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"REAL ME VERSUS SOCIAL MEDIA ME:" FILTERS, SNAPCHAT DYSMORPHIA, AND BEAUTY PERCEPTIONS AMONG YOUNG WOMEN

Janella Eshiet

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DYSMORPHIA, AND BEAUTY PERCEPTIONS AMONG YOUNG WOMEN

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A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

Communication Studies

_____

by

Janella Eshiet

June 2020

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Approved by:

Dr. Ahlam Muhtaseb, Committee Chair, Communication Studies

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ABSTRACT

Social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat are visual-based social media platforms that are popular among young women. One popular content many young women use on Snapchat and Instagram are beauty filters. A beauty filter is a photo-editing tool that allows users to smooth out their skin, enhance their lips and eyes, contour their nose, alter their jawline and cheekbones, etc. Due to these beauty filters, young women are now seeking plastic surgeons to alter their appearance to look just like their filtered photos (this trend is called Snapchat dysmorphia). This research study examines how these beauty filters and images that young women view and use on social media affect their perceptions of self and beauty. My participants consisted of 18 female college students who attend California State University, San Bernardino. Each participant was interviewed and asked questions regarding their social media experiences. My results indicate that many young women express how society's beauty standards for young women play a role in their use of beauty filters and cosmetic surgeries. Overall, this study's findings explain how beauty filters, fitspirations, and social media likes affect many young women's perceptions of beauty and body image. By understanding why many young women use these beauty filters it can help and encourage companies to create reliable resources and campaigns that encourage natural beauty and self-love for women all around the world.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Social media sites such as Instagram and Snapchat are visual-based media platforms that are popular among young people. Many young people use social media to connect with family, friends, peers, and colleagues. In 2018, approximately 78% of 18- to 24-year-olds were Snapchat users and around 71% used Instagram (Smith & Anderson, 2018, para. 3). The 2019 Pew Research Center report states, "the share of U.S. adults who say they use certain online platforms or apps is statistically unchanged from where it stood in early 2018…" (Perrin & Anderson, 2019, para. 1). Instagram and Snapchat are still popular among young adults ages 18-24. Approximately 42% of young adults check their Instagram several times a day, while 46% check their Snapchat multiple times a day, according to a report by the Pew Research Center (Perrin & Anderson, 2019, para. 1). Constantly checking social media causes a person to become a heavy user of such media. Many American young adults are heavy users of Snapchat and Instagram. "Heavy social media users are people who spend 4+ hours a day on social media sites and apps" (Diehl, 2018, para. 1). Sometimes, heavy social media usage can cause insecurities that can lead to body comparisons and body dissatisfaction.

Many young women compare their bodies to the beauty images they view on social media. Comparing can cause low-self-esteem, which has the potential to increase the use of beauty filters while taking photos on these social media

platforms. Beauty filters are becoming more popular each day. It has become
"normal" for people (mostly young women) to use beauty filters to alter their
appearance and hide their imperfections. "The problem is, when you alter a
photo and the result is a you-but-better-version staring back, you may start to get
it in your head that that's what you should look like" (Willingham, 2018, para. 2).
A digital version of Lacan's mirror phase explains a superior version of yourself
looking back at you, that is then internalized as the ideal "imago." The mirror
phase is important in Lacan's eyes. This phase explains how Lacan views ego as
an object not as a subject. "The ego, despite conscious senses to the contrary, is
not a locus of autonomous agency, the seat of a free, true "I" determining its own
fate" (Johnston, 2018, para. 26). Similar to Lacan's mirror phase, the beauty
images and filters young women view and use is a reflection of how they want to
look like. These beauty filters on social media provide a new reality of society's
beauty standards. Society's definition of beauty adds pressure for young women
to look a certain way, making them feel like if they do not look like these beauty
filters (e.g., nice lips, smooth skin, big eyes, nice jawline, cheek bones, etc.), they
are not considered beautiful. These unrealistic beauty standards are one of the
many reasons why many young women use beauty filters. "These apps allow
one to alter his or her appearance in an instant and conform to an unrealistic and
often unattainable standard of beauty" (Willingham, 2018, para. 3). Kellner (2014)
explains how "media images help shape our view of the world and our deepest
values: what we consider good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil" (p. 7).
The images and videos young women view and watch on social media have the

potential to shape their views of others and how they view themselves. By bringing attention to the beauty images and beauty filters young women use, I hope people will understand the pressures many young women go through to fit society's standards of beauty.

