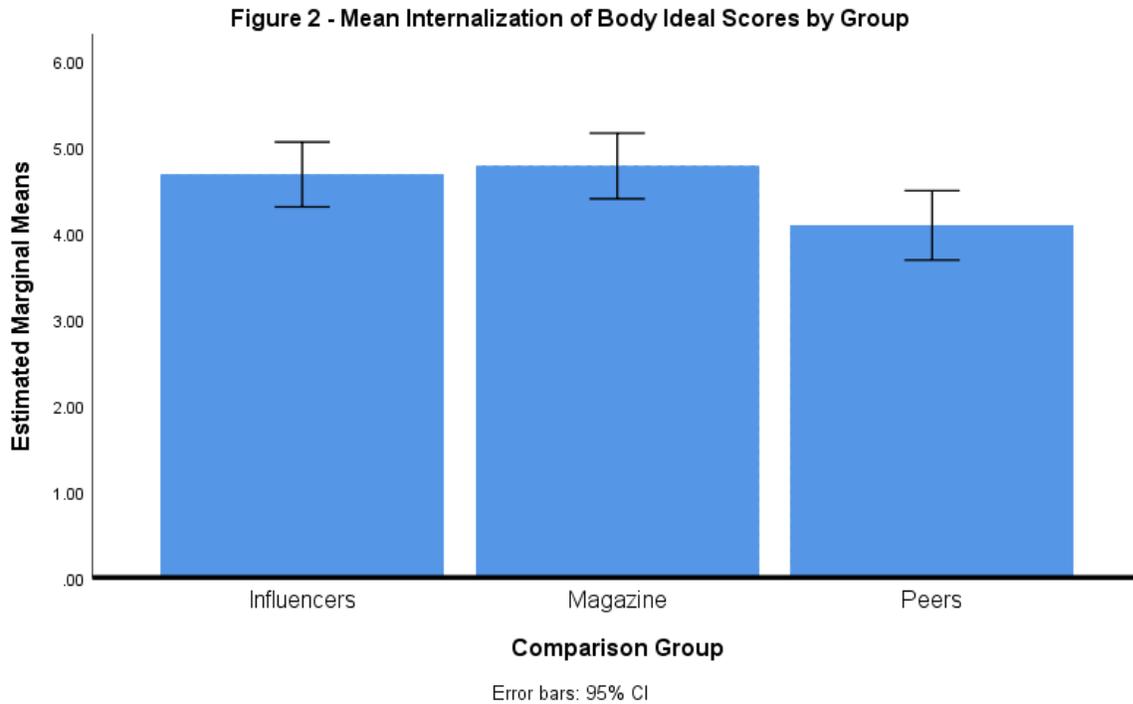
A second one-way ANOVA was run to determine whether mean differences in internalization of body ideals varied according to the amount of time participants spent on social media (daily). Significant differences between reported amount of time on social media was found, $F(4, 108)$= 4.48, *p*<.01, partial η^2= .14. Post-hoc Tukey HSD analysis demonstrated significant mean differences between individuals who reported being on social media less than 10 minutes (M=3.17, SD=.67), 10-30minutes (M=3.74, SD=.35), 30-60minutes (M=4.26, SD=.20) and individuals who spent 2 or more hours on social media (M=5.02, SD=.19). Moreover, significant differences between individuals who reported being on social media less than 10 minutes (M=3.17, SD=.67) or 10-30minutes (M=3.74, SD=.35) and individuals who reported being on social media for 1-2 hours (M=4.68, SD=.22) . See Figure 3.

Figure 3 - Mean Internalization of Body Ideals by Time Spent of Social Media

Time Spent of Social Media (per day)

Error bars: 95% CI

Lastly, two one-way ANOVAs were conducted to investigate whether there were mean differences in internalization of body ideals for time spent on Instagram (influencer and peer condition) and time spent looking at magazines (model condition), respectively. No significant differences between reported amounts of time spent Instagram were found, $F(4, 65) = 1.11$, $p=.36$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$. Similarly, no significant differences between reported frequencies of looking at a magazine were found, $F(4, 32)=1.67$, $p=.18$, partial $\eta^2 = .17$.

