

THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE BODY SATISFACTION  
OF ADOLESCENT AND YOUNG ADULT FEMALES

by

JULIA WALLIS

B.A., Kansas State University, 2013

A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Apparel, Textiles, and Interior Design  
College of Human Ecology

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

2015

Approved by:

Major Professor  
Dr. Joy Kozar

# **Copyright**

JULIA WALLIS

2015

## **Abstract**

The thin female body-type perpetuated in the media has historically caused decreased body satisfaction in adolescent and young adult females (Dittmar, 2009). Previous studies have examined the impact of these images in traditional media, but few studies have examined images seen in social media. Therefore, this study examined how social media impacts the body satisfaction of adolescent and young adult females through the variables of age, time spent on social media, social comparison behaviors, and appearance-related attitudes. The study utilized a sample of females between the ages of 14 to 25. As a component of this study, age was broken into two groups, creating a younger (14-18) and older (19-25) group. This allowed the researcher to make comparisons between the two age groups in relation to the variables being studied.

An online questionnaire was utilized as part of this study and distributed to college professors, high school instructors, high school and college-age students, and via social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. A total of 357 female respondents between the ages of 14 and 25 years old participated in the study. Of the 357 participants, 140 (39.2%) were in the age category of 14-18 and 217 (60.8%) were in the age category of 19-25.

Results indicated that participants who accessed their social media accounts more times per day were more likely to engage in social comparison behavior to fashion models and celebrities and peers. In addition, the more participants compared themselves with fashion models and celebrities and peers, the higher their appearance-related attitudes, which lowered their body satisfaction. Age was not a significant factor in predicting time spent on social media, participation in social comparison behavior, or appearance-related attitudes. However, among the sample, younger participants were overall more satisfied with their body than older participants.

It was determined that on average, participants checked their social media accounts between 5 and 15 times a day and spent three or less hours daily on social media.

These findings have important implications for the fashion and cosmetics industries and AT educators. The results indicate that social media has an impact on young women's body satisfaction.

## Table of Contents

List of Figures .....	viii
List of Tables .....	ix
Acknowledgements.....	x
Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	1
Overview.....	1
Purpose.....	2
Justification of Study .....	3
Definitions .....	4
Organization of Thesis.....	5
Chapter 2 - Review of Literature .....	7
Social Media .....	7
Facebook.....	8
Pinterest.....	12
Instagram.....	15
Body Image.....	17
Thin-Ideal Images in the Media.....	18
Social Comparison Behavior to Media Images .....	21
Social Comparison Behavior to Peers .....	27
Social Media Consumption and Body Satisfaction .....	28
Theoretical Framework.....	31
Social Comparison Theory.....	31
Lifespan Theory .....	33
Purpose and Research Objectives .....	37
Research Questions .....	38
Research Hypotheses .....	39
Chapter 3 - Method .....	41
Sample .....	41
Instrumentation .....	42

Body Satisfaction .....	42
Figure 3-6: Modified BASS.....	43
Social Comparison Behavior .....	44
Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance.....	46
Participants' Time Spent on Social Media.....	48
Demographic Information.....	48
Procedure .....	49
Chapter 4 - Results.....	51
Descriptive Statistics.....	52
Overview of Sample .....	52
Reliability of Measures.....	53
Body Satisfaction .....	53
Social Comparison Behavior .....	55
Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance.....	57
Time Spent on Social Media.....	60
Participants' Use of Social Media.....	61
Regression Analysis.....	65
Independent Samples <i>T</i> -Tests .....	72
Chapter 5 – Discussion .....	75
Summary of Results.....	75
Body Satisfaction .....	75
Social Media Usage .....	80
Theoretical Implications .....	84
Social Comparison Theory.....	84
Lifespan Theory .....	85
Contributions to Academia .....	86
Contributions to the Industry .....	87
Limitations .....	88
Recommendations for Future Research.....	89
References.....	91
Appendix A - Questionnaire .....	96

Appendix B - Example Email and Social Media Post ..... 108

## List of Figures

Figure 2-1: Facebook as viewed through a PC .....	10
Figure 2-2: Facebook as viewed through a mobile device .....	11
Figure 2-3: Pinterest Example of Board .....	13
Figure 2-4: Pinterest Features Example .....	14
Figure 2-5: Instagram Example .....	16
Figure 2-6: Model of Hypotheses .....	40

## List of Tables

Table 4-1	Frequency Results for Respondents' Demographic Characteristics (n = 357).....	53
Table 4-2	Descriptive Statistics for Body Areas Satisfaction Scale .....	55
Table 4-3	Descriptive Statistics for Social Comparison Behavior to Fashion Models and Celebrities .....	56
Table 4-4	Descriptive Statistics for Social Comparison Behavior to Peers.....	57
Table 4-5	Descriptive Statistics for Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Scale .....	59
Table 4-6	Frequency Results for Amount of Time Social Media Checked Daily (N = 356) .....	60
Table 4-7	Frequency Results for Amount of Time Spent on Social Media Daily (N = 356).....	61
Table 4-8	Frequency Results for Social Media Usages .....	63
Table 4-9	Regression Analysis of Amount of Times Social Media Accounts Checked and Social Comparison Behavior to Fashion Models and Celebrities.....	67
Table 4-10	Regression Analysis of Time Spent on Social Media and Social Comparison Behavior to Fashion Models and Celebrities .....	67
Table 4-11	Regression Analysis of Amount of Times Social Media Accounts Checked and Social Comparison Behavior to Peers.....	68
Table 4-12	Regression Analysis of Time Spent on Social Media and Social Comparison Behavior to Peers .....	68
Table 4-13	Regression Analysis of Social Comparison Behavior towards Fashion Models and Celebrities and Body Satisfaction.....	69
Table 4-14	Regression Analysis of Social Comparison Behavior towards Peers and Body Satisfaction.....	69
Table 4-15	Regression Analysis of Amount of Times Social Media Accounts Checked and Appearance-related Attitudes.....	70
Table 4-16	Regression Analysis of Time Spent on Social Media and Appearance-related Attitudes .....	71
Table 4-17	Regression Analysis of Appearance-related Attitudes and Body Satisfaction.....	71
Table 4-18	Independent Sample T-tests .....	74

## **Acknowledgements**

My journey through graduate school was done through the support of many and would not have been possible without their guidance. I cannot thank my major advisor, Dr. Joy Kozar, enough for her guidance, support, and countless hours in reviewing my research. Your support and dedication in helping me achieve my Master's degree was invaluable.

My sincerest appreciation and thanks to my committee members, Dr. Kim Hiller, Dr. Ji Hye Kang, and Dr. Walter Schumm for their support, encouragement, and time in reviewing my work.

Finally, words cannot express my deepest gratitude to my family. My parents, Michael and Jennifer Wallis, my sisters, Justine and Isabelle Wallis, and my best friend, Brittney Blum - your belief in me motivated me to no end. The endless amount of love and support you have provided me will always be more than enough.

# Chapter 1 - Introduction

## Overview

With the explosion of social media and more than a billion users on Facebook alone (Statistic Brain, 2014), social media consumers are being inundated with thousands of images on a daily basis. Social media sites like Facebook, Pinterest, and Instagram are filled with image content that reaches millions of people, including adolescent and young adult females. Many of these images play into body perfect ideals and encourage the thin female body-type standard. Researchers have shown a direct relationship between media usage and low body satisfaction among women and girls (Dittmar, 2009; Knauss, Paxton, & Alsaker, 2008; Knobloch-Westerwick & Crane, 2012; Levine & Murnen, 2009; Tiggemann, 2006), and concern is growing as to how body dissatisfaction may lead to eating disorders, low self-esteem, and other physical and mental health issues. The media and its exploitation of thin body-types, especially in females, puts immense pressure on females, regardless of age. Pressure to be thin and obtain an ideal body deemed acceptable by society can begin as young as five years old, leading to morphed self-image and low body satisfaction (Dittmar, 2009). Groesz, Levine, and Murnen (2002) note, “adolescent girls and college women are most affected by poor body image and are most likely to diet” (Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002, p.1).

Body image is defined as the way in which a person views his or her body; it is part of a person’s identity and sense of self, impacting mental and physical well-being (Dittmar, 2009). Body satisfaction, therefore, is how satisfied one is with their body and/or body image; consequently body dissatisfaction is “the experience of negative thoughts and esteem about one’s body” (Dittmar, 2009, p.1). Many studies have shown that the more a female is exposed to thin body images, the higher the level of a negative body image she will have (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde,

2008), and thus become dissatisfied with her body. According to Grabe, Ward, and Hyde (2008), “internalization of the thin ideal develops over time and with massive exposure” (Grabe et al., 2008, p. 471). Similar studies also confirm that the longer the exposure to media and the longer the internalization of thin body-type ideals, the more females desire to be thin and conversely become dissatisfied with their actual body type (Tiggemann, 2006). The internalization of the thin-ideal is also linked with social comparison behavior, defined as a person’s tendency to measure themselves against someone else (Festinger, 1954). Kalnes (2013) noted that adolescent and young adult females oftentimes compare themselves to the thinness and attractiveness of pictures seen in social media and that these comparisons tend to result in body dissatisfaction (Kalnes, 2013).

Through the evaluation of past studies exploring media exposure and its impact on body satisfaction in females, it can be noted that social media also plays a role. Since social media houses image content that plays into thin-ideal body types, similar to traditional media, it should be explored how social media effects body satisfaction in adolescent and young adult females.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of social media on the body satisfaction of adolescent and young adult females ages 15 to 24. By examining the relationship between time spent on social media, age, social comparison behavior, appearance-related attitudinal factors, and the body satisfaction of young women, connections can be formed on how thin body-type images found on social media may produce negative consequences. This study will examine these effects through the use of an online questionnaire. The findings of this study will assist in providing insight into how social media might fuel body dissatisfaction issues and social comparison behavior in young females. Through understanding how social media impacts

body satisfaction in young females, industry professionals and educators can better understand how to reach out to this audience in a way that helps promote a healthy lifestyle and diminish feelings of body dissatisfaction in adolescent and young adult females.

### **Justification of Study**

The majority of previous studies examining the relationship between body satisfaction and social comparison behavior have concentrated on media images in traditional mediums, i.e. television and magazine ads; however, few to none have studied the implications of social media on body satisfaction issues. The aim of the present study is to examine the relationship between body satisfaction and the variables of time, age, social comparison behavior, and appearance-related attitudes to images found in social media among a group of adolescent girls and young women aged 15-24. Although social media is a relatively new mode of communication, the implications this image-saturated media could have on adolescent and young adult females' body satisfaction is worth exploring. This is a time in a female's life when body dissatisfaction can be very high (Tiggemann, 2006). Females are also more susceptible to thin-ideal images than males, making females have an increased risk of being dissatisfied with their bodies (Jones, 2001). "Female beauty is inextricably linked to thinness, with low body weight defined as a central attribute and key evaluative dimension of physical attractiveness" (p.59), and while males are also targets of cultural ideals of attractiveness such as a muscular build, "girls respond with greater intensity...and consequently experience greater body image dissatisfaction than boys" (Lawler & Nixon, 2011, p. 60). Not only are females more susceptible to body image issues, but specifically adolescent and young adult females, as this is a time when self-evaluations are performed (Jones, 2001). Adolescence is also when body image is solidifying and increased concern over body weight develops through social, cognitive, and physical changes occurring

during this time (Lawler & Nixon, 2011). The focus of adolescent and young adult females between the ages of 15 and 24 puts the majority of females participating in this study in the high school and college aged group. Social settings like high school and college can also increase exposure to peer pressure and sociocultural pressures to be thin. Adolescents tend to discuss appearance between peers more frequently than adults do, which contributes to greater body dissatisfaction (Lawler & Nixon, 2011). Since adolescent and young adult females have a heightened sensitivity to body image and body satisfaction issues as well as increased pressure from sources like peers and the media to be thin, it is warranted that the current study examine how social media may also impact body satisfaction in this target group. Thus, this study explores how adolescent and young adult females who use social media are processing and internalizing thin-ideal images and the effects it has on their body satisfaction.

## **Definitions**

The following definitions are terms mentioned throughout the thesis.

**Appearance-related Attitudes:** Attitudes towards one's physical body appearance, and specifically, "women's recognition and acceptance of societally sanctioned standards of appearance" (Heinberg, Heinberg, Thompson, & Stormer, 1995, p.81).

**Body Dissatisfaction:** Defined as "...the experience of negative thoughts and esteem about one's body" (Dittmar, 2009, p. 1).

**Body Image:** Defined as the way in which a person views his or her body; it is part of a person's identity and sense of self, impacting mental and physical well-being (Dittmar, 2009).

**Body Satisfaction:** Defined as "...the degree of satisfaction with one's current physical self (size, shape, general appearance)" (Jones, 2001, p. 645).

**Life-Span Theory:** A person-centered holistic approach that, “proceeds from consideration of the person as a system and attempts to generate a knowledge base about lifespan development by describing and connecting age periods or stages of development into one overall pattern of lifetime individual development” (Baltes, Staudinger, & Lindenberger, 1999, p. 473).

**Self-perception:** The way in which one views and evaluates themselves (Dittmar, 2009).

**Social Comparison:** The tendency of people to compare themselves to others based on opinions, abilities, physical, and social attributes (Festinger, 1954).

**Social Media:** “Web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Kalnes, 2013, p. 15).

**Thin Body Type:** A body that is “...ultra-thin, and whose media models are typically underweight” (Dittmar, 2009, p. 2).

## **Organization of Thesis**

The following chapters provide a review of literature, methodology used, results of the study, and a discussion. The review of literature found in Chapter Two gives a foundation of past studies that have explored the relationship between the portrayal of the female body in the media and its effect on body satisfaction. The review explores social media, body image in adolescent and young adult females, thin ideal images in the media, social comparison behavior to media images and peers, and social media consumption and body satisfaction. Next, a theoretical foundation is provided using the Social Comparison Theory and the Lifespan Theory to ground the research. Social Comparison Theory provides a basis as to how and why people compare

themselves to others, including media images. The Lifespan Theory gives an understanding of the life stages adolescent and young adult females experience and how these particular stages in life shape their susceptibility to thin-ideal images. A series of research objectives, questions, and hypotheses provide a basis for the research. The research explores the objectives, questions, and hypotheses through the administration of an online questionnaire. Chapter Three focuses on the methodology of the research exploring the sample and instrument utilized. Scales used to create the questionnaire are explored in detail. A procedure outlines the process of obtaining the data. Chapter Four provides the results of the data obtained from the questionnaire, listing out which hypotheses were accepted and which were rejected according to the data. Chapter four will also provide the descriptive statistics, reliability of measures, regression analysis, and independent sample *t*-test results. Finally, Chapter Five provides a discussion of the study including a summary of the results, the theoretical implications of the study, contributions this study makes, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research. References and appendices are listed at the conclusion of the thesis.

## **Chapter 2 - Review of Literature**

According to Adler (2014), “Americans spend more time on social media than any other major Internet activity, including email” (Adler, 2014, p. 1). Social media claims millions of users, and billions of minutes from those users (Statistic Brain, 2014). Social media is defined as:

...web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Kalnes, 2013, p. 15).

However, for many people, social media has become more than just a web-based service; it has become their social lives, their lens into the way others live, look, and act.

### **Social Media**

Millions of people connect on a daily basis through social media; and among these millions, individuals between the ages of 18 to 24 comprise the heaviest users, with an astonishing 98% usage rate (Statistic Brain, 2014). In fact, over half the US population (approximately 58%) uses a social networking site (Statistic Brain, 2014). For many people, social media serves as the primary medium for communicating with friends and family and is an integral part of their daily lives. More than 213 million people connect through social media using their computers, and 52 million use mobile devices in their social media uses (Nielsen, 2012). On average, the total minutes spent on social media in the United States reached 520.1 billion in 2012, letting social media claim the most time spent on a network over any other Internet site; and in 2014, social networking sites still claimed that spot. In the top ten list of the social media sites with the most unique PC visitors in the U.S., Facebook currently claims the number one spot with social media

sites like Twitter and Pinterest also making a clear presence. In fact, Pinterest had a massive increase of 1,047 percent in just one year, from 2011 to 2012. This same study also noted that females are the primary users of Pinterest, and spend their time scrolling through this image content site with their mobile phones. Use of social media through mobile devices could indicate that females are not only constantly on social media, but that they literally take it wherever they go, with exposure to image content (and possibly thin-ideal images) many times during any given day (Nielsen, 2012). In Nielsen's most recent study (2014) it was found that 40% of social media users are actually surfing the sites in their bathrooms and almost half use social media in their cars, offices, and restaurants (Nielsen, 2014). Not only do users take their devices everywhere they go to access social media, but users are constantly checking their sites, with 22% of teens checking their Facebook profiles over 10 times a day (Statistic Brain, 2014).

Three specific social media sites, Facebook, Pinterest, and Instagram, are heavily focused on image content and have all experienced large increases in users over time. These sites focus on image sharing and give young users access to content that houses images of the thin-ideal body type. This study will focus on these three sites and how images found may impact body satisfaction issues in adolescent and young adult females.