This thesis discusses the beauty images and filters many young women view and/or use while on social media. Many scholars examine how these beauty images affect young women's self-esteem, but for my study, I wanted to know why young women used these beauty filters, how they used them, and how these filters, fitspirations, and social media "likes" affected their perceptions of beauty and their body image. By using a narrative interview and thematic analysis approach, I uncovered common patterns from my interviews that helped me answer my research questions. By answering my research questions, I hope to better understand how these beauty images and filters are affecting young women and their self-confidence and perceptions of beauty.

There are many studies that explain how social media affect young women. In my literature review, I will expand on these studies and explain the research that other scholars have conducted on this topic and their conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media

There are approximately 3.8 billion people using social media worldwide (Clement, 2020). According to Statista, "North America has one of the highest social network penetration rates in the world" (Clement, 2020, para. 1). Facebook is by far the most popular social networking site in the United States. Instagram and Snapchat are other popular social networking sites many use to communicate with others. One type of popular content often viewed by young women on social media are beauty images. Beauty images are images promoting beauty-related content. Fitness, hair, makeup, clothing, and skin care products are just a few types of beauty-related content most young women consume and post on social media. These beauty images that young women consume on social media can potentially shape their perceptions of beauty and how they define it. With beauty filters becoming more popular among young women, these filters can potentially affect their self-esteem and body image and what they consider beauty standards. Due to this, many young women ask plastic surgeons to improve their appearance. "Current data shows that 55% of surgeons report seeing patients who request surgery to improve their appearance in selfies, up from 42% in 2015" (Rajanala, Maymone, & Vashi, 2018, para. 4). Rajanala et al. explain how today, nasal and facial asymmetry is

the most common concern among people seeking reconstructive surgeries. "Along with rhinoplasties, hair transplants and eyelid surgical procedures are also popular requests to improve selfie appearance" (Rajanala et al., 2018, para. 4). Other impacts of social media have been studied by several researchers.

Many young women who use social media excessively sometimes struggle with self-esteem issues. According to an article from the BBC website, social media sites make more than half of users feel inadequate, based on a survey of 1,500 people conducted by the disability charity "Scope". In addition, "half of 18- to 34-year-olds say that social media makes them feel unattractive" (Brown, 2018, para. 25). Self-esteem represents the feelings of self-worth and acceptance. "Self-esteem is a basic human need, and individuals usually strive to present themselves favorably" (Grossman, 2017, p. 27). Individuals with low self-esteem sometimes use deception on social media as a way to gain acceptance from peers, friends, etc. "Many individuals engaging in deception on social media do so by creating identities online that differ from their own true identities. This deceptive or alternative identity can have both positive and negative effects on the individual" (Grossman, 2017, p. 30). Deceptive behaviors on social media sometimes occur when an individual struggles with self-esteem and compares themselves with their peers and social media influencers. Using filters and photoshopping images are two ways of deception that young people use on social media. Instagram and Snapchat have many filters that can be used to alter one's images. Photoshopping is actually a widely used technique in society.

Many fashion magazines use photoshopping as a way to make models look slimmer and alter their bodies and faces, as documented by several scholars including Jean Kilbourne in her famous *Killing Us Softly* documentary (Jhally & Kilbourne, 2010). Now, many young women photoshop their pictures on social media to make their bodies look just as slim as the models they see in magazines. Apps such as Facetune are becoming more popular among young women today. According to the Facetune website, Facetune is a photo-editing app that allows users to retouch their selfies or improve any of their photos. This app gives users full control of how they want to present themselves. Some people who use photo-editing apps such as Facetune deal with low self-esteem issues and compare themselves to others. Many young women who deal with self-esteem issues sometimes use deception (Photoshop and filters) to hide their imperfections because they are not comfortable showing their "unfiltered" self.