Body Appreciation

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to evaluate whether body appreciation varied between the peer, model, and influencer groups. No significant differences between the groups were found $F(2,111)=1.04$, $p=.36$, partial $\eta^2=.02$. A linear regression was run to evaluate whether the difference between participants' actual and ideal BMI predicts body appreciation. Table 1 provides the results of this regression. The difference in actual and ideal BMI (M=1.30, SD=1.09) was significantly and negatively related to mean body appreciation scores (M=3.92,

SD=1.18), *B*= -.36, *t*(100)= -3.51 , *p* <.01, and accounted for a significant proportion of the

variance in body appreciation. R^2=.11, *F*(1,100)=12.29, *p*<.01.

Table 1 – *Results of a Linear Regression of BMI Difference on Body Appreciation*

|	*b*	SE(*b*)	*t*
Intercept	4.39	.17	25.4*
Difference Between Actual & Ideal BMI	-.36	.10	-3.51*

* p< .01

Appearance Comparison

A series of one-way ANOVAs were run to determine whether upward and downward

comparison tendencies differed across the three groups. No significant differences were found

between groups were found for upward comparison, *F*(2,109)=.06, *p*=.942, partial η^2=.00, nor

downward comparison, *F*(2,111)=1.22, *p*=.298, partial η^2=.02.

A series of paired sample t-tests were conducted to determine whether there were mean

differences between participants who reported comparing themselves to (influencers vs. models

vs. peers). Participants reported comparing themselves to influencers (M=4.40, SD=1.94)

significantly more than to models in magazines (M=3.57, SD=1.87), *t*(111)=5.30 , p< .01, d=

.50. Moreover, participants reported comparing themselves to their peers significantly more

(M=5.24, SD=1.32) than to influencers, *t(*111)=5.22, *p*< .01, d=.49, and models, *t(*111)=9.91,

*p*< .01, d=.94.

Self-Esteem

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test whether levels of self-esteem after viewing

the images differed across the three groups. No significant differences between groups were

found, *F*(2,108)=.122, *p*=.885, partial η^2=.00. A second one-way ANOVA revealed significant

mean differences in self-esteem based on the difference between participants' actual and ideal

BMI, $F(4, 95)=16.65$, $p< .01$, , partial $\eta^2=.41$. Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests demonstrated significant mean difference for all groups expect between those wishing their BMI to be 1-5 points lower (M=4.29, SD=.14) and those wishing it to be 1-5 higher (M=4.08 ,SD=.36). Moreover, no significant mean differences in self-esteem were found between those wishing their BMI to be lower by 6-10 points (M=2.52, SD=.33) and those wishing it to be more than 10 points higher (M=3.06 ,SD=.39). Figure 4 provides the results of this analysis.