## **Facebook**

Facebook is the leader in social media, claiming the largest audience, the most minutes spent on a social media site, the most unique PC visitors, and the most mobile usage time (Nielsen, 2012). In 2014, Facebook had over 1.4 billion users and an average of 700 billion monthly minutes of usage time (Statistic Brain, 2014). Facebook consists of picture sharing from user to user as well as advertisement content integrated into Facebook pages and positioned on the side bar of the site. Facebook is mainly filled with image content, promoting a sort of online photo

album site. Its ease of connection and access to millions of people has opened up endless amounts of images to its users. Facebook, like other social media sites, is run by using “personal pages” which individuals can set up for their own unique profiles. Individuals can add “friends” and connect with as many people as they like while having full control over who can see their page and what is posted on their personal page.

Another interesting attribute of Facebook is the “like” feature. When a user uploads a picture or any image, their “friends,” or the people who they are connected with on Facebook, have the option to comment on the image or “like” the image. Liking an image in Facebook is when a Facebook friend clicks on the word “like” on a PC (Figure 2-1) or on an icon of a tiny thumbs up picture in mobile devices (Figure 2-2), which indicates that they find the picture appealing in some way, almost as if they are giving their approval of the picture. It is possible that these “likes” can be perceived as affirmation for the person who posted the image and is receiving the likes. For instance, as seen in a recent study that examined images seen in social media and its impact on adolescent girls, “participants mentioned focusing on the number of likes their pictures had received compared to friends’ photos” (Kalnes, 2013, p. 66). Findings by Kalnes (2013) revealed that individuals who frequently compared their number of likes to others had lower levels of self-esteem and confidence. In fact, participants who compared themselves to others reported increased feelings of jealousy, body dissatisfaction, the desire to be thin, or the desire to have “things” such as clothing, that others may possess (Kalnes, 2013). As such, it is plausible that the number of likes on a picture could impact an individual’s self-esteem and body satisfaction, particularly if the picture uploaded happens to be of the individual’s own self-image.

*Figure 2-1: Facebook as viewed through a PC*



- A. "Liking" Feature
- B. Comment Feature
- C. Sharing Feature

*Figure 2-2: Facebook as viewed through a mobile device*



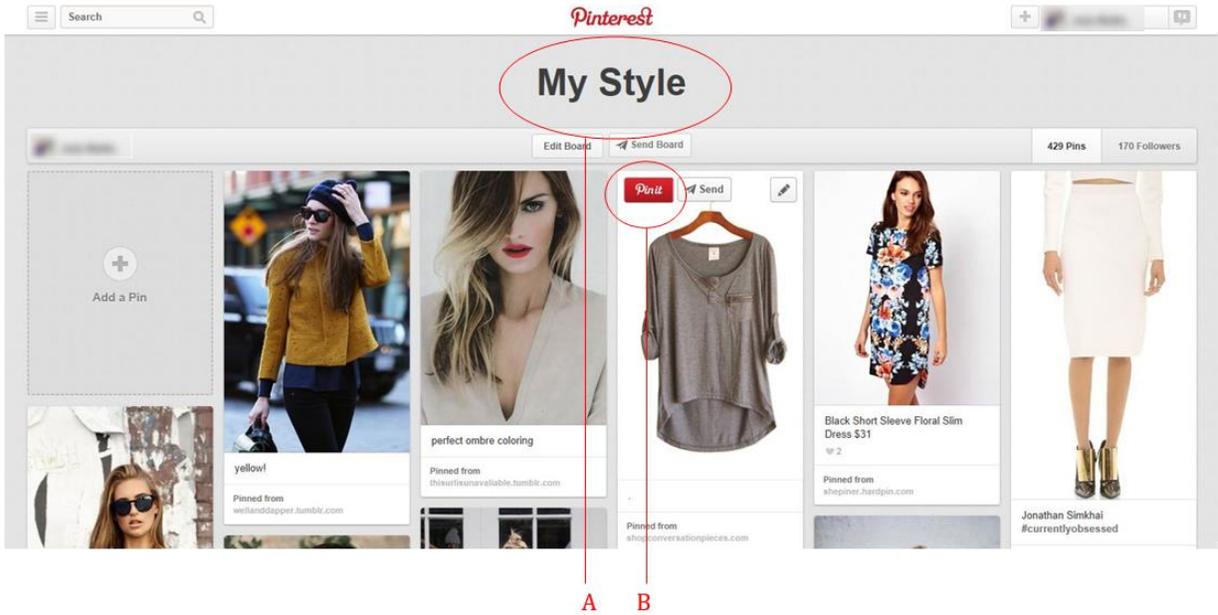
- A. "Liking" Feature
- B. Comment Feature
- C. Sharing Feature

## **Pinterest**

Similar to Facebook, Pinterest is also an image content social media site. Pinterest is “a place to discover ideas for all your projects and interests, hand-picked by people like you” (Pinterest, 2013). Pinterest has gained quick popularity over a short period of time. In 2012, Pinterest had over 27,000 new users, and a 1,047 percent increase from 2011 as mentioned earlier (Nielsen, 2012). By 2014, Pinterest boasted more than 53 million monthly active users in the US (Bercovici, 2014). Pinterest primarily uses images on their site and encourages individual users to “pin”, or share, images to their own unique and personal “boards.” In this way users can create boards which encompass numerous images that individuals find appealing and have “pinned;” the images can also be shared and “liked” by others (Figure 2-3 and Figure 2-4).

A considerable portion of Pinterest is dedicated to fashion and beauty, including the sharing of fashion model images. Oftentimes the models depicted in the images are of the thin-ideal body type perpetuated in the media. What is also interesting about Pinterest is the juxtaposition of pins that can be viewed on one board. For example, users can share images of homes, handbags or even recipes, creating a screen that is filled with how to make the perfect chocolate chip cookie next to an image of how to lose ten pounds in ten days, next to another image of an extremely thin model.

**Figure 2-3: Pinterest Example of Board**



- A. Option to create a personalized board
- B. Option to pin photos

**Figure 2-4: Pinterest Features Example**

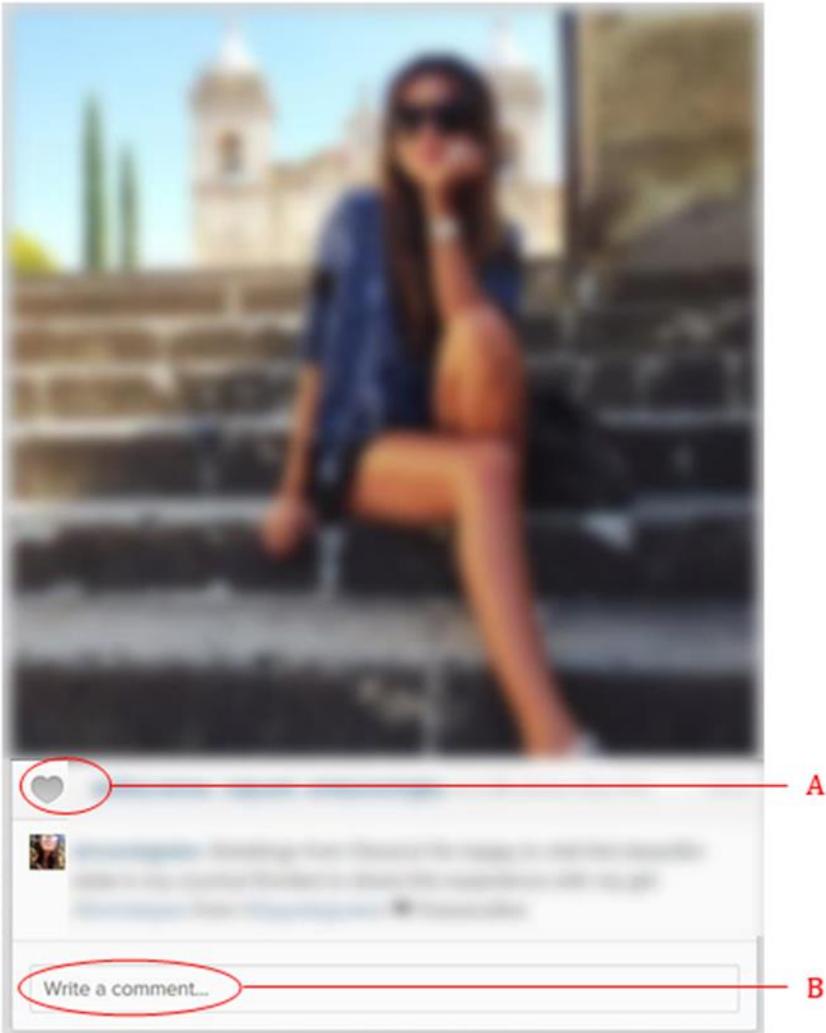


- A. Liking" Feature
- B. Pin it feature to share the photo
- C. Option to comment on a photo you share
- D. Option to comment on a photo someone else shares

## **Instagram**

Similar to Facebook, Instagram uses individual profiles. However, Instagram is focused solely on photos. Instagram allows users to take a photo from their mobile device and alter it by using filters, blurring effects, color adjustments, etc., in order to enhance or change the image. Instagram also uses features such as “likes” in the form of clicking a heart (Figure 2-5). Instagram is primarily accessed through mobile devices although is available for use on a computer (however users are unable to upload photos through that medium). Instagram was created in October of 2010 (Instagram, 2014) and therefore has limited studies associated with it. However, Instagram gained enormous popularity since it first began and is now home to more than 300 million users with over 70 million photos uploaded daily (Instagram, 2014). As Instagram gains popularity with Millennials, the effects of sharing and engaging in social comparison behavior to images on Instagram merits further exploration. In the next sections of this paper, further discussion on the relationship between social comparison behavior and body image is outlined.

*Figure 2-5: Instagram Example*



- A. Option to like a photo
- B. Option to comment on a photo

## **Body Image**

Body image is defined as the way in which an individual views his or her body; it is part of a person's identity and sense of self (Dittmar, 2009). Body image becomes a part of who you are as a person and can impact everything from self-perception to self-esteem, anxiety, and depression (Kalnes, 2013). Body satisfaction is "the degree of satisfaction with one's current physical self (size, shape, general appearance)" (Jones, 2001, p. 645). Body image specifically plays a key role in health for adolescent and young adult women (Rudd & Lennon, 2000). Low body image can lead to appearance-management behaviors which include attempting to alter the body through behaviors such as restriction of food intake, exercise, choice in clothing, makeup products, and in more severe cases, cosmetic surgery (Rudd & Lennon, 2000).

From a young age, females learn that they must be attractive, that their worth lies in their beauty, and that looks are their most powerful asset (Groesz et al., 2002). American standards base attractiveness in women on having a beautiful face and thin body (Rudd, Rudd, Lennon, 2000). Body image and the need for females to be physically thin are strengthened daily by Western cultural and peer reinforcements (Lawler & Nixon, 2011). Even dolls portray the thin-ideal image, conditioning young girls to desire a body that in all reality is unattainable or often in the category of anorexia and starvation (Dittmar, 2009).

The desire to obtain a thin body and the pressure put on females to look a certain way is often heavily reflected in adolescent and young adult females' perceptions of their own body image. In fact, it was found that 60% of adolescent girls would like to change their body in shape and size (Stice & Whitenton, 2002), and body discontent and giving in to American beauty standards is normal behavior for women (Rudd & Lennon, 2000).

In a study done by Clark and Tiggemann (2008), it was found that the desire to please and the importance of being liked by others impacted appearance satisfaction levels in girls (Clark & Tiggemann, 2008). In other words, the more girls are focused on how they look, the more they will be preoccupied with their body image and have increased levels of body dissatisfaction. Grabe et al. (2008) found that many girls measure self-worth by their appearance. Stice and Whitenton (2002) noted that oftentimes young females associated being thin with the rewards of social acceptance and academic success. “Many [young women] become preoccupied with the quest for physical perfection as an avenue to attention and approval from others” (Rudd et al., 2000, p. 154). In reality, body image issues and the drive to obtain a perfect body has historically been an issue; however, today’s adolescent girls seem to face these issues at an intensified level and with more emphasis on the body specifically (Rudd et. al, 2000).

Body satisfaction and sense of self is an important issue for many individuals but especially for adolescent and young adult females. As pressure for females to obtain the thin body type increases (Rudd et al., 2000), it is worth exploring further the effects social media could have in this area. Body image and the degree of body satisfaction an individual has, not only impacts identity but as described above, can impact self-esteem, mood, and behaviors (Tiggemann, 2006), and sometimes even lead to severe consequences such as eating disorders and mental/physical illnesses (Rudd & Lennon, 2000). Society’s ultrathin standards are reiterated through family, peers, and most frequently, and perhaps most severely, through the media, as discussed further in the next section.

### **Thin-Ideal Images in the Media**

“I want to lose three pounds,” the already petite blonde says in the popular 2004 movie, *Mean Girls*, (Waters, 2004) and although it is just a movie, it seems as though this is the type of

society women live in today - a society that emphasizes being thin and always needing to lose those extra few pounds in order to have the “ideal body.” In fact, it has been noted that body dissatisfaction among women is so common that it has become a normative part of a female’s life and her perception of her body (Knobloch-Westerwick & Crane, 2012). Females especially are targeted by the media when it comes to what the “ideal body type” should be and therefore often feel pressured to be thin and attractive in order to meet Western society standards. Research has shown that girls start to become socialized to the thin ideal body type perpetuated in the media as early as toddler years – when they are still learning fundamental skills like speech and communication. Even girls as young as six begin to feel pressure to be thin as one study noted that 40% of six-year-olds wanted to be thinner (Park, 2005).

Groesz et al. (2002) found that girls under the age of 19 were significantly more affected by thin-ideal media images as compared to those 19 and older. Moreover, many participants attributed this exposure not only to the media, but also to peers, family pressure, school, and other social environments. However, various mass mediums are still the largest contributor to promoting the thin-ideal beauty standard. Advertisements are now using some of the thinnest models seen in media to date and oftentimes the models are underweight and technically considered in the weight class of anorexia (Dittmar, 2009). These images provide an unrealistic appearance of what it means to have an ideal body type and is often unattainable by the average person (Grabe et al., 2008).

The ideal body type that is portrayed in the media is extremely thin (Knobloch-Westerwick & Crane, 2012); oftentimes women are pictured to have little to no curves, long features, and flawless skin. Many of these images objectify and sexualize women, featuring females in sexual poses, with little to no clothing, or focusing only on specific body parts such as

the legs or stomach. Many of the images seen in the media have been altered by programs such as Photoshop so that even the actual models do not reflect their photos (Kalnes, 2013).

Thin body-type images not only promote a specific type of body to females, but also “highlight these particular gaps within an individual’s bodily self-concept, which causes negative affect and body dissatisfaction” (Dittmar, 2009, p. 6). In other words, women are not only shown what kind of body is considered ideal, but also receive messages which point out what society might consider “flaws” in other body types. In fact, the problem of media exposure and its effects on body image issues has become so grave that countries like Spain and Italy have banned models that are “too thin” in order to curb the thin-ideal body type standard seen in the media (Grabe et al., 2008).

Recently, however, there has been a positive response to the portrayal of women in the media by the implementation of real beauty campaigns. Real beauty campaigns shared via YouTube and social media sites get millions of views, and thousands of positive comments (YouTube, 2015). These real beauty campaigns focus on highlighting women who are “real” or natural, with what normally would be considered as “flaws” by the highly critical fashion and beauty industries. Real beauty campaigns highlight and celebrate a woman’s unique and natural body, be it short, curvy, tall or petite.

Paving the way in the real beauty trail was Dove, launching advertisements featuring models of all shapes and sizes complete with “flaws” such as moles, wrinkles, and freckles. Dove expertly launched commercials with real women discussing beauty and ripping down stereotypes of beauty ideals. Dove also focused on the empowerment of girls and women with attention to what beauty means to women everywhere (Dove, 2014). Dove created advertisements and videos that focused on real beauty, several of which have gone viral. For

example, when Dove created the “Dove Evolution” ad featuring a normal looking woman who becomes nearly unrecognizable after undergoing a plethora of photo editing, using the tag line “no wonder our perception of beauty is distorted,” in order to bring attention to how much photo modification models undergo in order to appear the way the ads depict them to look. The Dove Evolution YouTube video has been viewed over 17 million times, and begun positive discussion around what real beauty looks like with comments from everyday people like, “Love yourself. Love your body” and “Real beauty is untouched, it radiates from within” (Dove, 2006).

Retailers like American Eagle Outfitters also took note of the success of the Dove Real Beauty Campaign and mirrored efforts to highlight real women in their advertisements when they launched un-touched models for their lingerie line, Aerie. The models showcased their natural beauty and were used in advertisements for Aerie without the use of photo editing or altering the models aesthetically (Lutz, 2014).

Although the media has harshly criticized a woman’s body and has set standards of ultrathin body types, it is encouraging to witness the counter-approach of real beauty campaigns. Unfortunately, however, today’s media is not just confined to traditional mediums such as print, television, and broadcast. As mentioned previously, social media has quickly gained popularity, particularly among adolescents and young adults, and is now acting as a gateway to millions of images of the thin-ideal communicated to young women on a daily basis.