Deception is sometimes used by young women when they are trying to portray a more favorable self-presentation on social media. "Self-presentation refers to tactics used to convey one's impression by controlling disclosure of one's information" (Hong, Jahng, Lee & Wise, 2018, p. 2). A research study conducted by Hong et al. explains that strategies of self-presentations involve suppressing certain personal information to get the validation one is seeking from peers and friends. Strategies for self-presentation are most frequently found among social media users who post selfies and edit their photos to create their best "presentation" of one's appearance (Hong et al., 2018, p. 2). The article

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explains how some people modify their self-presentations to fit in with their peers and appear more favorable to strangers. Using filters/photo-editing tools on social media is starting to become the new norm. Sometimes a filtered selfie may give off an inadequate impression of a person. Hong et al. explains that sometimes extensive presentations of "ideal" selves may decrease the popularity of selfies (Hong et al., 2018). Although many people use filters to alter their picture with the goal of presenting their "best self," sometimes other users may find using filters to enhance one's facial features deceitful. The study explains that when one uses filters to manipulate their appearance, it is no longer considered authentic. "The use of filters as a manifestation of appearance manipulation demonstrates an attempt to present socially desirable self-images. This may lead to negative evaluations from other users" (Hong et al., 2018, p. 2). Many young women use deceptive behaviors on social media due to the messages behind the images and videos they view and watch on these platforms. "The media are forms of pedagogy that teach us how to be men and women. They show us how to dress, look, and consume…" (Kellner, 2014, p. 7). When young women view beauty images on these social media platforms, the content they view all have a specific messgae tailored to women. These messages are telling women how they should look and dress, which can potentially cause women to feel insecure about their appearance because they feel that they do not fit society's standards of beauty for women. The ultimate goal of these images is to push women to want to buy these products so they can feel confident in themselves.

Two popular social media sites that many young women use for self-presentations are Instagram and Snapchat. People who use these two platforms can take advantage of different filters at any time. Additionally, there is a growing concern about users struggling with body image issues due to potential negative influence of comparing one's body to others

Instagram: Body Image and Filters

Instagram is currently a popular social media site, especially among young women. Instagram allows its users to share videos and photos with one another. Since the start of Instagram in 2010, "there has been more than 400 million active users, who upload around 80 million photos a day" (Kleemans, Daalmans, Carbaat, & Anschütz, 2016, p. 93). According to Fardouly, Willburger, and Vartanian (2018), many young women who are active social media users spend 30 minutes per day on the site. "Given that Instagram's primary use is for posting and sharing images, researchers have suggested Instagram may be more detrimental to women's appearance concerns than other media platforms such as Facebook" (Fardouly et al., 2018, p. 1831). Many of the images Instagram users upload and view are beauty images with filters. Filters are one way users can alter their images on social media. Instagram has many beauty filters that enhance users' facial appearance, making users look like they have bigger eyes, fuller lips, smoother skin with no imperfections, etc. These beauty images and filters have the potential to make women feel insecure about their true appearance. Kathryn Kalnes (2013) examined social media and the negative

effect it can have on young women's body image. This qualitative case study investigated the influence of social media use on young female's perceptions of their body image. The participants were from a Midwestern public high school, and participants were interviewed individually. Four main themes emerged during the interviews and three-day recordings of their social media use:

> (a) female adolescents' daily activities are influenced by perceived body image; (b) there is a distinct change in perceived body image with age (participants explained that they started noticing their bodies were different from other girls in junior high and freshman year); (c) social comparison is a constant activity for adolescent females; and (d) the area in which these students reside, which includes parental influence to fit the high ideal of the community, has a direct effect on perceived body image. (Kalnes, 2013, pp. 60-69)

The study indicated that the participants believed the use of social media plays a significant role in all four of the themes described. These findings were used to help develop a curriculum for discussing body image, examining how social media influences adolescents and their body image, as well as to draw attention to the negative effects of body dissatisfaction. Kalnes (2013) believes this curriculum will help improve the body image of female students. Improving body image of female students will also result in a decrease in depression and eating disorders and an increase in self-esteem.