Figure 4 - Mean Self-Esteem Score by BMI Difference

Difference between Actual and Ideal BMI

Error bars: 95% CI
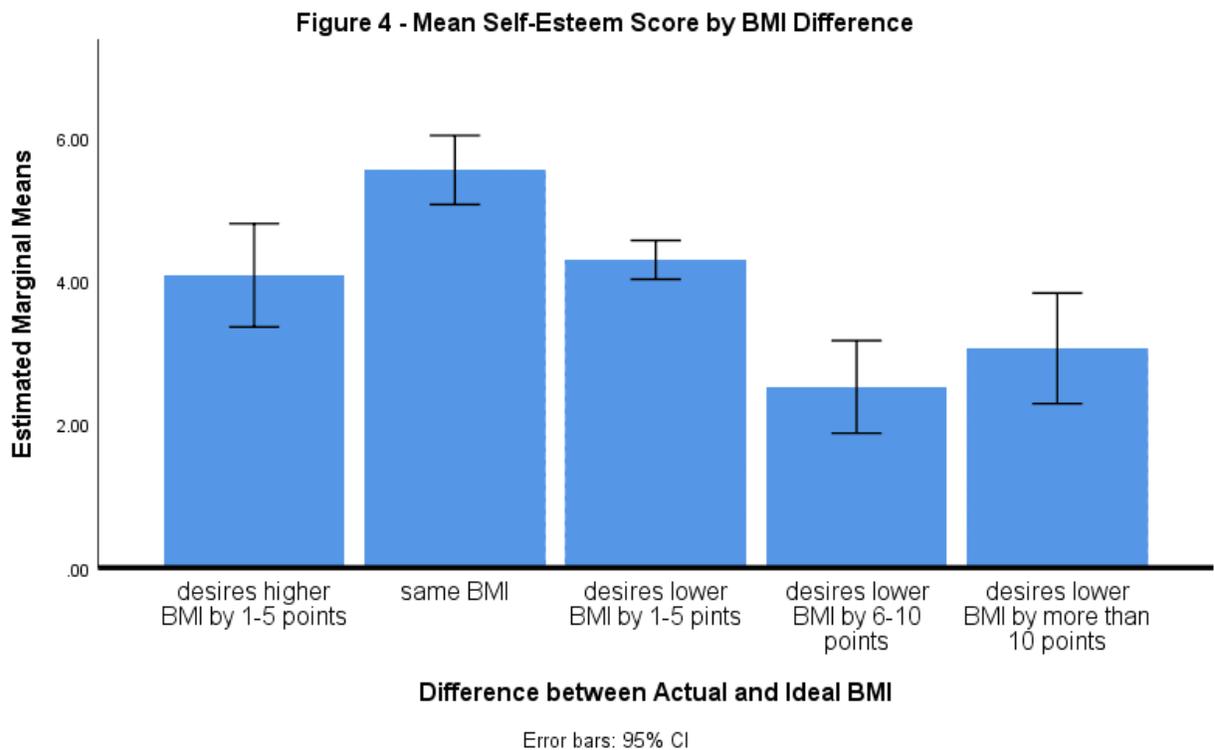
Finally, a one-way ANOVA was used to analyze whether a participants' mean self-esteem score was influenced by how much participants wished their body resembled that of the women depicted. Significant differences in mean self-esteem score were found, $F(4, 106)=14.97$, $p< .01$, partial $\eta^2=.36$. Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests demonstrated significant difference between of majority of the groups. The mean scores of individuals who rated their wish to look like the women highly, either "a great deal" (M= 2.8, SD=1.07) or "a lot" (M=3.43, SD= .99), were not

significantly different from one another. Moreover, the mean scores of individuals rated their wish medium to low ("a moderate amount" (M= 4.91, SD= 1.11), "a little" (M=4.55, SD= 1.06), and "not at all" (M=5.10 ,SD=1.08) were not significantly different. See Figure 5 below for a visual presentation of the results.