### **Social Comparison Behavior to Media Images**

Social comparison theory is often used in guiding research that examines body image in relation to social comparison behavior to media images as well as to peers. According to Festinger (1954), people innately compare themselves with one another and these comparisons help individuals determine self-characteristics and attributes, which can include physical

appearance. Rudd and Lennon state, “people have a drive to evaluate themselves in relation to others in an attempt to understand themselves” (Rudd & Lennon, 2000, p. 155). Similarly, Richins (1991) reported that comparisons lead to increased levels of attractiveness standards and decreased body satisfaction levels. Although many times comparisons are made without intent, they can negatively impact adolescents and young adults, as they begin to self-evaluate (Rudd & Lennon, 2000). Social comparison behavior leads to “guilt, shame, stress, unhappiness, insecurity, and body dissatisfaction” and in some cases is directly linked to bulimic and anorexic behaviors (Rudd et al., 2000, p. 155). Among the literature reviewed, most researchers agree that social comparison behavior to media images negatively influence young women, and often results in body dissatisfaction.

In Richins’ (1991) study, a sample of female college students were examined in order to observe how the highly attractive images in the media impact social comparison behavior. A two part study was utilized in which the first part used focus groups, showing participants images of highly attractive models and measuring responses, while the second part utilized a questionnaire, in which questions about advertising were used imbedded with discrete social comparison questions. Both studies confirmed that young adult females compare themselves with idealized images in the media. These comparisons led to dissatisfaction with appearance and higher attractiveness standards (Richins, 1991).

Martin, Martin, and Kennedy (1993) expanded upon Richins’ study and examined how advertising fuels social comparison in preadolescent and adolescent females. By examining 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders through a questionnaire that exposed advertising containing the ideal-body for females and highly attractive females, the authors were able to conclude that again, attractiveness standards were raised, and body satisfaction was lowered. Self-perceptions of

attractiveness and self-esteem were all lowered after the girls viewed the attractive female images, supporting previous research that highly attractive media images negatively impact body satisfaction in young girls (Martin, Martin, & Kennedy, 1993).

Similarly, Posavac, Posavac, and Posavac (1998) studied media image exposure to adolescent and young adult women and how this exposure impacted body weight concerns and attractiveness levels. The authors used three experiments where media images were shown to groups of women and measurements were taken of body dissatisfaction levels before and after exposure to the images. What the authors found was that the exposure caused overall increased weight concern among young women. The young women made direct comparisons to the images in the media and consequently heightened their attractiveness standards. Since media images of females are very slim and attractive, the young women studied began demonstrating feelings of inferiority and dissatisfaction with their own bodies. Although it is important to note, not every single woman in this study felt dissatisfied after the viewing of the media images, those women in particular demonstrated high levels of body satisfaction before the viewing of the images, and did not change this sentiment after the viewing. However, for the majority of the young women studied, media images caused them to inherently compare themselves to the women that they viewed in these images, and in doing so, body satisfaction decreased and weight concern increased (Posavac, Posavac & Posavac, 1998).

Rudd and Lennon (2000) discussed body image and appearance-management behaviors in college women and how these are created through social comparison behaviors. The authors stressed that adolescents are especially affected by social comparison behaviors, as they are at a critical time of self-evaluations. Mass media, in this case, television and fashion magazines, proved to be a great source of images in which young females used to compare themselves

against. Through a qualitative study that examined young women's lived experiences, the authors concluded that even though almost half of the women studied demonstrated a neutral body image, many women (36.8%) mentioned making comparisons with others and media images. The comparisons often resulted in negative feelings. For example, one participant mentioned, "thinking about my body in a positive way is difficult, especially after seeing model after model prancing around" (Rudd et al., 2000, p. 157). By participating in social comparison behaviors to models in advertisements, again, it was noted that attractiveness standards were raised therefore causing a decrease in participants' own body satisfaction (Rudd & Lennon, 2000).

Similar findings can also be seen in a study done by Jones (2001) in which the author examined how adolescent girls and boys use social comparison to evaluate attractiveness and body image. Jones conducted a study through the use of peer and media images via a questionnaire in order to evaluate comparison behaviors. Results from this study determined that adolescent girls reported higher rates of social comparison behaviors than boys. These comparisons were made in particular to media images, comparing themselves to models and celebrities. Specifically, the girls focused on comparing the physical attributes of body shape, weight, and facial features to models and celebrities found in the media. These comparisons led to higher attractiveness standards and body dissatisfaction. Jones concluded that girls who participate in social comparison behavior to images seen in the media will experience an increase in body dissatisfaction and will overall be negatively affected (Jones, 2001).

Similar to previous studies mentioned, Kozar and Damhorst's (2009) study focused on comparisons made by women to fashion. This particular study examined the relationship of age and how that affects the tendency to participate in social comparison behaviors. By utilizing a

sample of women between the ages of 30 and 80, surveys were distributed in order to measure social comparison behaviors of the women to images seen in the media. The authors concluded that the older the participant was in age, the less likely she compared herself with models seen in the media, and on the other hand, participants younger in age were more likely to compare themselves with models seen in the media. Through this study it was suggested that as women age, they become more accepting of their bodies, and are less likely to make comparisons to media images. However, of the women that did participate in social comparison behaviors, it was still shown that comparisons to media images resulted in body dissatisfaction (Kozar & Damhorst, 2008).

Social comparison behavior not only lowers body satisfaction and increases attractiveness standards like seen time and time again in the studies mentioned above, but it can also lead to severe consequences such as anorexia and bulimia. Stice and Shaw (1994) examined the effects of media images of the thin-ideal on women and how this formed a relationship with bulimia. Through a study that exposed media images of highly attractive and extremely thin models to a sample of female college students, it was found that the images had a negative effect as shown in numerous other studies previously mentioned. The young women, after viewing the thin females in the media, produced feelings of dissatisfaction and insecurity. By running a multiple regression analyses, the researchers were able to determine that the factors felt by the women would predict bulimic behaviors. In other words, the internalization and viewing of the ultrathin body type in the media could, and often times does, result in bulimic behaviors (Stice & Shaw, 1994).

Similar to Stice and Shaw, Thomsen, McCoy, and Williams (2001) studied how anorexic outpatients experienced and interacted with fashion magazines, and it was found that there was a

strong relationship between social comparison behavior and anorexia. Through a qualitative study conducting interviews with women of varying ages, the authors explored how these women internalized media images. The women in this particular study used media images to compare their own bodies against, mainly in size and shape. Social comparison behavior became an addiction for several of the women studied and they often used the social comparison process as a weekly ritual. Comparisons to the models led many women to obsess about their weight and shape, going to drastic measures, like restricting their food intake and starving themselves in order to more closely resemble the models in the magazines. For these women, social comparison behavior to media images contributed to their diagnosis of anorexia (Thomsen, Thomsen, McCoy, & Williams, 2001).

Over and over again countless studies have shown that social comparison behavior to media images in young women leads to increased attractiveness standards and body dissatisfaction. Young women are left feeling inadequate and inferior to the overly perfected, highly attractive, and ultrathin models seen in the media. Like traditional media, which was used as the comparison tool in the previously mentioned studies, social media also is home to images of the thin-ideal body type. It should be explored how social media might also fuel social comparison behavior in young women and the relationship it has with body satisfaction. However, social media not only houses images of fashion models and celebrities, but encourages users to connect with peers, displaying images of friends and family alongside models and celebrities. Therefore, it is also important to explore peer comparisons and the impact it has on body satisfaction in young women.

## **Social Comparison Behavior to Peers**

Jones (2001) reported that a main source of social comparison for adolescent and young adult females were peers (Jones, 2001). Many young females turn to their friends to judge their appearance and evaluate physical expectations. Since the individual most likely has closer relationships to her friends, it becomes much easier for her to compare herself to them versus a model in advertising that could be seen as a distant figure. Mothers, sisters, and other female family members also serve as figures in which females may compare themselves against. In fact, Park (2005) mentioned mothers often feel concerned to keep their daughters thin, and even a mother's own preoccupation with her weight can begin to influence her daughter's feelings towards body image and attractiveness (Park, 2005).

Jones (2001) examined how adolescent girls and boys used peer influences to evaluate themselves. By examining peer influences, Jones was able to conclude that same-sex peers were heavily influential when used for evaluations regarding physical attributes such as appearance and weight, as well as personal and social attributes – noting that girls tended to engage in social comparison behavior more often than boys and this significantly contributed to body dissatisfaction (Jones, 2001). Similar to Jones, Kalnes (2013) stated that “school environment motivates weight control decisions” and that social media only allows the “school context [to] continue beyond the classroom doors; extending the influence of social comparison theory” (Kalnes, 2013, p. 19). Rudd et al. (2000) stated in their study examining body image and appearance-management behaviors in young females that females reported comparing themselves to peers on physical attributes like breast size, weight, hips, etc. These comparisons often resulted in females feeling less satisfied with their bodies, a decrease in self-esteem, and the desire to lose weight (Rudd & Lennon, 2000). In agreement with previous studies, Myers and

Crowther (2009) examined social comparison behavior as a predictor of body dissatisfaction. The authors found that comparing oneself to another directly caused body dissatisfaction, and that social comparison behavior is more prevalent in women than men, as well as inversely related to age (Myers & Crowther, 2009).

Not only does social media extend peer involvement beyond the classroom, but features through social media such as the “liking” option encourage social comparison behavior. Kalnes’ (2013) study also found that many young females were attentive to the number of likes their pictures received in comparison to the number of likes of friends’ pictures. In the study, it was noted that many of the females compared themselves to their peers, not necessarily models, increasing feelings of jealousy and decreasing their self-esteem. Participants mentioned that feelings of competitiveness arose when choosing which pictures to post and how many shares and likes their photos received (Kalnes, 2013).

Social media lends itself to not only models and celebrities but to many opportunities for users to compare themselves against their peers. Since social media is largely focused on obtaining “friends” many are indeed classmates and “real-life” friends that users may associate with on a regular basis. Social media only allows for female adolescents and young adults more opportunities and ease of access to comparisons against peers, which in turn can, and often times does, effect body satisfaction.

### **Social Media Consumption and Body Satisfaction**

Social media highlights the thin-ideal body type to females, and it also bombards users with these images daily and through mobile devices, so users have the opportunity to view these images at any given time and wherever they may be. Moreover, social media not only exposes

adolescent and young adult females to thin-ideal images but in many cases also communicates to users how to obtain the thin-ideal body type.

Pinterest is an excellent example of how social media teaches users how the thin body-type can be achieved. Pinterest houses thousands of recipes on how to become thin, how to make foods with less fat, what exercises to do in order to lose weight, detoxes that will help weight loss, and much more. However, Pinterest is not the only site giving step by step instructions for achieving the thin-ideal; Facebook is home to many pages that are centered on the theme of how to lose weight, encouraging users to become thinner. Instagram features posts encouraging weight loss and dieting as well. Countless accounts on Instagram give users tips and ideas that not only encourage weight loss but that promote extreme measures to getting what is considered an ideal body.

While outwardly promoting thinness through tips and advice, social media also espouses the thin-ideal body type through less obvious measures, such as images that focus on certain parts of the female body. For example, users on social media sites like Facebook, Pinterest, and Instagram began emphasizing female legs, specifically the female's thighs. Subsequently it became a "trend" to focus on thighs, specifically thin thighs in which women are pictured standing up, with their feet touching and sporting what came to be known as the "thigh gap." The thigh gap is the space between a female's thighs, where the thighs do not touch. Because of this trend, it became a desire for young females to obtain a "thigh gap" and many pictures began emphasizing this physical attribute in female bodies. These kinds of trends can also be seen when the "bikini bridge" became popular as well. The bikini bridge references the gap found when a female wears a bikini bottom, and the bikini bottom rests on her hip bones without touching her stomach, creating a gap between her stomach and the edge of her bikini. Although these images

of bikini bridges and thigh gaps are not necessarily giving a step-by-step tutorial on how to obtain such a physical appearance, they certainly can influence approval-seeking adolescents looking to obtain this “desirable” attribute.

Social media has a unique advantage over traditional media in that photos of the female thin body-type can be uploaded at incredible speed and transmitted to millions of viewers via different sites like Instagram and Facebook. Social media has the ability to quickly reach viewers in a way that traditional media is not necessarily able to. For example, it takes mere seconds to upload a photo on a social media site and share that photo with numerous others.

Although the relationship social media has with body satisfaction has yet to be explored by many researchers, Kalnes (2013) conducted a qualitative study that looked into how social media influences female adolescent body image. Kalnes interviewed participants and recorded their social media usage in a three-day time period in order to examine how social media impacts body image. Through this study Kalnes was able to draw the conclusion that social media plays a major role in body dissatisfaction among female adolescents and often times fuels social comparison behavior, encouraging young females to compare themselves against images seen in social media, which in this case, led to low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction (Kalnes, 2013).

While much literature exists documenting the negative impacts of traditional media images on female body perception and satisfaction, because social media is relatively new to the marketplace, there is little research on how this particular medium is utilized by adolescent and young adult women in perceiving their body and appearance. As part of the current study, the role of social media in perpetuating the thin-ideal beauty standard will be explored, with an examination of how these new mediums impact body satisfaction among adolescent and young adult females ages 15 to 24.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Social Comparison Theory**

Social comparison theory posits that people innately compare themselves with one another (Festinger, 1954); these comparisons then become crucial to an individual's self-evaluations, self-improvement, and self-enhancement (Wood, 1989). Martin et al. (1993) reported three fundamental points as being part of social comparison theory:

1. People have a drive to evaluate their opinions and abilities.
2. In the absence of objective bases for comparison, this need can be satisfied by social comparison with other people.
3. Such social comparisons will, when possible, be made with similar others. (Martin et al., 1993, p. 515).

People tend to focus on attributes they feel they lack when compared with a larger group of people, and therefore become motivated to improve themselves in those areas (Festinger, 1954). Therefore, based on the premises of social comparison theory, people who put more emphasis on certain attributes, for example weight, will then feel more pressure to obtain certain weight standards in order to fit in or belong with a certain group (Festinger, 1954). Additionally, people tend to compare themselves with other people most closely related to them (Festinger, 1954). This was demonstrated in the study previously mentioned that examined older women's social comparison behavior to fashion models in advertisements (Kozar & Damhorst, 2008). According to the authors, participants were found to be less likely to compare themselves with younger models as participants did not perceive themselves as similar to the models in terms of age (Kozar & Damhorst, 2008). However, adolescent and young adult females may indeed feel closely related to fashion models in the media, since fashion models are often young (i.e., closer

to the age, if not the same age, as the adolescent and young adult females). In this way, adolescent and young adult females may be more likely to engage in comparison behaviors that could potentially put them at risk for consequences including eating disorders, increased weight concern, body dissatisfaction, depression, and in some cases self-mutilation (Posavac et al., 1998; Stephens, Stephens, Hill, & Hanson, 1994; Thomsen et al., 2001). Among those women that use thin-ideal images in the media as a comparison tool, most likely practice upward comparison behavior, which fuels negative feelings that lead to the consequences previously mentioned.

Upward comparison is when an individual compares themselves with someone who is “more than,” for example, more attractive, more intelligent, more humorous, etc. Upward comparisons often times makes the person who is doing the comparing feel levels of decreased confidence, self-esteem, and negative feelings, as these people feel they do not measure up to whomever they may be comparing themselves with. Consequently, downward comparison behavior is when an individual compares themselves with someone who is “less than,” for example, less attractive, less intelligent, less humorous, etc. Downward comparison often times results in feelings of increased confidence, self-esteem, and positive feelings. While comparisons can create negative and positive feelings in individuals, it is determined that social comparison affects adolescents and young adults the most as this is an essential time for self-evaluations (Levinson, 1986).

Female adolescents and young adults with a predisposition to social comparison behavior not only use peers and media images to evaluate themselves against, but increase their risk of negative consequences due to this very delicate stage in their lives. Adolescence and young

adulthood play important roles in the formation of the individual self, and are critical to a person's development.

### **Lifespan Theory**

Lifespan theory is also instrumental as a lens in examining the relationship between social comparison behavior to social media images and body satisfaction among a sample of young adult women. Baltes et al. (1999) described lifespan theory as a person-centered holistic approach that, "proceeds from consideration of the person as a system and attempts to generate a knowledge base about lifespan development by describing and connecting age periods or stages of development into one overall pattern of lifetime individual development" (Baltes et al., 1999, p. 473). Similarly, Levinson (1986) described the life course as, intertwining the self with the world and the need to understand how humans at a particular time in their life cycle integrate themselves with the outside world (Levinson, 1986). As part of this study, those transitioning from adolescence into early adulthood will be studied.

This study uses female participants in the age range of 15 to 24 and examines participants in two separate groups, the younger group (15-18) and the older group (19-24), in order to observe how age plays a role in the effects of social media on body satisfaction. Although this age range falls into one generation known as Generation Y, or the "Millennials," each group could be experiencing and interpreting things differently. For example, the groups may differ on their media usage, their body satisfaction, their attitudes towards their appearance, or perhaps their social comparison behaviors. For this reason, it is important to acknowledge the specific characteristics of each group, how the groups are alike, and how the groups differ.