Figure 5 - Mean Self-Esteem Scores by Wish To Resemble The Women Depicted

Error bars: 95% CI
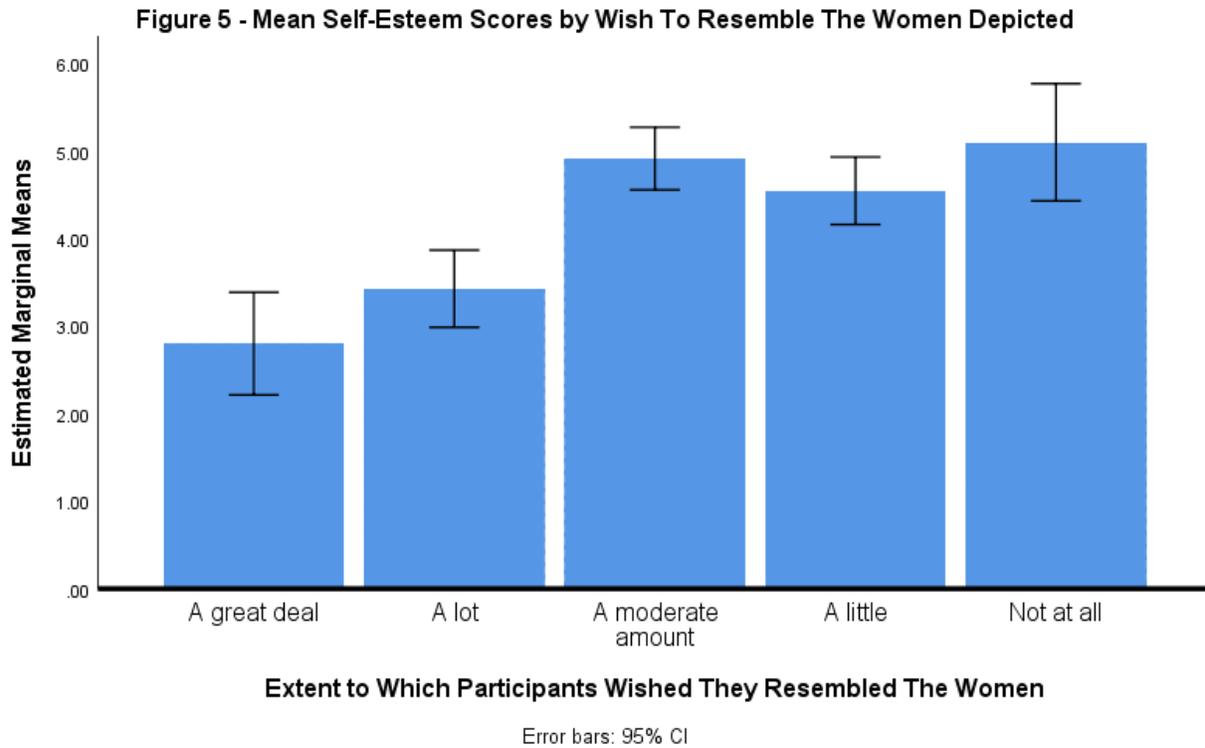
Discussion

The aim of this study was to begin to fill the gap in the literature on Instagram influencers and constructs related to body image by examining how content from Instagram influencers compares to post from peers and professional models in terms of participants' appearance comparisons, self-esteem, body appreciation, and the internalization of beauty ideals in young women. As hypothesized (H1), participants reported comparing themselves to Instagram influencers more than they did to models in magazines. It should be noted, however, that participants reported looking at magazines at significantly lower rates than they reported

spending time on social media. This may be due to a decline in popularity of magazines (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2011). Nevertheless, participants reported peers to be their most significant comparison group. This suggests that in the absence of objective standards, peers are perceived as the best comparison group. These findings align with those of Fardouly et al. (2017) who found that the majority of appearance comparisons are made in-person, with some comparisons made on social media and few with pictures in magazines.

Contrary to the hypothesis (H2), no mean differences between groups were found for upward and downward comparison tendencies. Festinger (1954) suggests that when individuals are perceived as being better off, individuals tend to engage in upward comparison. Thus, given the luxurious lifestyles and beauty-ideals influencers advertise, I would have expected significant differences in mean upward comparison between the influencer and the peer condition. The absence of significant differences between the influencer and peer group could, however, be related to how attainable individuals believe their physical appearance to be. No significant differences in belief of attainability were found between the influencer and peer condition (H2). Therefore, it could be that by rating the appearance of an influencer as relatively attainable (compared to that of a model), participants did not perceive the influencers to be significantly better off or superior.

As predicted, the internalization of body ideals varied as a function of which group participants were in. However, the differences in internalization of body ideals were only significant between the model and peer groups. Contrary to hypotheses (H2, H3), the internalization of body ideals was lowest in the peer group despite participants reporting the physical appearance of their peers to be the most attainable. It could be that the pressure experienced from peers to fit the thin body ideal is weaker than that of (social) media.

Interestingly, the more time participants reported spending on social media (including Instagram), the higher their internalization of body image scores were. This was not the case for time spent on Instagram only. Thus, it could be that there are other social media websites (such as Facebook or TikTok) that might explain this relationship.

No significant differences between the three conditions and levels of body appreciation were found. The difference between a participants' actual and ideal BMI, however, was negatively associated with body appreciation. This suggests that individuals who are less satisfied with their weight (and thus had a higher difference between BMIs) appreciate their body less than those who are content with their BMI.

Contrary to the hypothesis (H2), no significant differences in mean self-esteem scores across the three conditions were observed. In retrospect, these findings are logical since a participants' self-esteem is a characteristic that has most likely been established throughout their lifetime and would not vary greatly after being presented with a series of images. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that exposure to idealized images via social media platforms (including Instagram) and magazines is normal part of everyday life and could thus cause harmful effects on women's body image (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016) and self-esteem over time.

In general, it was found that participants who had lower levels of self-esteem had a greater desire to look like the women depicted in the images presented. Since all the women depicted fit the thin body ideal, these findings could suggest that individuals with lower self-esteem are more affected by presentations of the thin-ideal on social media or in everyday life. Further analysis would have to be conducted to test this claim.

Limitations and Future Research

The following limitations of the current study should be considered. First, it should be noted that the sample size in this study was relatively small, limiting the analysis and conclusions that could be made regarding gender and ethnicity. Moreover, by choosing a cross-sectional design, no long-term effects of repeated exposure to the thin ideal and the three conditions could be observed. A longitudinal design, on the other hand, could have better simulated everyday exposure to the thin-ideal and potentially identified differences in appearance comparisons and self-esteem between the groups.

Another limitation lies within how much information and context was given to the participants about the women in the images. On social media, context is given through elements such as profiles, captions, comments, and pre-existing knowledge of the other. As such, it could be that without this context, the individual images presented were not distinct enough. Moreover, influencers create a connection to their followers by sharing every day, sometimes vulnerable, aspects of their life on Instagram. By stripping the influencer's posts of their backstory, the women depicted may have lacked in relatability and thus not been significantly different from the images of the models.

Furthermore, in the survey, participants were asked what their ideal weight is (vs. actual), implying there might be a difference. However, it was not asked why participants wanted to change their weight. Reasons for a desire to lose weight, outside of wanting to fit the beauty ideal, could include health, improved fitness, injury prevention, and lowering insurance cost.

Mean scores of internalization of body ideals varied as a function of gender. Within this analysis, only female and non-binary/gender fluid participants were included. Moreover, non-binary and gender fluid participants made up only a small part of the sample. Though there has been a societal shift towards the acceptance of genders outside of male vs. female, individuals

identifying with genders outside of the binary are often underrepresented in media (TV, magazines, social media) (O'Connell, 2012). The pressure media puts on individuals to fit certain gendered body ideals might thus be harmful to their self-esteem, body appreciation, and body satisfaction. Future research should focus more on the role of genders outside of the binary in the relationship between Instagram influencers, magazine models, and peers and body image related variables.

Future research could also expand which social media platform and micro-celebrities they include in their study. One such platform is Tiktok, a relatively new social media app that reached 150 million daily active users by June 2018 (Bahiyah & Wang, 2020). What makes Tiktok different from Instagram is that only video content can be shared. Like Instagram, however, multiple types of influencers and trends have surfaced on the platform, including trends advertising how pretty and skinny users are. It could be interesting for future researchers to explore the effects of different appearance related trends on user's self-esteem and body image.

Lastly, this study focused on one type of influencer only. Many influencers promote body positivity, a fitness lifestyle (rather than just being thin), and makeup skills. It would be interesting to see whether the constructs measured in this study differ across influencer type (thinspiration vs. fitspiration).

In conclusion, the findings of this study show that while the direction of the comparison was not significantly different between the comparison groups, peers are the most frequent comparison target. Moreover, appearance comparisons to influencers are made significantly more than to magazine models. While body appreciation and self-esteem did not vary as a function of comparison group, the internalization of the thin body ideal significantly higher in the model condition than in the peer condition. This finding is consistent with the notion that

media is highly influential and a stronger indicator of social ideals surrounding body image

(Bandura, 2001). Future research should further examine the role influencers on social media

platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, play on appearance comparisons, body appreciation,

and eating disorders.

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