The participants between the ages of 15 to 18 are in the preadulthood stage while participants 17 to 18 are simultaneously in the early adult transition sub-stage. During the

preadulthood stage, adolescents experience high levels of dependency, yet are transitioning into becoming independent adults as they mature. In this stage, adolescents are also looking for ways to be individuals as they separate themselves from their family units. During the preadulthood stage which occurs during the time of infancy to 22, individuals learn to become independent and experience evolving relationships and maturity (Levinson, 1986). The early adult transition stage is a sub-stage of the overall preadulthood stage, in which people begin the transition into fully becoming an adult. As adolescents mature in both stages, it is likely that they will rely on outside sources, such as the media, to influence the types of people they would like to become and the types of characteristics they may develop. Especially as adolescent females go through this stage in their lifespan, they experience drastic changes to their body as they go through puberty. As the female body changes and young women engage in social comparison behavior, media influences of what is beautiful can have extreme and detrimental impacts on the individual's self-esteem and body image. Adolescent females in this stage have a heightened increase in awareness of culture and are more susceptible to social standards of beauty as compared to those in later stages of the lifespan (Baltes et al., 1999). As females move through adolescence and young adulthood, they develop an intensified awareness and sensitivity towards outside influences such as friends and the media in order to gain understanding and knowledge on many different aspects of life. Arguably, some of these aspects are beauty, physical appearance, and body type.

As adolescents move through the preadulthood stage, maturing during the early adult transition, they will then enter into the second stage called early adulthood. The older half of the participants studied (19-24) are categorized as in the early adulthood stage. Since the early adulthood stage technically begins around age 17 and lasts until age 45, participants will inevitably overlap between both stages (preadulthood and early adulthood) during the ages of 17

through 22. During the early adulthood stage is when the most stress and ironically the most abundance will occur. This is a time when social growth is high, forming relationships, and having an active social life. Many people in this stage will begin to form their life goals, sexuality, love, and unfortunately begin experiencing difficulties and hardships. During this stage hard choices are made regarding occupation, romantic relationships, family, and general lifestyle choices. This stage is full of more demands felt than in the previous stages and can lead to more pressure. This time is critical as peaks are often experienced during this stage (Levinson, 1986). Because of the additional stress and pressure this stage adds, young adults may be more sensitized to media images and messages of the thin-ideal. It is possible that this particular group may also feel more pressure to become an image of the “perfect body” shown in the media, perhaps participating in social comparison behavior in order to measure themselves and their growth in this stage. The pressure put on females to be attractive with the underlying message that this will bring social acceptance, could drive females to risky decision making in order to obtain the media attractiveness standard. Through the development in this stage however, young adults will mature and soon prepare to move into the midlife transition stage. Therefore, young adults in the early adulthood stage will eventually begin to feel more secure about themselves as a person as they advance through this stage, and oftentimes feel more secure in how they interpret new experiences, recover from unfortunate events, and become a mature adult.

Since these two stages overlap, they share many similarities such as individualism, forming a more concrete identity, building more relationships, maturing, and creating self-evaluations. In both stages, information is being taken in to help form these self-evaluations while aiding in creating the individualism and self-dependency. Both stages are times of sensitivity as neither age group has completely transitioned into a mid-life adult. Therefore, both

stages represent a time of particular vulnerability and impressionability. Although these stages may seem very similar, there are also differences that are important to point out. As mentioned above, the early adulthood stage is a time of stress and pressure that was not necessarily felt in the preadulthood stage. Added pressures such as forming life goals, families, perhaps even children, begin to cause major effects that are not necessarily felt in the preadulthood stage, as usually participants in that stage are more dependent on parental figures and less likely to be concerned with life goals. That being said, the early adulthood stage is a time of extreme independence, where financial responsibilities, occupational, and educational aspects become much more of a stress factor than for younger people who are still very reliant on others. However, the early adulthood stage is also a time where self-evaluations become more concrete, whereas the preadulthood stage they are just forming. The preadulthood stage also includes the transition from childhood and the first experiences of forming identity, whereas the early adulthood stage has much more of a grasp on identity and self-image.

Both stages share many similarities and differences, however, both are critical in order to examine adolescent and young adult females, in this study between the ages of 15 to 24, since they are experiencing drastic changes in their cultural ideals, independence, individualism, the need to fit in socially, physical changes to the body, and added stress and pressure.

In the study previously mentioned by Kozar and Damhorst, the relationship between social comparison behavior to media images and body satisfaction of women between the ages of 30 and 80 was examined with the use of the lifespan theory as a guiding principle (Kozar & Damhorst, 2008). Specifically, the study examined women in the early and middle adulthood stages of the lifespan and evaluated participants' body image and engagement in social comparison behavior. As part of the results, it was noted that as women age, they realized greater

body satisfaction and sense of self and were less likely to engage in social comparison behavior to media images. For this reason it was concluded that generally women in this stage of the life cycle are less affected by media portrayals of the thin-ideal seen in fashion models (Kozar & Damhorst, 2008). Through this study, it is shown that the lifespan theory is an accurate predictor in determining characteristics of a certain age group and helps to explain why certain age groups may react in differing ways. In this case, lifespan theory helps to explain a female's susceptibleness and social comparison behavior to media images.

Lifespan theory is also a particularly relevant theoretical foundation in exploring how individuals are influenced in their behavior and feelings as they progress through the life course. Lifespan theory, therefore, can be used in examining adolescent and young adult females' feelings of body satisfaction when exposed to social media and the thin-ideal. As examined in the Kozar and Damhorst (2008) study, lifespan theory can be successfully used to evaluate females in a particular stage of life and how engagement in social comparison behavior impacts body satisfaction. As part of this study, this same theoretical foundation will be used.

### **Purpose and Research Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of social media on the body satisfaction of adolescent and young adult females ages 15 to 24. Therefore, three specific research objectives were developed to guide this study:

1. To investigate how the amount of time spent on social media affects females' social comparison behavior and appearance-related attitudinal factors.
2. To examine the effects of social comparison behavior and appearance-related attitudinal factors on body satisfaction.

3. To examine the differences in time spent on social media, social comparison behavior, appearance-related attitudinal factors, and body satisfaction among younger (ages 15-18) and older (ages 19-24) adolescent and young adult females.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between time spent on social media and social comparison behavior among a sample of adolescent and young adult females between the ages of 15 to 24?
2. What is the relationship between time spent on social media and appearance-related attitudinal factors among a sample of adolescent and young adult females between the ages of 15 to 24?
3. What is the relationship between social comparison behavior and body satisfaction among a sample of adolescent and young adult females between the ages of 15 to 24?
4. What is the relationship between appearance-related attitudinal factors and body satisfaction among a sample of adolescent and young adult females between the ages of 15 to 24?
5. What is the difference in time spent on social media among participants aged 15-18 and 19-24?
6. What is the difference in engagement in social comparison behavior among participants aged 15-18 and 19-24?
7. What is the difference in appearance-related attitudes among participants aged 15-18 and 19-24?
8. What is the difference in body satisfaction among participants aged 15-18 and 19-24?

## **Research Hypotheses**

H1 (or Hypothesis 1): Participants who spend more time on social media are more likely to engage in social comparison behavior as compared to those who spend less time on social media.

H2 (or Hypothesis 2): Participants who engage in social comparison behavior are more likely to have lower body satisfaction scores as compared to those who engage less frequently in social comparison behavior.

H3 (or Hypothesis 3): Participants who spend more time on social media are more likely to have higher appearance-related attitudes as compared to those who spend less time on social media.

H4 (or Hypothesis 4): Participants with higher appearance-related attitudes are more likely to have decreased body satisfaction scores as compared to those with lower appearance-related attitudes.

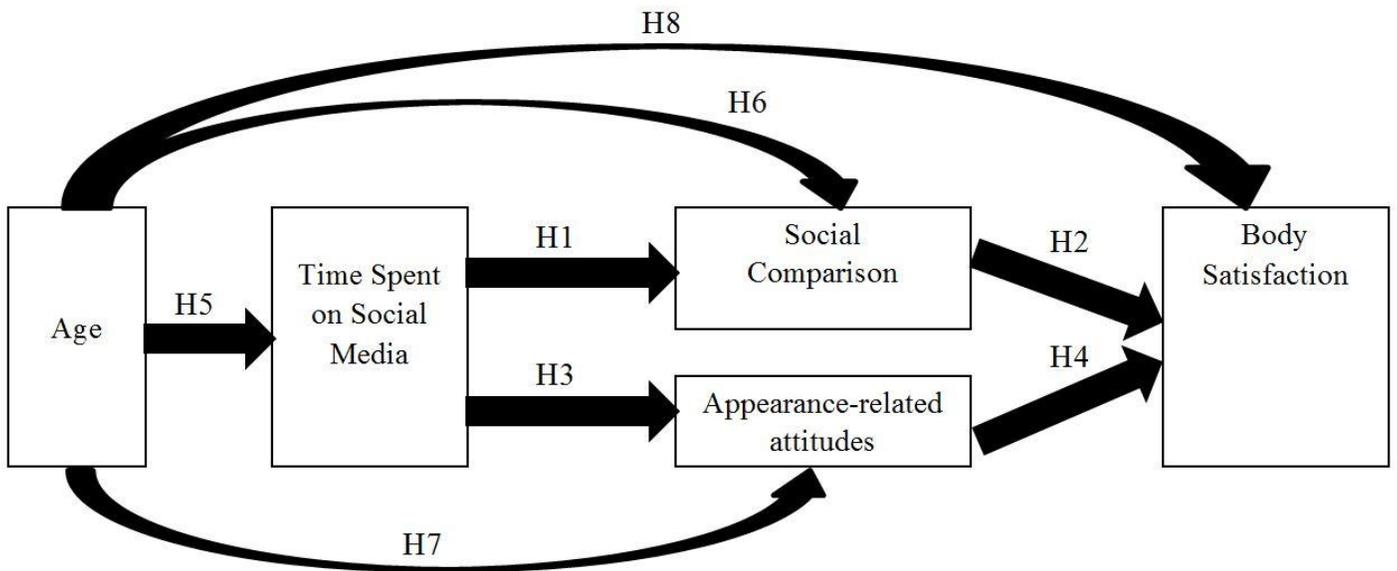
H5 (or Hypothesis 5): Younger participants (aged 15-18) will spend more time on social media than older participants (aged 19-24).

H6 (or Hypothesis 6): Younger participants (aged 15-18) will participate more in social comparison behavior than older participants (aged 19-24).

H7 (or Hypothesis 7): Younger participants (aged 15-18) will have higher appearance-related attitudes than older participants (aged 19-24).

H8 (or Hypothesis 8): Younger participants (aged 15-18) will have decreased body satisfaction than older participants (aged 19-24).

*Figure 2-6: Model of Hypotheses*



## **Chapter 3 - Method**

Chapter Three provides a detailed review of the sample, the instrumentation, and the procedure utilized in this study. Detailed explanations of the Body-Areas Satisfaction Scale, the Social Comparison towards Behavior Scale, and the Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Scale are provided. Information explaining the evaluation of time spent on social media as well as participants' demographic variables are also included followed by a description of the procedure process and a brief overview of the data analysis.

### **Sample**

Participants of this study included female high school and college students between the ages of 15 and 24. A snowball sampling approach was employed to recruit female participants with varying ages, academic backgrounds, degree fields, ethnicities, etc. The researcher used an online questionnaire that was administered through a URL link. The link was posted on the researcher's Facebook and Twitter accounts in order to gain participants and increase diversity. The researcher also contacted various professors, instructors, and students requesting that they forward the questionnaire link to others. The researcher reached out to 14 university professors and 23 high school teachers, and requested that they share the link with their students. The researcher also reached out to 21 students of various ages between 15 and 24 that could begin the snowball effect of sending out the questionnaire to other eligible participants. The questionnaire link was available for approximately five weeks, and monitored on a weekly basis to ensure an appropriate sample size was obtained. Approval from the Institutional Review Board was obtained prior to data collection.

## **Instrumentation**

The instrument used in this study was a 66-item questionnaire using the Qualtrics program. The Body-Areas Satisfaction Scale (Cash & Henry, 1995), the Engagement in Social Comparison Behavior Scale (Jones, 2001), and the Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire (Thompson, van den Berg, Roehrig, Guarda, & Heinberg, 2004) were utilized in this study in exploring the research objectives. Items measuring participants' time spent on social media and other demographic variables were also included in the research instrument. A complete copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix A.

### **Body Satisfaction**

To determine the degree in which participants are satisfied with their bodies, the Body-Areas Satisfaction Scale (BASS) was included in the questionnaire (Figure 3-6). As a part of BASS, participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with eight different attributes, including the face (facial features, complexion); hair (color, thickness, texture); lower torso (buttocks, hips, thighs, legs); mid torso (waist, stomach); upper torso (breasts, shoulders, arms); muscle tone; weight; and height (Cash & Henry, 1995). This study utilized the adaptation of the BASS scale from the Kozar and Damhorst (2008) study in which breasts were listed as a separate characteristic. According to Kozar and Damhorst, "because of physical changes that occur with age, it is conceivable that as women age, they may become dissatisfied with their breasts in ways differentiated from assessments of other upper-body attributes..." (Kozar & Damhorst, 2008, p. 203). Conversely, as women develop physically through adolescence and young adulthood, changes in breasts may potentially cause feelings of increased self-awareness, self-consciousness, and possibly the increase or decrease in satisfaction levels of this particular region of her body. In this study, the lower torso section was also divided so that each individual

characteristic was listed separately. As the buttocks, thighs, and hips tend to develop and change with puberty and continue to evolve through the process of aging, this can potentially cause similar feelings of dissatisfaction or insecurity, and it merits the separation of individual characteristics in this region of the body. In ranking each attribute, a 5-point Likert-type ordered set of options (1-very dissatisfied; 5-very satisfied) was used. Each participant was instructed to rank each attribute in terms of self-satisfaction. Internal reliability was evaluated using Cronbach’s standardized *alpha*. According to Kozar and Damhorst (2008), the internal consistency of the modified scale was .81.

**Figure 3-6: Modified BASS**

Below, please indicate how satisfied you are with each personal characteristic. Use the 5-point scale to indicate your level of satisfaction with each item.

- 1 = Very Dissatisfied
- 2 = Somewhat Dissatisfied
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Somewhat Satisfied
- 5 = Very Satisfied

	Please rank the following:				
	1 Very Dissatisfied	2 Somewhat Dissatisfied	3 Neutral	4 Somewhat Satisfied	5 Very Satisfied
FACE (facial features, complexion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HAIR (color, thickness, texture)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HIPS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
THIGHS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LEGS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
BUTTOCKS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
MID TORSO (waist, stomach)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
UPPER TORSO (shoulders, arms)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
BREASTS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
MUSCLE TONE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WEIGHT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HEIGHT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## **Social Comparison Behavior**

Participants were assessed on their likeliness to engage in social comparison behavior by how often they compare themselves to images they see in social media. Responses were based on a 5-point Likert-type ordered set of options (1-never; 5-always). Participants were asked to respond to how frequently they compare themselves with others, including friends and fashion models and celebrities. The original scale was developed by Jones (2001) to evaluate social comparison behaviors to peers. Similar to Jones, participants in this study were evaluated on how frequently they compare themselves to peers. Additionally, participants were evaluated on how often they compare themselves to fashion models and celebrities. In this study, images seen on social media were emphasized. Participants were asked to respond to how often they compare themselves with others based on height, weight, shape, face, hair, style, and attractiveness (Figure 3-7). For this scale, an alpha ranging from .83 to .89 was deemed acceptable in the Kozar and Damhorst study and yielded reliable results (Kozar & Damhorst, 2008). In addition to the scales, items were added to measure how participants compare themselves to images in social media based on “likes”. Statements were ranked on a five-point Likert-type scale (1-strongly disagree; 5-strongly agree). An example of a statement used was, “I feel jealous if a friend’s picture on social media gets more ‘likes’ than my picture”. These particular statements enabled the researcher to gain insight into how participants used images in social media to compare themselves against. The statements were not taken from a pre-existing scale.

**Figure 3-7: Modified Social Comparison Behavior Scale**

Regarding the physical features listed below, please rate how frequently you compare yourself **to your friends on social media** (Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, etc.).

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Rarely
- 3 = Sometimes
- 4 = Fairly Often
- 5 = Always

Regarding the physical features listed below, please rate how frequently you compare yourself to **fashion models and celebrities** on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.).

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Rarely
- 3 = Sometimes
- 4 = Fairly Often
- 5 = Always

	Please rank the following:				
	1 Never	2 Rarely	3 Sometimes	4 Fairly Often	5 Always
HEIGHT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WEIGHT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SHAPE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FACE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HAIR	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
STYLE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ATTRACTIVENESS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## **Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance**

In order to evaluate participants' attitudes towards their body, an adaptation of the Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire (SATAQ) was used. This scale was "developed to assess women's recognition and acceptance of societally sanctioned standards of appearance" (Heinberg, Heinberg, Thompson, & Stormer, 1995, p.81). The SATAQ-3 used by Thompson et al. (2004) to test females and their attitudes towards their bodies was utilized in this study to evaluate adolescent and young adult females' perceptions of their body image (Thompson et al., 2004). The SATAQ-3 is a slightly modified version of the original SATAQ to include measurements of athleticism and media influences on female body image (Thompson et al., 2004). The scale includes statements such as, "I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to have a perfect body," "I would like my body to look like the models who appear in magazines," and "I've felt pressure from TV or magazines to lose weight." The SATAQ-3 focuses heavily on media which is relevant to this study. Since the focus of this study is images seen in social media, the SATAQ-3 was modified so that terminology regarding "media" stated "social media" in its place. The SATAQ-3 also focuses on athletic and fit bodies which are not as pertinent to the current study, therefore questions regarding athleticism were not included, and statements were modified to reflect "thin" body types instead. For example, participants in this study were asked to rank their level of agreement with the following statement, "I wish I looked as thin as fashion models and celebrities on social media" which was altered from the original statement, "I wish I looked as athletic as the people in magazines" (Figure 3-8). This scale was important as it helped determine levels of body satisfaction and the attitudes the participants have towards their bodies. This scale also addresses pressures felt from social media to be thin as well as

comparisons to thin body types seen in social media. An alpha ranging from .89 to .94 was found acceptable and yielded reliable results (Thompson et al., 2004).

**Figure 3-8: Modified SATAQ**

Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement below using the 5-point scale.

For these questions, social media users can include your family members and friends, celebrities and fashion models, and other popular social media users (such as popular bloggers, etc.). Social media includes all the major social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, Twitter, etc.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

	Please rank the following:				
	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
Social media is an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive".	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've felt pressure from social media to lose weight.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like my body to look like the people who are on my social media accounts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I compare my body to the bodies of people popular on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've felt pressure from social media to look pretty.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like my body to look like the fashion models and celebrities who appear in social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I compare my appearance to the appearance of people popular on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've felt pressure from social media to be thin.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've felt pressure from social media to have a perfect body.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I wish I looked like the models in my social media accounts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I compare my appearance to the appearance of people in social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've felt pressure from social media to diet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I compare my body to that of people in "good shape" on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Images in social media are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive".	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've felt pressure from social media to exercise.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I wish I looked as thin as fashion models and celebrities on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I compare my body to that of people who are thin on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to look like the people on my social media accounts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## **Participants' Time Spent on Social Media**

Participants' time spent on social media was evaluated through a series of statements that determined how much time the participants spend on social media on a daily basis. Statements evaluated for what purposes participants use social media, on what type of medium, i.e. computer or phone, for what lengths of time, and how many times participants look at their social media accounts on a daily basis. Two statements specifically evaluated time which included, "I check my social media accounts \_\_\_ amounts of time per day" and "On average, I spend \_\_\_ amount of time on social media per day." Statements also evaluated what social media accounts users were accessing and ranked their top three accounts they utilized the most. Additionally, statements evaluated for what purposes participants generally use their social media accounts.

## **Demographic Information**

Demographic information was obtained from participants using a series of general questions including: "What is your gender?", "What is your age?", "Are you currently enrolled in school?", "What is your highest level of education?", "To which racial or ethnic group do you most identify?", "Do you own a smart phone?", and "Do you have access to or own a computer?" A screening question was used to verify all participants were within the target group being studied, i.e., female and between the ages of 15 and 24, before they could move forward to take the survey. The screening question stated, "Are you a female between the ages of 15 and 24?" with a yes or no response option; upon clicking "no" the survey would end, while clicking "yes" allowed participants to move forward to the first question.

## Procedure

This study used a quantitative methods approach. The instrumentation used to collect the data was a 66-item questionnaire that was administered via a URL link. The questionnaire cover page explained the nature of the study and participants' rights. Participants' responses were anonymous and only the primary researcher and supervising faculty member had access to the data.

Participants were recruited through the researcher, professors, instructors, and students. The researcher posted the link to her Facebook and Twitter accounts. The link included a short post explaining the study (Appendix B). The researcher also reached out to 14 university level professors and 23 high school instructors, and requested that they share the link with their students and/or forward the link to others that may be able to recruit additional participants. The link was emailed to these professors and instructors with a short explanation of the study (Appendix B). The researcher also contacted 21 students of various ages between 15 and 24 that were willing to help promote the questionnaire via social media and/or email. The researcher highly encouraged the sharing of the link to others that fit the profile of the sample.

The researcher monitored the sample size through the questionnaire program, Qualtrics. The questionnaire remained open for a five week time period and was monitored on a weekly basis.

## Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed in several ways. A frequency test was run for each variable in order to ensure the number of participants and that there were no mistakes in the data, for example skipped questions or missing information. Descriptive statistics were calculated for each variable and Cronbach's *alpha* was utilized to assess the internal reliability of each scale. A

regression analysis was run to examine relationships between the variables and coordinating hypotheses to test for significance levels. These variables included the effects of time spent on social media and participants' social comparison and appearance-related attitudinal scores, and the effects of appearance-related attitudes and social comparison behavior on body satisfaction. Independent sample t-tests were used to examine results based on participants' age and split into two separate groups, the younger group (15-18) and the older group (19-24). Each variable was examined in relation to age in order to compare the differences between female adolescents and young adults.

## Chapter 4 - Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of social media on the body satisfaction of adolescent and young adult females. Three specific objectives drove the data collection:

1. To investigate how the amount of time spent on social media affects females' social comparison behavior and appearance-related attitudinal factors.
2. To examine the effects of social comparison behavior and appearance-related attitudinal factors on body satisfaction.
3. To examine the differences in time spent on social media, social comparison behavior, appearance-related attitudinal factors, and body satisfaction among younger (ages 15-18) and older (ages 19-24) adolescent and young adult females.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each variable and Cronbach's *alpha* was utilized to assess the internal reliability of each scale. Each scale had multiple items that were combined in order to create a summed mean score per scale, for a total of four summed variables.

Regression analysis was run to examine relationships between the variables and coordinating hypotheses to test for significance. These variables included the effects of time spent on social media and participants' social comparison and appearance-related attitudinal scores, and the effects of appearance-related attitudes and social comparison behavior on body satisfaction.

Independent sample *t*-tests were used to examine differences among the two age groups, with the younger group being those between the ages of 14-18 and the older group including participants between the ages of 19-25. Each summed variable was examined in relation to age in order to compare the differences between female adolescents and young adults.

## Descriptive Statistics

### Overview of Sample

A total of 357 female respondents between the ages of 14 and 25 years old participated in the study. Of the 357 participants, 140 (39.2%) were in the age category of 14-18 and 217 (60.8%) were in the age category of 19-25. One participant marked their age as 14.5 and one participant marked their age as 25, therefore the two samples were labeled “14-18” for the younger group and “19-25” for the older group in order to include these two participants in the analysis. The mean age of participants was 19 years old. The majority of participants indicated they were currently enrolled in school (96.1%). The majority of participants were Caucasian/White (85.4%), with the second highest ethnicity group being Hispanic (5.3%), and the remaining participants belonging to African-American, Asian Pacific, European, and Islander ethnicities. Participants’ level of education ranged from middle school to master’s degree. The majority of participants indicated their highest level of education as some college,  $n = 160$  (44.8%), and high school,  $n = 121$  (33.9%). Almost all of the participants (99.4%) were currently living in the US at the time of data collection. Frequency results for respondents’ reported demographic characteristics are included in Table 4-1.

**Table 4-1**  
**Frequency Results for Respondents' Demographic Characteristics (n = 357)**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>Age</i>		
14-18 years old	140	39.2
19-25 years old	217	60.8
<i>Currently Enrolled in School</i>		
Yes	343	96.1
No	14	3.9
<i>Highest Level of Education</i>		
Middle School	5	1.4
High School	121	33.9
Some College	160	44.8
Associate's Degree	20	5.6
Bachelor's Degree	43	12.0
Master's Degree	7	2.0
<i>Race/Ethnic Group</i>		
Caucasian/White	305	85.4
Hispanic	19	5.3
African-American	10	2.8
Asian Pacific	10	2.8
Other	8	2.2
European	4	1.1
Islander	1	.3
<i>Currently living in U.S.</i>		
Yes	355	99.4
No	2	.6

## **Reliability of Measures**

### **Body Satisfaction**

The internal reliability of the Body Areas Satisfaction Scale (BASS) was found to be consistent with the reliability reported by Kozar and Damhorst (2008). A Cronbach's *alpha* on multiple-item measures (12 items) of .89 was reported for the modified BASS utilized in this study. Kozar and Damhorst reported a Cronbach's *alpha* of .81 (Kozar & Damhorst, 2008),

therefore, reported reliability of this modified scale exceeded previous research findings of the BASS. The computed mean score for the summed *mean* variable was reported as 3.3 ( $SD = .78$ ), signifying that overall, participants felt neutral towards their body satisfaction. Results recorded in Table 4-2 outline individual mean scores for each variable. According to the mean scores of each variable, participants were most satisfied with their hair ( $M = 4.11$ ). Following hair, participants were also fairly satisfied with their height and facial features, scoring a *mean* of 3.88 and 3.83, respectively. Not surprisingly according to past research (Kozar & Damhorst, 2008), participants were most dissatisfied with their weight and mid torso scoring the lowest *mean* scores on the scale of 2.86 and 2.69, respectively. These scores correspond to “somewhat dissatisfied” as outlined in the scale. The remaining mean scores for each body characteristic including breasts, upper torso, hips, legs, buttocks, muscle tone, and thighs are reported below in Table 4-2, and overall indicate neutrality.

**Table 4-2**  
**Descriptive Statistics for Body Areas Satisfaction Scale**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
HAIR (color, thickness, texture)	356	4.11	.96
HEIGHT	357	3.88	1.02
FACE (facial features, complexion)	357	3.83	.90
BREASTS	357	3.50	1.13
UPPER TORSO (shoulders, arms)	357	3.35	1.14
HIPS	355	3.34	1.15
LEGS	355	3.31	1.21
BUTTOCKS	354	3.24	1.20
MUSCLE TONE	356	2.98	1.11
THIGHS	357	2.94	1.26
WEIGHT	357	2.86	1.32
MID TORSO (waist, stomach)	357	2.69	1.31

Scores were based on a 1-5 scale, with “1” reflecting very dissatisfied and “5” reflecting very satisfied.

### **Social Comparison Behavior**

The internal reliability of the social comparison behavior scale was found to be consistent with previous reports of reliability. Kozar and Damhorst (2008) reported an *alpha* ranging from .83 to .89 (Kozar & Damhorst, 2008). In this study the social comparison behavior scale was modified in two different ways to measure participants’ comparisons against two different groups, fashion models and celebrities and peers. The first scale measured comparisons made by participants to fashion models and celebrities. The second scale measured comparisons made by participants to their peers (worded as friends in the questionnaire). The social comparison behavior scale measuring fashion model and celebrity comparisons yielded a Cronbach’s *alpha* of .89 (7 items), falling within the *alpha* range of .83 to .89 reported by Kozar and Damhorst.

The social comparison behavior scale measuring peer comparisons yielded a Cronbach’s *alpha* of .87 (7 items), which also fell within the range of the reported *alpha* range of .83 to .89 by Kozar and Damhorst (Kozar & Damhorst, 2008). The computed *mean* scores for each of the scales were 3.06 (*SD*=.86) for social comparison behavior to fashion models and celebrities and 3.05 (*SD*=.87) for social comparison behavior to peers. According to these scores, participants “sometimes” compare themselves to each group. The *mean* scores of 3.06 and 3.05 both signify “sometimes” as outlined in the scale and indicate that comparisons are only made sometimes towards fashion models and celebrities and peers. Mean comparison scores on each individual item are noted in Table 4-3 and Table 4-4 below.

**Table 4-3**  
***Descriptive Statistics for Social Comparison Behavior to Fashion Models and Celebrities***

<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
ATTRACTIVENESS	355	3.48	1.11
STYLE	355	3.39	1.18
SHAPE	355	3.21	1.14
FACE	355	3.15	1.14
WEIGHT	355	3.06	1.20
HAIR	354	3.03	1.20
HEIGHT	355	2.11	1.10

Scores were based on a 1-5 scale, with “1” reflecting never and “5” reflecting always.

According to the mean scores in Table 4-3, participants compared themselves with fashion models and celebrities mostly on attractiveness and style, showing a *mean* score of 3.48 and 3.39, respectively. Participants indicated they rarely compared their height (*M* = 2.11) to fashion models and celebrities and stayed fairly neutral on the remaining characteristics noting they only “sometimes” made comparisons to their shape, face, weight, and hair. According to the mean scores in Table 4-4, participants also compared themselves with their peers mostly on attractiveness and style, showing a *mean* score of 3.48 and 3.34, respectively. Participants also

indicated they rarely compared their height ( $M = 2.14$ ) with their peers, and stayed fairly neutral for the remaining characteristics, only indicating they “sometimes” compared shape, weight, face, and hair to their peers. Both scales had very similar mean values indicating that adolescent and young adult females compared themselves fairly equally to fashion models and celebrities as they do to their peers. This could indicate that comparisons are made regardless of the person and that peer comparisons are just as common as fashion model and celebrity comparisons.

**Table 4-4**  
**Descriptive Statistics for Social Comparison Behavior to Peers**

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
ATTRACTIVENESS	353	3.48	1.07
STYLE	352	3.34	1.11
SHAPE	352	3.18	1.13
WEIGHT	353	3.14	1.20
FACE	353	3.10	1.09
HAIR	353	2.95	1.11
HEIGHT	353	2.14	1.13

Scores were based on a 1-5 scale, with “1” reflecting never and “5” reflecting always.

### **Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance**

The internal reliability of the Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance scale (SATAQ) was found to be consistent with previous research. A Cronbach’s *alpha* of .96 was reported for this multi-item measure (18 items), exceeding the previous *alpha* range of .89 to .94 reported by Thompson et al. (Thompson et al., 2004). The computed *mean* score for this scale was reported as 3.31 ( $SD = .92$ ). According to this overall mean score, participants felt mostly neutral about their appearance-related attitudes, measured by agreement with statements made in the scale. However, mean scores varied according to each statement as displayed in Table 4-5. Participants tended to indicate agreement with statements such as, “*I compare my body to that of people in ‘good shape’ on social media*” and “*I’ve felt pressure from social media to look pretty,*” with

*mean* scores of 3.69 and 3.66, respectively. Participants also agreed with statements such as, “*I compare my appearance to the appearance of people in social media,*” “*I’ve felt pressure from social media to exercise,*” and “*I’ve felt pressure from social media to have a perfect body.*” *Mean* scores for these statements were 3.50, 3.49, and 3.47, respectively and indicate that social media puts pressure on adolescent females and young adults to attain physical attractiveness. For the remaining statements, scores were rather consistent, with the lowest *mean* scores of a 2.96 and a 2.78, corresponding to disagreement with the statements, “*I wish I looked as thin as fashion models and celebrities on social media*” and “*I try to look like the people on my social media accounts*” indicating that adolescent and young adult females, although pressured, do not necessarily wish to look like the images seen on social media.

**Table 4-5**  
**Descriptive Statistics for Sociocultural Attitudes towards Appearance Scale**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
I compare my body to that of people in "good shape" on social media.	354	3.69	1.07
I've felt pressure from social media to look pretty.	354	3.66	1.11
I compare my appearance to the appearance of people in social media.	353	3.50	1.10
I've felt pressure from social media to exercise.	353	3.49	1.14
I've felt pressure from social media to have a perfect body.	353	3.47	1.22
I've felt pressure from social media to be thin.	352	3.41	1.26
I compare my body to the bodies of people popular on social media.	354	3.41	1.18
I compare my appearance to the appearance of people popular on social media.	354	3.38	1.12
Social media is an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive".	352	3.36	1.08
Images in social media are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive".	354	3.28	1.20
I've felt pressure from social media to lose weight.	354	3.26	1.29
I would like my body to look like the people who are on my social media accounts.	354	3.23	1.17
I would like my body to look like the fashion models and celebrities who appear in social media.	352	3.21	1.25
I compare my body to that of people who are thin on social media.	354	3.19	1.23
I've felt pressure from social media to diet.	352	3.13	1.30
I wish I looked like the models in my social media accounts.	353	3.11	1.27
I wish I looked as thin as fashion models and celebrities on social media.	353	2.96	1.33
I try to look like the people on my social media accounts.	354	2.78	1.20

Scores were based on a 1-5 scale, with "1" reflecting strongly disagree and "5" reflecting strongly agree.

## Time Spent on Social Media

Time spent on social media was evaluated by two questions. The first question stated, “*I check my social media accounts \_\_\_ amounts of time per day*” and displayed eight potential response options including: less than 5; 5; 10; 15; 20; 25; 30; and More than 30. The second question used to assess time spent on social media stated, “*On average, I spend \_\_\_ amount of time on social media per day*” and displayed eight potential response options including: less than 1 hour; 1 hour; 2 hours; 3 hours; 4 hours; 5 hours; more than 5 hours; and other. Table 4-6 displays the frequencies and percentages of the amount of time social media accounts are checked daily. As evidenced in Table 4-6, the majority of participants check their accounts between 5 and 15 times a day, however, interestingly over 10% of the sample indicated checking their accounts more than 30 times daily.

**Table 4-6**  
***Frequency Results for Amount of Time Social Media Checked Daily (N = 356)***

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
less than 5	52	14.6
5	74	20.7
10	58	16.2
15	60	16.8
20	26	7.3
25	19	5.3
30	29	8.1
more than 30	38	10.6

Table 4-7 displays frequencies and percentages of the amount of time participants spend on their accounts daily. For the most part, participants spend less than three hours a day on social media; however 9.5% of the participants indicated spending at least four hours or more a day on their social media accounts.

**Table 4-7**  
**Frequency Results for Amount of Time Spent on Social Media Daily (N = 356)**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Less than 1 hour	40	11.2
1 hour	114	31.9
2 hours	68	19.0
3 hours	31	8.7
4 hours	15	4.2
5 hours	15	4.2
more than 5 hours	4	1.1
Other	69	19.3

### **Participants' Use of Social Media**

Participants' use of social media was measured by a variety of questions including, how "likes" on social media affected participants and what types of social media participants used. Table 4-8 displays the frequency and percentage results of these questions. It was clear that number of likes definitely played an important role for participants, with almost half of the participants indicating that they felt dissatisfied if a picture they upload of themselves did not receive the amount of likes they wanted. However, participants in general felt neutral about the number of likes their picture received. When it came to feelings of jealousy about a friend's photo receiving more likes than their photo, participants indicated that overall, they did not feel very jealous. Although in general participants did not have feelings of jealousy, approximately 34.2% of the participants did feel jealous if a friend's photo received more likes than their own photo. Overall, participants felt they needed between 30 and 40 likes on a photo in order to feel satisfied, which is interesting considering the previous question that participants answered as feeling "neutral" if a photo did not receive the amount of likes they wanted. This could be that participants do indeed have a "number" of likes that they would like on their photos, but may not admit to feeling dissatisfied if a photo does not receive this amount. This could mean that

participants may also perceive likes as approval, which could determine levels of self-esteem, but perhaps participants do not necessarily want to admit to caring about number of likes as the discrepancy in the answers of these two questions points out.

Participants are not only paying attention to likes, but almost all (98.3%) of the participants indicated using social media on their smart phones versus 73.3% that indicated using social media on their computers. This indicates that participants access their social media accounts fairly regularly on a mobile basis and have access potentially multiple times a day. This is in line with further data that indicated 93.6% check their social media on a daily basis.

**Table 4-8**  
**Frequency Results for Social Media Usages**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<i>If a picture I upload of myself onto social media does not get the number of “likes” I want I feel dissatisfied.</i>		
Strongly Disagree	49	13.7
Disagree	63	17.6
Neutral	70	19.6
Agree	129	36.1
Strongly Agree	46	12.9
<i>I feel jealous if a friend’s picture on social media gets more “likes” than my picture.</i>		
Strongly Disagree	72	20.2
Disagree	84	23.5
Neutral	79	22.1
Agree	100	28.0
Strongly Agree	22	6.2
<i>In order to feel good about the amount of “likes” I receive on a picture I upload of myself, I must have at least ____ amount of likes.</i>		
Less than 10	48	13.4
10	59	16.5
20	63	17.6
30	34	9.5
40	36	10.1
50	23	6.4
More than 50	40	11.2
More than 100	18	5.0
Other	34	9.5
<i>I use social media accounts on my computer.</i>		
Yes	263	73.7
No	94	26.3
<i>I use social media accounts on my smart phone.</i>		
Yes	351	98.3
No	6	1.7
<i>I look at my social media accounts on a daily basis.</i>		
Yes	334	93.6
No	23	6.4

*I belong to the following social media accounts (please select all that apply):*

Facebook	333	93.3
Snapchat	328	91.9
Instagram	305	85.4
Pinterest	284	79.6
Twitter	278	77.9
Vine	128	35.9
LinkedIn	119	33.3
Google+	72	20.2
Other	27	7.6
Badoo	4	1.1

*I check my social media accounts as soon as I wake up.*

Yes	202	56.6
No	125	42.6

*I check my social media accounts before I go to bed.*

Yes	315	88.2
No	42	11.8

*I do not go more than 24 hours without checking my social media accounts.*

Yes	270	75.6
No	86	24.1

*I generally use my social media to... (please choose all that apply)*

Look at pictures	338	94.7
Talk with friends	306	85.7
Upload pictures	284	79.6
Stay in touch with family	237	66.4
Receive fashion advice	149	41.7
Keep up with celebrities	120	33.6
Meet new people	68	19.0
Blog	49	13.7
Other	19	5.3

Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and Twitter were all popular social media choices among participants, which corresponds with previous research (Statistic Brain, 2014). However, what is interesting to note is the usage of Snapchat. Snapchat rivaled Facebook in number of users by a difference of only five participants. While Facebook still claimed the number one spot with

93.3% of the participants, Snapchat is quickly gaining popularity with 91.9% of the participants. Snapchat was not included in any previous research and was initially released in 2011 versus Facebook, which was launched in 2004. This shows the popularity of Snapchat in a relatively short amount of time. Finally, the data indicates 88.2% of users check their social media accounts before bed and primarily use social media to look at photos, talk with friends, and upload pictures.

In summary, participants indicated a fairly neutral body satisfaction score with particular satisfaction with characteristics including hair, height, and facial features, and dissatisfaction with weight and mid torso. Participants, for the most part, only sometimes compared themselves with fashion models and celebrities and peers, and were most likely to compare attractiveness and style, and least likely to compare height. Participants also were rather neutral on their attitudes towards their appearance, however, showed slight agreement with statements indicating pressure felt from social media and comparisons to social media images. Interestingly enough, participants indicated they did not wish to look as thin as media images – despite feeling pressured to look a certain way. Overall, participants checked their social media accounts between 5 and 15 times a day, spending around 3 or less hours daily on their social media accounts. Participants generally checked accounts before bed and upon waking, spending time looking at photos, and uploading photos of themselves. Finally, they most favored image based sites like Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram.

### **Regression Analysis**

Simple linear regression analyses were employed to explore the relationships between the variables of body satisfaction, social comparison behavior, appearance-related attitudes, and time spent on social media. Results from these analyses are presented below with the corresponding

hypothesis.

*H1 (or Hypothesis 1): Participants who spend more time on social media are more likely to engage in social comparison behavior as compared to those who spend less time on social media.*

Simple linear regression analysis was performed to assess the impact of time spent on social media to engagement in social comparison behavior. Time was measured by two independent variables: the amount of times participants check their social media accounts per day and the average time spent on social media daily. The summed score of the social comparison behavior scale was used as the dependent variable. Separate summed scores were used to assess participants' social comparison behavior towards fashion models and celebrities and social comparison behavior to peers. The results indicated some interesting findings. A significant positive relationship existed between the number of times participants checked their social media accounts per day and social comparison behavior to fashion models and celebrities (Table 4-9). In other words, the more times participants accessed their social media accounts per day, the more tendency they had to engage in social comparison behavior to fashion models and celebrities ( $F = 8.23, p < .01$ ). However, interestingly, as shown in Table 4-10, the amount of time spent on social media was not a significant predictor of participants' social comparison behavior to fashion models and celebrities ( $F = .457, p > .05$ ). Further, as seen in Table 4-11, a significant positive relationship was found between the number of times participants accessed their social media accounts per day and their social comparison behavior to peers ( $F = 4.68, p < .05$ ). This suggests that those participants checking their social media accounts more frequently per day have a greater tendency to engage in social comparison behavior to peers. However,

again, as indicated by Table 4-12, time spent on social media per day was not a significant predictor of social comparison behavior to peers ( $F = .001, p > .05$ ). Therefore, based on these findings, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported. Overall, it was determined that the more times participants accessed their social media accounts daily, regardless of actual time spent on social media, the more likely they are to engage in social comparison behavior towards both fashion models and celebrities and peers.

**Table 4-9**  
*Regression Analysis of Amount of Times Social Media Accounts Checked and Social Comparison Behavior to Fashion Models and Celebrities*

<i>Source</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Regression</b>	1	5.93	5.93	8.23	.004
<b>Residual</b>	352	253.43	.72		
<b>Total</b>	353	259.35			

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
I check my social media accounts ____ amounts of time per day.	.06	.02	.15	2.87	.004*

\*p<.01

**Table 4-10**  
*Regression Analysis of Time Spent on Social Media and Social Comparison Behavior to Fashion Models and Celebrities*

<i>Source</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Regression</b>	1	.336	.336	.457	.5
<b>Residual</b>	352	259.02	.74		
<b>Total</b>	353	259.35			

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
On average, I spend ____ amount of time on social media per day.	.01	.02	.04	.68	.5

**Table 4-11**

**Regression Analysis of Amount of Times Social Media Accounts Checked and Social Comparison Behavior to Peers**

<i>Source</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Regression</b>	1	3.52	3.52	4.68	.031
<b>Residual</b>	351	263.98	.75		
<b>Total</b>	352	267.5			

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
I check my social media accounts ____ amounts of time per day.	.05	.02	.12	2.16	.03*

\*p<.05

**Table 4-12**

**Regression Analysis of Time Spent on Social Media and Social Comparison Behavior to Peers**

<i>Source</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Regression</b>	1	.001	.001	.001	.97
<b>Residual</b>	351	267.5	.76		
<b>Total</b>	352	267.5			

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
On average, I spend ____ amount of time on social media per day.	.00	.02	.00	.04	.97

*H2 (or Hypothesis 2): Participants who engage in social comparison behavior are more likely to have lower body satisfaction scores as compared to those who engage less frequently in social comparison behavior.*

Simple linear regression analysis was performed to assess the relationship between social comparison behavior and body satisfaction. Social comparison behavior was measured by two independent variables: social comparison behavior towards fashion models and celebrities and social comparison behavior towards peers. The summed score of the BASS scale was used as the dependent variable. As indicated by Table 4-13, a significant inverse relationship between social comparison behavior to fashion models and celebrities and body satisfaction was observed ( $F = 40.98, p < .0001$ ), meaning those participants engaging more frequently in social comparison

behavior towards fashion models and celebrities have lower body satisfaction scores as compared to those who engage less frequently in social comparison behavior to fashion models and celebrities. As indicated by Table 4-14, there was also a significant inverse relationship between social comparison behavior towards peers and body satisfaction ( $F = 83.36, p < .0001$ ), meaning that those participants engaging more frequently in social comparison behavior to peers have lower body satisfaction scores as compared to those who engage less frequently in social comparison behavior to peers. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported. Based on this analysis, it can be determined that the practice of social comparison behavior towards fashion models and celebrities and peers are significant predictors of body satisfaction.

**Table 4-13**  
**Regression Analysis of Social Comparison Behavior towards Fashion Models and Celebrities and Body Satisfaction**

<i>Source</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Regression</b>	1	22.37	22.37	40.98	.00
<b>Residual</b>	353	192.65	.55		
<b>Total</b>	354	215.02			

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Social comparison towards fashion models and celebrities	-.29	.05	-.32	-6.40	.00*

\*p<.0001

**Table 4-14**  
**Regression Analysis of Social Comparison Behavior towards Peers and Body Satisfaction**

<i>Source</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Regression</b>	1	41.46	41.46	83.36	.00
<b>Residual</b>	351	174.57	.497		
<b>Total</b>	352	216.02			

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Social Comparison towards peers	-.39	.04	-.44	-9.13	.00*

\*p<.0001

*H3 (or Hypothesis 3): Participants who spend more time on social media are more likely to have higher appearance-related attitudes as compared to those who spend less time on social media.*

Simple linear regression analysis was performed to assess the impact of time spent on social media and appearance-related attitudes. Time was measured by two independent variables: amount of times participants check their social media accounts per day and average time spent on social media daily. The summed score of the SATAQ scale was used as the dependent variable. The resulting analysis showed an insignificant relationship among these variables. The number of times participants accessed their social media accounts per day was not a significant predictor of participants' appearance-related attitudes ( $F = 2.64, p > .05$ ) (Table 4-15). Additionally, the amount of time spent on social media per day was also not a significant predictor of participants' appearance-related attitudes ( $F = .95, p > .05$ ) (Table 4-16). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was not supported. However, although not significant, it should be noted that a positive relationship existed among these variables. In other words, those participants checking their social media accounts more times per day and on average spent more time on social media per day, held higher appearance-related attitudes as compared to those with lower appearance-related attitudes.

**Table 4-15**  
**Regression Analysis of Amount of Times Social Media Accounts Checked and Appearance-related Attitudes**

<i>Source</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Regression</b>	1	2.21	2.21	2.64	.12
<b>Residual</b>	351	294.17	.84		
<b>Total</b>	352	296.38			

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
I check my social media accounts ____ amounts of time per day.	.04	.02	.09	1.63	.11

**Table 4-16**  
**Regression Analysis of Time Spent on Social Media and Appearance-related Attitudes**

<i>Source</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Regression</b>	1	.8	.8	.95	.33
<b>Residual</b>	351	295.58	.84		
<b>Total</b>	352	296.38			

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
On average, I spend ____ amount of time on social media per day.	.02	.02	.05	.97	.33

*H4 (or Hypothesis 4): Participants with higher appearance-related attitudes are more likely to have decreased body satisfaction scores as compared to those with lower appearance-related attitudes.*

Simple linear regression analysis was performed to assess the relationship between participants' appearance-related attitudes and body satisfaction. The summed score of the SATAQ scale was used as the independent variable while the summed score of the BASS scale was used as the dependent variable. The resulting analysis, as indicated in Table 4-17, showed a significant inverse relationship among the two variables. In other words, participants who held stronger appearance-related attitudes had lower body satisfaction scores ( $F = 134.56, p < .0001$ ) as compared to those with lower appearance-related attitudes. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

**Table 4-17**  
**Regression Analysis of Appearance-related Attitudes and Body Satisfaction**

<i>Source</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Regression</b>	1	59.09	59.09	134.56	.0001
<b>Residual</b>	352	154.56	.44		
<b>Total</b>	353	213.65			

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
SATAQ	-.45	.04	-.53	-11.60	.0001*

\*p<.0001

## Independent Samples *T*-Tests

Independent sample *t*-tests were used to compare the mean scores of the variables among the two age groups of participants, including time spent on social media, social comparison behavior, appearance-related attitudes, and body satisfaction. Participants aged 14 through 18 were categorized as younger participants, with those aged 19 through 25 categorized as older participants. Independent sample *t*-tests were run to test Hypothesis 5 through 8 as indicated below:

*H5 (or Hypothesis 5): Younger participants (aged 14-18) will spend more time on social media than older participants (aged 19-25).*

*H6 (or Hypothesis 6): Younger participants (aged 14-18) will participate more in social comparison behavior than older participants (aged 19-25).*

*H7 (or Hypothesis 7): Younger participants (aged 14-18) will have higher appearance-related attitudes than older participants (aged 19-25).*

*H8 (or Hypothesis 8): Younger participants (aged 14-18) will have decreased body satisfaction than older participants (aged 19-25).*

Based on the analysis of the independent sample *t*-tests, Hypotheses H5 through H8 were not supported. However, a significant difference between the two age groups regarding their body satisfaction scores ( $t= 2.20, p < .05$ ), revealed that older participants are significantly less satisfied with their body as compared to the younger participants which was actually opposite of that originally hypothesized. Further, as shown in Table 4-18, a comparison of the mean scores reveals that younger participants reported spending less time on social media, including the number of times they access their social media accounts per day, as compared to the older participants. Additionally, younger participants also had slightly lower mean scores regarding

their tendency to engage in social comparison behavior to fashion models and celebrities and peers. There was also a negligible difference in the mean scores between the two age groups regarding their appearance related attitudes. These differences in scores among the two age groups will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

**Table 4-18**  
**Independent Sample T-tests**

	<i>n</i>	Mean	Std. dev.	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>H5: Younger participants (aged 14-18) will spend more time on social media than older participants (aged 19-25).</i>				-1.60	.110
Younger group					
Avg. time spent on social media	139	3.52	2.22		
Older group					
Avg. time spent on social media	217	3.93	2.53		
<i>H5: Younger participants (aged 14-18) will spend more time on social media than older participants (aged 19-25).</i>				-.531	.596
Younger group					
Amount of times social media checked daily	139	3.76	2.22		
Older group					
Amount of times social media checked daily	217	3.88	2.26		
<i>H6: Younger participants (aged 14-18) will participate more in social comparison behavior than older participants (aged 19-25).</i>				-.728	.467
Younger group					
Social Comparison to Fashion Models and Celebrities	138	3.02	.834		
Older group					
Social Comparison to Fashion Models and Celebrities	217	3.09	.871		
<i>H6: Younger participants (aged 14-18) will participate more in social comparison behavior than older participants (aged 19-25).</i>				-.064	.949
Younger group					
Social Comparison to Peers	139	3.04	.868		
Older group					
Social Comparison to Peers	214	3.05	.876		
<i>H7: Younger participants (aged 14-18) will have higher appearance-related attitudes than older participants (aged 19-25).</i>				-.091	.928
Younger group (SATAQ)	140	3.30	.919		
Older group (SATAQ)	214	3.31	.918		
<i>H8: Younger participants (aged 14-18) will have decreased body satisfaction than older participants (aged 19-25).</i>				2.20	.028*
Younger group (BASS)	140	3.45	.764		
Older group (BASS)	217	3.26	.782		

\*p < 0.05

## **Chapter 5 – Discussion**

This study explored how social media affects body satisfaction in adolescent and young adult females. The final chapter includes a summary of the results found in Chapter 4, discusses the theoretical implications, how the findings of this study contributes to academia and the industry, and finally explore limitations and recommendations for future research.

### **Summary of Results**

This study aimed to examine how social media effects body satisfaction in adolescent and young adult females. While extensive research exists exploring how traditional media impacts body image and body satisfaction issues in females (Dittmar, 2009; Groesz et al., 2002; Levine & Murnen, 2009; Martin et al., 1993; Posavac et al., 1998; Richins, 1991; Rudd & Lennon, 2000; Stice & Shaw, 1994; Tiggemann, 2006) little to no research exists exploring the impact of social media on women's body satisfaction. Therefore, this study explored how the perpetuation of the thin female body-type, specifically through social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest, effects body satisfaction, social comparison behaviors, and appearance-related attitudes in adolescent and young adult females. Results explored differences in age groups between younger (14-18) and older (19-25) females and time spent on social media.

### **Body Satisfaction**

In exploring how social media impacts body satisfaction, the Body Areas Satisfaction Scale (BASS) was employed to measure how body satisfaction is effected by social comparison behavior, appearance-related attitudes, and age. It was found that overall participants were neutral in regards to their body satisfaction in general. However, participants did vary on satisfaction according to individual characteristics and displayed satisfaction with hair, height, and face. Conversely participants also displayed dissatisfaction on individual characteristics that

included weight and mid torso. This is similar to previous findings that found weight was a preoccupation for most women (Cash & Henry, 1995; Kozar & Damhorst, 2008; Stice & Shaw, 1994). In fact, regardless of age, weight and mid torso concerns have been the most common physical concerns for women for a long time. Like previous research that found fashion models and celebrities as influential as comparison tools (Dittmar, 2009; Grabe et al., 2008; Groesz et al., 2002; Jones, 2001; Knobloch-Westerwick & Crane, 2012; Posavac et al., 1998; Richins, 1991; Tiggemann, 2006), this study also found that fashion models and celebrities significantly impacted body satisfaction through social comparison behaviors. Even though weight and mid torso were obvious areas of dissatisfaction among the sample, participants still only “sometimes” compared weight with fashion models and celebrities. However, even with a sometimes comparison, adolescent and young adults still significantly lowered their body satisfaction when comparing themselves with fashion models and celebrities seen in social media. Although this sample may not have been completely satisfied with their bodies, they were not dissatisfied either which is, if nothing else, one step closer to body satisfaction.

Social media also provides a unique platform where multiple body types and shapes are displayed, which perhaps helps to normalize all body types, and promote multiple shapes and figures of the female body in the media that young girls can relate to, versus the unrealistic thin-ideal body type. Social media also provides more user control, where users are now able to filter images they see to a certain extent. Social media users also have the opportunity to contribute their own images to social media, by uploading photos of themselves or other normal female body-types onto different platforms. With more user control, more diverse images are being shared via social media, which also could contribute to promoting all types of the female body-types, versus only using thin images as seen in the past via traditional media.

Adolescents and young adults also experienced significant change in body satisfaction when comparing themselves against peers. The more participants compared themselves to their peers, the less they were satisfied with their bodies. This is similar to findings by Jones (2001) that reported peer comparisons to be influential on body satisfaction. This further confirms the notion that women often compare themselves to similar others (Martin et al., 1993), and in this case, that would most likely be with their peers. Peer comparisons may also be influenced by the participants' relationship with their peers. Media images tend to represent distant figures that the participant may not know on a deeper level, whereas peer relationships create more opportunity for personality and intelligence to show. Social media also encourages users to connect with their friends, something to which traditional media does not easily lend itself. Social media is built on the idea of users connecting to friends, sharing photos with friends, chatting online to friends, etc. Since social media is deeply rooted in creating and maintaining peer relationships, perhaps this helped to create social comparisons towards peers. As social media opens a window into the lives of others, comparisons are easily made to one another, especially on the basis of appearance. It is important that peer comparisons are further evaluated in order to understand at what length these comparisons are being made.

Although comparisons are an important aspect for adolescent and young adult females, there was no significant difference in age regarding social comparison behaviors, both younger and older groups of participants practiced social comparison behaviors. This could be because people tend to use comparisons regardless of age as they are constantly self-evaluating.

Whereas social comparisons influenced body dissatisfaction, it was also found that body satisfaction was impacted by appearance-related attitudes. When appearance-related attitudes increased, body satisfaction decreased. As a result, the way participants' attitudes shaped their

general appearance translated into how satisfied they were with their bodies. Heinberg (1995) noted that appearance-related attitudes and the “internalization of societal pressures regarding appearance may be a key feature of body dissatisfaction” (Heinberg et al., 1995, p. 87). The findings of this study further confirms that appearance-related attitudes do indeed impact body satisfaction especially in adolescent and young adult females and these impacts are felt regardless of age, as age was not significant in determining appearance-related attitudes.

Participants displayed a slight agreement to statements like *“I compare my body to that of people in ‘good shape’ on social media”*, *“I compare my appearance to the appearance of people in social media”*, *“I compare my body to the bodies of people popular on social media”* and *“I compare my appearance to the appearance of people popular on social media.”* Participants also showed slight agreements with statements that focused on pressure from social media.

Participants agreed to some extent with statements that declared, *“I’ve felt pressure from social media to look pretty”*, *“I’ve felt pressure from social media to exercise”*, *“I’ve felt pressure from social media to have a perfect body”* and *“I’ve felt pressure from social media to be thin.”* In agreement with past research that noted media tends to put enormous pressure on females to conform to the thin-ideal (Park, 2005; Rudd et al., 2000), participants noted feeling this pressure through social media as well, and that this shapes their attitudes towards their appearance.

Although participants noted utilizing social media images as comparison tools and feeling pressured by social media to live up to body perfect ideals, it was interesting to find that participants did not express agreement with wanting to look like those seen in social media. Participants expressed disagreement with statements that read, *“I wish I looked as thin as fashion models and celebrities on social media”* and *“I try to look like people on my social media accounts.”* Therefore, perhaps social media, while still a source of thin body-type images and

messages to live up to body perfect standards, also may desensitize young females to wanting to obtain a thin figure. Young women may recognize media pressures and unrealistic standards of the thin body-type and no longer wish to conform to that appearance. Love your body campaigns and campaigns utilizing un-photoshopped women could be positively impacting young women and helping them to accept their natural shape, encouraging young women to be happy with the body they have while discouraging unrealistically thin images. Social media may also provide an abundance of images that portray a multitude of shapes and sizes of the female body, exposing young women to a diversity of female body types. Perhaps the celebration of the female body, whatever body type that may be, helps young women to become more accepting of the body that they have, which may help to discourage them from wishing to look extremely thin. The impact of real beauty social media campaigns on women's body satisfaction should be an area of future research.

Finally, body satisfaction, social comparison behaviors, and appearance related-attitudes were compared among the two age groups. According to previous researchers, as women age and develop throughout the life course, they tend to become more satisfied with their bodies over time (Cash & Henry, 1995; Kozar & Damhorst, 2008). In this study, significant differences in body satisfaction scores among the two age groups was found ( $t = 2.20, p < .05$ ). An independent sample *t*-test revealed that as participants age, their body satisfaction is significantly lowered. Consequently, perhaps as women enter their mid-twenties they feel even more pressured to have a youthful and thin body type, which increases their body dissatisfaction. Since young women are under more pressure during this time in their life (Levinson, 1986), they may feel an increased amount of pressure to have a thin body type versus when they were younger. Also, as

women age, the body tends to experience physical changes, perhaps physical changes that occur could also lead to more dissatisfaction than when young women had adolescent bodies.

Significant differences among the two age groups were not found in regards to social comparison behaviors and appearance-related attitudes. It could be possible that at any age in the older adolescent and young adult life span, females are facing similar experiences with media images, social comparisons, and appearance-related attitudes, so that these feelings and behaviors do not change much within a few years. The lifespan theory confirms that women in both adolescent and young adult stages experience a great amount of pressure during these times. In fact, both stages have many characteristics that cross-over, for example increased pressure, forming concrete identities, and constantly self-evaluating. Additional research should explore this topic further, using a wider age range of participants, including those in their middle and older adult life spans.

### **Social Media Usage**

Social media usage was measured by different questions that sought out participants' habits including time spent on social media and its impacts on social comparison behavior and appearance-related attitudes. Participants were also questioned about which social media platforms they belonged to, specific usages of social media, and impacts of "likes" on photos.

It was hypothesized that the more time spent on social media the more participants would engage in social comparison behavior and have higher appearance-related attitudes. According to previous research (Festinger, 1954; Grabe et al., 2008; Stice & Shaw, 1994; Tiggemann, 2006) the more exposure to media images of the thin ideal typically cause internalization which leads to an increase in social comparison behaviors and negative attitudes towards appearance and body dissatisfaction. In this study, it was found that amount of time had no impact on social

comparison behaviors or appearance-related attitudes, however the number of times social media accounts were accessed per day did cause an effect on social comparison behaviors. On average, participants checked their social media accounts 5 to 15 times a day, which is consistent with previous research (Statistic Brain, 2014) and although not significant, they also spent about three hours or less on social media a day. The more participants checked their social media accounts, the higher their likelihood of engaging in social comparison behavior to both fashion models and celebrities and peers, regardless of how long they actually access their social media accounts. In fact, previous research has noted that social comparisons occur best at random times versus length of exposure (Knobloch-Westerwick & Crane, 2012). This could explain why amount of times social media accounts are checked has a significant relationship to social comparisons and why amount of time did not.

Although social comparison behaviors were impacted by time in terms of accessing social media accounts, participants' appearance-related attitudes were not. Appearance-related attitudes could be more deeply rooted psychologically and therefore not as susceptible to social media time influences. Social media also could only contribute to a small proportion of appearance-related attitudes; future research should explore more thoroughly the influential factors that predict appearance-related attitudes.

Age was also not a statistically significant predictor of time spent on social media, although mean scores did reveal that older participants spent slightly more time on social media and checked their accounts somewhat more often than younger participants. Since the majority of participants were currently enrolled in school, this could also have an impact on how much time participants were able to log onto their social media accounts. However, older participants likely have more freedom to access their social media accounts as compared to those in the

younger age group who experience more structure in their school days and more parental control overall.

Participants were also asked about which social media platforms they belonged to and their primary use of social media. In accordance with previous statistics (Statistic Brain, 2014), Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest remained leaders as far as number of users goes. The majority of participants had accounts with these three social media sites. As mentioned in the literature review, all three of those sites are home to millions of images of the thin-ideal body type and certainly provide sources for social comparison which can impact body satisfaction. Instagram was also a popular choice among participants and ranked in third place after Snapchat. Interesting, Snapchat was highly used by this age group (91.9% of participants), just 1.4% from reaching Facebook. Snapchat is a social media site that allows for the sharing of pictures to individual users. Pictures only last between one to 10 seconds long before they are erased. In this way users are able to communicate between each other via pictures, and with the knowledge that each picture has an expiration time. This is a great example that demonstrates the fast-changing environment of social media, and how quickly one site can gain popularity.

Social media has become an important aspect of many people's daily lives. The majority of users in this study check their social media accounts via their smart phones, having access to their sites anywhere and at any time. In fact, the majority of participants (88.2%) used social media as their "bed time stories," checking accounts before bed and some (56.6%) even upon waking. Most, if not all, social media sites update users with "notifications" which means users may receive a message, a like on a picture, etc. Notifications are sent to users (similar to receiving an email or a text) and could encourage users to check social media accounts at random times during the day, it could also be the reason users check accounts before bedtime and in the

morning. This would most certainly increase the amount of times social media accounts are checked daily. Perhaps if positive messages are being pushed through social media accounts through notifications, users could potentially view positive messages throughout a given day, which could impact body satisfaction, hopefully in a positive way.

In contrast to traditional media, at the heart of social media it is just that – social. The encouraging of picture sharing and connecting with friends supports a connection with others. Therefore, it is not surprising that the majority of participants use social media to primarily look at photos, talk with friends, and upload photos of their own. Different from traditional media outlets, social media lends itself to much more control by the user. Social media users have the power to not only choose which images they view for the most part, but to contribute and comment on images.

As users control personal social media accounts and upload photos to their own sites – preoccupation over photos and how they appear could occur. Kalnes (2013) noted that young women tended to focus on the amount of likes their pictures received and associated the likes to acceptance (Kalnes, 2013). In return the amount of likes they did or did not receive impacted levels of self-esteem and satisfaction. Therefore, it was assumed that participants of this study would also be conscious of the number of likes their photos received and also compare likes with friends' photos. However, participants overall felt neutral towards the amount of likes their photos received, even though over half indicated they would feel dissatisfied if their photo did not receive enough likes. In fact, the majority of participants indicated needing between 30 and 40 likes on a photo in order to feel satisfied. It could be that participants do not admit to feeling dissatisfied if a photo receives less likes than they desire, as the majority of participants indicated having a certain expectation of amount of likes they wanted their photo to receive. Participants

also noted that they did not feel jealous if a friends' photo received more likes than their photo which contradicts findings by Kalnes (Kalnes, 2013). This could also correlate with how many followers/friends (or connections to others on social media) a particular person has, as this would directly impact number of likes a photo will receive. It would be interesting to compare followers/friends of participants in relation to likes desired as this could have some theoretical implications to social comparison behaviors. Although participants reported that the number of likes did not impact feelings of dissatisfaction or jealousy, based on the number of likes participants expected (between 30 and 40) it was still rather apparent that likes play an important role in social media for young women.

## **Theoretical Implications**

### **Social Comparison Theory**

Historically, it has been reported that the thin-ideal body type depicted in traditional mediums has a significant impact on women's body satisfaction. Social comparison theory is useful in exploring this phenomenon. It has been found that women who compare themselves more frequently with unrealistically thin models and celebrities, feel "less-than", overweight, less beautiful, and less wanted, leading to body dissatisfaction. According to this study, social comparisons are still being made to fashion models and celebrities and still negatively impact body satisfaction. It was also found that peer comparisons significantly lowered body satisfaction in participants. Previous studies like that done by Jones (2001) also emphasized the importance of peer relationships. It appears that social comparisons are being made to both fashion models and celebrities and peers through social media.

Social comparison theory posits that people innately compare themselves with others and that usually they will use comparisons to others most similar to themselves. This study showed

that participants did indeed compare themselves to peers or those most similar to themselves and they also continued to use fashion models and celebrities as comparisons. Social comparison theory goes on to explain that comparisons are usually upward comparisons, where people will compare themselves with others on attributes they feel they personally lack. For example, in this study participants were most dissatisfied with weight and mid-torso and were likely to compare their weight to that of their peers. This theory helps to explain how many individuals determine their acceptability, for example if they are under weight, overweight, or at a socially acceptable weight.

What is unique about social media is that users can upload actual pictures of themselves onto the Internet, unleashing countless opportunities for comparisons to others to be made. This includes not only comparisons on physical attributes and appearances, but also with comparisons such as number of likes on photos and number of followers. As social media continues to expand, methods of social comparisons become almost endless. Unfortunately, as social comparisons to thin ideal images increase, typically women have reduced body satisfaction levels.

### **Lifespan Theory**

Findings from this study contributed to lifespan theory in a couple of ways. Lifespan theory suggests that during the stages of preadulthood and early adulthood, there is an intensified amount of pressure buildup in preparation for big life changes in the early adulthood stage (Levinson, 1986). This study can confirm to a degree that females in this stage of their life may indeed feel more pressured, especially to obtain a body considered beautiful by the media. Lifespan theory also implies that young women in these stages rely heavily on outside sources like the media in order to obtain more knowledge (Baltes et al., 1999). Through this study it is

clear that young women utilize social media on a daily basis in order to obtain knowledge about appearance, beauty, and attractiveness. In fact, regardless of what stage a female is in, in this study it appeared that social media held significant importance and was an important source of information for young women.

Lifespan theory states that the preadulthood and early adulthood stages both include times of vulnerability and susceptibility to many things including the media. However, this study showed that perhaps young women today have become less vulnerable as the theory suggests they are. Through this study, it was noted that young women are beginning to make the distinction between “real” bodies, and unrealistic bodies seen in the media. Although many women felt the pressure from social media to obtain a thin body, they did not wish to have a thin body, which could mean that education coupled with real beauty campaigns can have a lasting impact on the body acceptance and satisfaction of young women. Future research should continue to explore the impact of real beauty social media campaigns on future generations of young women.

### **Contributions to Academia**

The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of how social media shapes body satisfaction in adolescent and young adult females. The results of this study show that the more times adolescent and young adult females check their social media accounts, the more likely they are to participate in social comparison behaviors. Results also revealed that social comparison behaviors to fashion models and celebrities and peers significantly impacted body satisfaction and appearance-related attitudes.

These significant results have important implications to educators. Particularly at the middle- and high-school levels, educators should incorporate lessons of body acceptance and

satisfaction. Lessons should include a discussion of social media and how the fashion industry utilizes this type of media to target young women. Educators should engage girls in discussions on their social media usage and communicate the relationship between use of social media on body acceptance and satisfaction. A discussion should also exist on the differences between the women shown in real beauty campaigns and advertisements in the fashion and cosmetics industries. Educators should share with students examples of real beauty campaigns like those done by Dove and American Eagle Outfitters.

### **Contributions to the Industry**

The fashion industry primarily targets women over men and subsequently often pressures women of all ages to morph themselves into unrealistic standards of beauty. In order to preserve the health of young women in particular, it is important for the industry to recognize how pressuring young women to be thin can cause body satisfaction issues and lead to appearance management behaviors in some women.

The industry should also take note that the majority of adolescent and young adult females utilize social media, especially Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Pinterest, and Twitter. It would be extremely beneficial if marketers reach out to young consumers via social media. Social media is a free service and it does not cost anyone anything to set up an account. In this way marketers should really take advantage of utilizing social media to reach out to this target audience in promoting campaigns that utilize real models that represent diversity of shape, size, and overall appearance, in order to promote positive messages related to the female body image

Marketers should be aware that young consumers may realize the pressure put on them by the industry to obtain unrealistically thin standards. Marketers should consider using models that more closely relate to the target audience. By utilizing realistic bodies of women, marketers

have the chance to relate to their target market and promote beauty in all shapes and sizes. Not only could this create positive effect on body satisfaction, but it encourages young women to stay healthy and confident without the pressure to become something that may be physically impossible. As young consumers become more educated about marketing strategies, producing more realistic images of young girls could also potentially foster customer loyalty. This ideation is another topic of future research.

Industry professionals should also consider practical implications like the utilization of hashtags (#) which help to link phrases and words to images and messages. A hashtag promoting real beauty could encourage young girls to participate and show off their natural selves, whatever their shape may be. Industry professionals should also consider ripping down their own stereotypes and looking inward on how they might contribute to perpetuating thin bodies in the images they use and begin employing bodies of different shapes and sizes.

### **Limitations**

A limitation of this study is the use of a convenience sample. There was not much diversity among participants, with the majority of the sample being Caucasian/White. If a random sample had been used, a more diversified population could have been obtained in order to be more generalizable. Variations in race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographical residence should be incorporated into future studies examining this topic. Also, the age range was relatively close; therefore, oftentimes the two groups were relatively similar in attitudes and satisfaction levels. Future research should explore widening the age range.

The questionnaire was designed so that participants could easily share the questionnaire to qualified friends and family, it was also designed so that the internet was necessary in order to

complete it and submit it. Therefore, those that did not have internet access or a computer/smart phone were automatically not able to take the questionnaire.

Finally, since this was a quantitative study, participants did not have the opportunity to elaborate on feelings or include additional comments. It would have been beneficial to include a section where participants could share additional comments in relation to the study. This should be noted in future studies.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

While this study provided a great start into understanding social media and its impacts on body satisfaction in adolescent and young adult females, further research is needed to focus on how consumers utilize social media to make social comparisons and decisions about how they view their bodies. Future research should emphasize peer comparisons and how social media possibly fuels comparisons through liking and sharing features, as well as continue understanding how comparisons to fashion models and celebrities influence young women. Future research should also explore effective marketing social media strategies that promote real beauty campaigns and a more realistic representation of women's shapes and sizes. As such, future studies should broaden the sample size and perhaps include a wider age range of participants, comparing those in the various stages of adulthood. Future research should focus on obtaining a more diversified sample and explore how different cultures such as Latina or African American populations are impacted by social media images.

As research continues it would be beneficial to collect data by using social media as the tool. For example, future research should contact influential bloggers, popular fashionistas, makeup artists, etc. that have a large social media presence and following in order to reach a

larger segment of young women. Social media should be used not only as the topic of study, but as a research tool as well.

Future research should also explore the feature of “likes” and the impact likes has on young women. Social media includes other features such as commenting, number of followers, etc. that could certainly impact young women. Forthcoming research should incorporate more social media features in order to explore potential impacts these could cause, as well as exploring individual sites. For example, Facebook specifically should be explored and its potential impact versus Instagram, or Twitter, etc.

Finally, as more research is conducted on social media, marketers, educators, and young women themselves will have a greater understanding of the impact this medium can have on body acceptance and satisfaction. Perhaps through the use of positive messages of health and beauty, social media can be used as a platform that represents diversity in beauty and spreads confidence and self-assurance in young women.

## References

- Adler, E. (2014). *Social media engagement: The surprising facts about how much time people spend on the major social networks*. Retrieved December 14, 2014, from <http://www.businessinsider.com/social-media-engagement-statistics-2013-12>
- Baltes, P. B., Staudinger, U. M., & Lindenberger, U. (1999). Lifespan psychology: Theory and application to intellectual functioning. *Annual Reviews*, 50(471-507).
- Bercovici, J. (2014). *Still more data shows pinterest passing twitter in popularity*. Retrieved December 18, 2014, from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffbercovici/2014/06/24/still-more-data-shows-pinterest-passing-twitter-in-popularity/>
- Cash, T. F., & Henry, P. E. (1995). Women's body images: The results of a national survey in the U. S. A. *Sex Roles*, 33(1-2).
- Clark, L., & Tiggemann, M. (2008). Sociocultural and individual psychological predictors of body image in young girls: A prospective study. *Developmental Psychology*, 44(4), 1124-1134.
- Dittmar, H. (2009). How do "body perfect" ideals in the media have a negative impact on body image and behaviors? Factors and processes related to self and identity. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 28(1), 1-8.
- Dove. *Dove Evolution*. (2006).[Video/DVD]
- Dove. (2014). *Real beauty*. Retrieved April 4, 2014, from <http://www.dove.us/Our-Mission/Real-Beauty/default.aspx>
- Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, 7(2), 117-140.

- Grabe, S., Ward, L. M., & Hyde, J. S. (2008). The role of the media in body image concerns among women: A meta-analysis of experimental and correlational studies. *Psychological Bulletin*, 134(3), 460-476.
- Groesz, Lisa, Levine, Michael, Murnen, Sarah (2002). The effect of experimental presentation of thin media images on body satisfaction: A meta-analytic review. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 31(1), 1-16.
- Heinberg, L., Heinberg, J. K., Thompson, S., & Stormer. (1995). Development and validation of the sociocultural attitudes towards appearance questionnaire. *The International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 17(1), 81-89.
- Instagram. (2014). Retrieved December 18, 2014, from <http://blog.instagram.com/post/27359237977/2-years-later-the-first-instagram-photo>
- Jones, D. (2001). Social comparison and body image: Attractiveness comparisons to models and peers among adolescent girls and boys. *Sex Roles*, 45(9-10), 645-664.
- Kalnes, K. (2013). Influence of social media use on adolescent females' perceptions of their body image. (Ed.D., Walden University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1435634429?accountid=11789>
- Knauss, C., Paxton, S. J., & Alsaker, F. D. (2008). Body dissatisfaction in adolescent boys and girls: Objectified body consciousness, internalization of the media body ideal and perceived pressure from media. *Sex Roles*, 59(9-10), 633-643.
- Knobloch-Westerwick, S., & Crane, J. (2012). A losing battle: Effects of prolonged exposure to thin-ideal images on dieting and body satisfaction. *Communication Research*, 39(1), 79.

- Kozar, J. M., & Damhorst, M. L. (2008). Comparison of the ideal and real body as women age; relationships to age identity, body satisfaction and importance, and attention to models in advertising. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, (27), 197.
- Lawler, M., & Nixon, E. (2011). Body dissatisfaction among adolescent boys and girls: The effects of body mass, peer appearance culture and internalization of appearance ideals. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 40(1), 59-71.
- Levine, M. P., & Murnen, S. K. (2009). "Everybody knows that mass media are/are not [pick one] a cause of eating disorders": A critical review of evidence for a causal link between media, negative body image, and disordered eating in females. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 28(1), 9-42.
- Levinson, D. L. (1986). A conception of adult development. *The American Psychologist*, 41(1), 3-13.
- Lutz, A. (2014). *American eagle abandons photoshop for new lingerie campaign*. Retrieved April 4, 2014, from <http://www.businessinsider.com/aerie-lingerie-ads-without-photoshop-2014-1>
- Martin, M., Martin, P., & Kennedy. (1993). Advertising and social comparison: Consequences for female preadolescents and adolescents. *Psychology & Marketing*, 10(6), 513-530.
- Myers, T. A., & Crowther, J. H. (2009). Social comparison as a predictor of body dissatisfaction: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 118(4), 683-698.
- Nielsen. (2012). *State of the media: The social media report 2012*Nielsen; NM Incite.
- Nielsen. (2014). *The digital consumer* Consumer Report. New York: The Nielsen Company.
- Park, S. (2005). The influence of presumed media influence on women's desire to be thin. *Communication Research*, 32(5), 594-614.

- Pinterest. (2013). Retrieved December 4, 2013, from <http://about.pinterest.com/>
- Posavac, H., Posavac, S., Posavac, E., & Posavac. (1998). Exposure to media images of female attractiveness and concern with body weight among young Women1. *Sex Roles, 38*(3-4), 187-201.
- Richins, M. L. (1991). Social comparison and the idealized images of advertising. *Journal of Consumer Research, 18*(1), 71-83.
- Rudd, N. A., Lennon. (2000). Body image and appearance-management behaviors in college women. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal, 18*(3), 152-162.
- Statistic Brain. (2013). *Social networking statistics*. online: Browser Media, Socialnomics, MacWorld.
- Statistic Brain. (2014). *Social networking statistics*. Retrieved April 2, 2014, from <http://www.statisticbrain.com/social-networking-statistics/>
- Stephens, D., Stephens, R., Hill, C., & Hanson. (1994). The beauty myth and female consumers: The controversial role of advertising. *The Journal of Consumer Affairs, 28*(1), 137-153.
- Stice, E., & Shaw, H. E. (1994). Adverse effects of the media portrayed thin-ideal on women and linkages to bulimic symptomatology. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 13*(3), 288-308.
- Stice, E., & Whitenton, K. (2002). Risk factors for body dissatisfaction in adolescent girls: A longitudinal investigation. *Developmental Psychology, 38*(5), 669-678.
- Thompson, J. K., van den Berg, P., Roehrig, M., Guarda, A. S., & Heinberg, L. J. (2004). The sociocultural attitudes towards appearance scale-3 (SATAQ-3): Development and validation. *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 35*(3), 293-304.

- Thomsen, S., Thomsen, J. K., McCoy, M., & Williams. (2001). Internalizing the impossible: Anorexic outpatients' experiences with women's beauty and fashion magazines. *Eating Disorders, 9*(1), 49-64.
- Tiggemann, M. (2006). The role of media exposure in adolescent girls' body dissatisfaction and drive for thinness: prospective results. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 25*(5), 523-541.
- Waters, Mark (Director), Michaels, Lorne (Producer). (2004). *Mean girls*. [Motion Picture] Paramount Pictures.
- Wood, J. V. (1989). Theory and research concerning social comparisons of personal attributes. *Psychological Bulletin, 106*(2), 231-248.
- YouTube (2015). *Real Beauty Dove* [Video].

## **Appendix A - Questionnaire**

Thank you for volunteering to take the following survey. We are interested in learning about your social media habits, including how much time you spend on the major social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, Twitter, etc. We also want to learn more about how you feel about your appearance in comparison to how others look.

The survey will be strictly used for educational purposes and all answers are anonymous. The survey will not ask for any identifying information. You are not obligated to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering, and you may exit the survey at any time you wish.

By continuing with this survey you are consenting to the material that will be presented.

The survey will take approximately 10 minutes.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this survey please contact Dr. Rick Scheidt, Chair Institutional Review Board, KSU, 785-532-3224 or Julia Wallis, research investigator, KSU, wallisj@ksu.edu.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Are you a female between the ages of 15 and 24?

- Yes
- No

Below, please indicate **how satisfied you are with each personal characteristic**. Use the 5-point scale to indicate your level of satisfaction with each item.

- 1 = Very Dissatisfied
- 2 = Somewhat Dissatisfied
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Somewhat Satisfied
- 5 = Very Satisfied

	Please rank the following:				
	1 Very Dissatisfied	2 Somewhat Dissatisfied	3 Neutral	4 Somewhat Satisfied	5 Very Satisfied
FACE (facial features, complexion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HAIR (color, thickness, texture)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HIPS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
THIGHS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LEGS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
BUTTOCKS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
MID TORSO (waist, stomach)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
UPPER TORSO (shoulders, arms)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
BREASTS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
MUSCLE TONE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WEIGHT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HEIGHT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Regarding the physical features listed below, please rate how frequently you compare yourself to **fashion models and celebrities** on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.).

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Rarely
- 3 = Sometimes
- 4 = Fairly Often
- 5 = Always

	Please rank the following:				
	1 Never	2 Rarely	3 Sometimes	4 Fairly Often	5 Always
HEIGHT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WEIGHT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SHAPE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FACE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HAIR	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
STYLE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ATTRACTIVENESS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Regarding the physical features listed below, please rate how frequently you compare yourself **to your friends on social media** (Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, etc.).

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Rarely
- 3 = Sometimes
- 4 = Fairly Often
- 5 = Always

	Please rank the following:				
	1 Never	2 Rarely	3 Sometimes	4 Fairly Often	5 Always
HEIGHT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WEIGHT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SHAPE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FACE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HAIR	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
STYLE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ATTRACTIVENESS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement below using the 5-point scale.

For these questions, social media users can include your family members and friends, celebrities and fashion models, and other popular social media users (such as popular bloggers, etc.). Social media includes all the major social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, Twitter, etc.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

	Please rank the following:				
	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
Social media is an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive".	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've felt pressure from social media to lose weight.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like my body to look like the people who are on my social media accounts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I compare my body to the bodies of people popular on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've felt pressure from social media to look pretty.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like my body to look like the fashion models and celebrities who appear in social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I compare my appearance to the appearance of people popular on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've felt pressure from social media to be thin.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've felt pressure from social media to have a perfect body.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I wish I looked like the models in my social media accounts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I compare my appearance to the appearance of people in social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've felt pressure from social media to diet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I compare my body to that of people in "good shape" on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Images in social media are an important source of information about fashion and "being attractive".	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've felt pressure from social media to exercise.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I wish I looked as thin as fashion models and celebrities on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I compare my body to that of people who are thin on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to look like the people on my social media accounts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement below using the 5-point scale.

For these questions, social media includes all the major social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, Twitter, etc.

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

If a picture I upload of myself onto social media does not get the number of “likes” I want I feel dissatisfied.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

I feel jealous if a friend’s picture on social media gets more “likes” than my picture.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

In order to feel good about the amount of “likes” I receive on a picture I upload of myself, I must have at least \_\_\_ amount of likes.

- Less than 10
- 10
- 20
- 30
- 40

- 50
- More than 50
- More than 100
- Other

I use social media accounts on my computer

- Yes
- No

I use social media accounts on my smart phone.

- Yes
- No

I look at my social media accounts on a daily basis.

- Yes
- No

I belong to the following social media accounts (please select all that apply):

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Pinterest
- Instagram
- Google +
- Vine
- Snapchat
- Badoo
- LinkedIn
- Other

I check my social media accounts \_\_\_\_\_ amounts of time per day.

- Less than 5
- 5
- 10
- 15
- 20
- 25
- 30
- More than 30

On average, I spend \_\_\_\_\_ amount of time on social media per day.

- Less than 1 hour
- 1 hour
- 2 hours
- 3 hours
- 4 hours
- 5 hours
- More than 5 hours
- Other

I check my social media accounts as soon as I wake up.

- Yes
- No

I check my social media accounts before I go to bed.

- Yes
- No

I do not go more than 24 hours without checking my social media accounts.

- Yes
- No

I generally use my social media to... (please choose all that apply)

- Talk with friends
- Receive fashion advice
- Meet new people
- Look at pictures
- Blog
- Keep up with celebrities
- Upload pictures
- Stay in touch with family
- other

Please list the top three social media accounts you use the most.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently enrolled in school?

- Yes
- No

What is your highest level of education?

- Middle School
- High School
- Some college
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctorate Degree

To which racial or ethnic group do you most identify?

- Caucasian/White
- Hispanic
- Islander
- African-American
- European
- Asian Pacific
- Other

Do you own a smart phone?

- Yes

- No

Do you have access to or own a computer?

- Yes
- No

Are you currently living in the U.S.A?

- Yes
- No

## **Appendix B - Example Email and Social Media Post**

## Example Email

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,

My name is Julia Wallis and I am currently a graduate student at Kansas State University pursuing my Master's degree in Apparel and Textiles. As part of the degree requirements I am completing a thesis research project. I am studying the social media habits and body satisfaction of females aged 15 to 24. I hope you will be willing to distribute the following questionnaire to your students, [link to questionnaire]. The results of this study will help us understand the relationship of social comparison behavior to body image.

This project has been approved by K-State's Institutional Review Board. I would be happy to answer any questions or concerns regarding this study as well as provide more detailed information upon request.

Thank you for your consideration,

Julia Wallis

## **Example Social Media Post**

Hello family and friends! As many of you already know I am currently pursuing my master's degree in Apparel and Textiles. As part of the degree requirements I am completing a thesis research project. I am studying the social media habits and body satisfaction of females aged 15 to 24. The results of this study will help us understand the relationship of social comparison behavior to body image. So, if you're a female between the ages of 15 and 24, or know of some ladies in that age range, I would be extremely grateful if you could take a couple of minutes and fill out, and/or share, the following survey to help me conduct my research! Thank you so much! [link to questionnaire]