Bell (2016) conducted a study on body image and how it connects to social media. Bell wanted to know how college female students perceive themselves while viewing images on social media, how they (college females) perceive the images they view on social media, and if the participants compare their body to what they see on social media. Bell's results indicated that 72.5% of the female participants compared their body to the images they view on social media. The results also indicated that "rates of negative body images among social media users were higher based on the user's own internalization of messages and images. The higher one's internalization level, the more likely they were to experience negative body image and body dissatisfaction" (Bell, 2016, p. 4). The way users perceive the images on social media can have either a negative or positive effect on body image. A young women's internalization level (which refers to the opinions of others when it comes to their attitudes towards values and self) can affect her perception of beauty, body image, and how she views herself on social media.

Instagram is one social media site where images (such as beauty related content) can lead to body dissatisfaction. Burnette, Kwitowski, and Mazzeo (2017) explored the relationship between social media use and body image in young girls. Over 90% of participants from this study reported using social media at least daily, while half of the participants reported visiting social media sites multiple times a day. In this study, the most popular type of social media participants used was visual-based social media sites such as Instagram and

Snapchat. The survey indicated that participants compare themselves to peers and celebrity content on social media. Excessive social media use can result in body dissatisfaction. Snapchat and Instagram filters inspire many young women to alter their face and body due to the way these filters make them feel and how it hides their imperfections.

There are many different types of Instagram filters social media users can choose from. Some filters include changing the saturation, brightness, and color of the photo, while other filters are used to enhance face structure such as eyes, nose, cheeks, and lips. Instagram introduced filters that mimic plastic surgeries such as facelifts and Botox injections. In August 2019, "Instagram rolled out an update to the app which lets users create and submit their own face filters using Spark AR Studios. Those filters were then searchable by other users in the app's Effects Gallery" (DeGeurin, 2019, para. 3). Other cosmetic filters include, Beautiful Face, Perfect Skin, and HolyBucks. These filters alter the users' faces by increasing their lip size, giving users bigger eyes, as well as smoother looking skin.

In 2019 it was announced that Instagram will ban all "cosmetic surgery" filters. "Instagram is removing all augmented reality (AR) filters that depict or promote cosmetic surgery, amid concerns they harm people's mental health" ("Instagram bans all cosmetic surgery filters," 2019, para. 1). Instagram was under scrutiny after a father of a 14-year-old British teenager explained that he believes Instagram images that depict self-harm and depression contributed to

his daughters' suicide. "Not long after that, Instagram released an overhaul of its self-harm policy, making those images less visible on the platform" (DeGeurin, 2019, para.10). Instagram explained that the ban was about promoting wellbeing. "'We're re-evaluating our policies - we want our filters to be a positive experience for people,' a spokesman said" ("Instagram bans all cosmetic surgery filters,", 2019, para. 5).

Similar to filters, Instagram fitspiration images can also impact young women's perceptions of beauty. Fitspiration images are popular fitness images seen on social media sites such as Pinterest and Instagram.

Instagram: Fitspirations

Social media sites are also used to promote fitness-related content such as "fitspirations." Fitspiration stands for fitness inspiration. "These fitspiration pages aim to inspire and motivate people to live an active lifestyle" (Easton, Morton, Tappy, Francis, & Dennison, 2018, para. 1). There are many fitspiration pages on Instagram that aim to encourage young women to stay healthy and fit. Although the purpose is to show positive examples of active lifestyles, many young women's perceptions of these images can lead to body dissatisfaction. Many researchers have become interested in studying this topic and examine how much of an impact fitspirations have on young adults when it comes to body dissatisfaction and how they view themselves. Arroyo and Brunner's (2016) research study explains that "the positive, health promoting messages are often accompanied by images of thin and objectified models…and such contradictory

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messages are associated with negative body talk and body dissatisfaction"
(Arroyo & Brunner, 2016, p. 219).The researchers believe that negative body talk
was predicted as an outcome to constant exposure to friends' fitness posts on
social media "e.g., pictures and status updates about working out, fitness
inspiration quotations/images, etc." (Arroyo & Brunner, 2016, p. 216). The
researchers first asked each participant to identify the different types of fitness-
related posts that they see their friends post on social media. A total of six items
were retained:

> (1) pictures of the healthy foods they have cooked/eaten, (2)
> pictures of themselves working out or at the gym, (3) about how
> they have worked out or exercised, (4) fitness inspiration quotations
> or images, (5) before and after pictures of themselves, and (6)
> statistics after they have worked out (e.g. how far they ran, how
> many calories they burned). Participants in the current sample were
> asked to think about their friends, peers, and connections on
> different SNSs. (Arroyo & Brunner, 2016, p. 221)

Along with letting the researchers know the type of fitness/health content
their friends post on social media, the participants also explained how often their
friends post this type of fitness content. The researchers also tested social
comparison using the five-item physical appearance social comparison scale.
This scale was used to assess participants' tendency to compare their bodies
with others who post this type of fitness content online. Other items tested in this

study included, body surveillance (participants' tendency to view their bodies from an outside perspective), negative body talk (using negative body talk scale (how often participants used negative comments about their bodies), body satisfaction (measuring participants' satisfaction with their bodies and how they look), exercise and healthy eating (how often participates exercise, and the type of foods they eat), and social networking sites use (how frequently participants use SNS). The results indicated that exposure to friends' fitness posts on social media significantly and positively predicted negative body talk. The results for body surveillance and social comparison indicated that individuals who reported higher levels of social comparison and higher levels of exposure to friends' fitness posts reported engaging in the most negative body talk (p. 225). Participants with lower levels of social comparison and lower levels of exposure to friends' fitness posts reportedly engaged in negative body talk the least. Arroyo and Brunner's research study explained how those who are more exposed to their friends' fitness posts and constantly comparing themselves to others will experience more negative body talk/negative social media experience than others.

Easton et al. (2018) sought to understand fitspiration pages from the perspective of users. The researchers used a qualitative approach to "explore how people experience viewing Fitspirations on social media and how they engage with this material" (Easton et al., 2018, para.1). The researchers recruited 20 young women ages 18-25 to participate in this study. Participants

were all fitspiration followers. They all participated in either focus groups or individual interviews and were asked detailed open-ended questions about their understanding and use of fitspirations. Results indicated that viewing fitspirations can bring both negative and positive effects on users. "A range of harms also appeared to arise from Fitspiration viewing ranging from minor annoyances and frustrations to more meaningful negative effects on psychological & physical health" (Easton et al., 2018, para. 4). Tiggermann and Zaccardo (2015) examined 130 female college students viewing fitspirations on Instagram and explained how they interpreted the images. Results indicated that fitspiration images can have negative unintended consequences on body image for young females.

Although some might respond to the fitspiration images they view on Instagram negatively, there are many social media influencers, celebrities, etc. who want to promote body positivity to their followers. Cohen, Fardouly, Newton-John, and Slater (2019) studied body positivity on Instagram. The researchers explain how body positive posts on Instagram often include a range of pictures, captions, selfies, and quotes of women proudly displaying their larger bodies with encouraging captions to go with them.

Body positive images on social media are becoming more popular among young women. Body positive images or 'Bo Po' aims to challenge the aforementioned narrow appearance ideals and instead represent a diverse array of bodies of different shapes, sizes…" (Cohen et al., 2019, p. 1548). Cohen et

al.'s study used an experimental design to examine the effects of body positive Instagram content on young women's mood, body satisfaction, body appreciation, and self-objectification (p. 1549). "We hypothesized that viewing body positive content would result in greater positive mood, body satisfaction, and body appreciation, and reduced self-objectification and negative mood, compared to exposure to thin-ideal content and appearance-neutral content" (Cohen et al., 2019, p.1549). The researchers wanted to know if the body positive images women view on social media have an effect on them even when controlling the trait levels of body appreciation. The participants of this study were women ages 18-30 years old. Three types of stimuli were used in this study: body positive, thin-ideals, and appearance neutral. The results from this study indicated that brief exposure to body positive content on social media is associated with improvements in young women's positive mood, body saturation and body appreciation. Both thin-ideal and body-positive posts were associated with increased self-objectification relative to appearance neutral posts. Lastly, the results showed that "participants showed favourable attitudes towards the body positive accounts with the majority being willing to follow them in the future" (Cohen et al., 2019, p. 1547). The researchers concluded that body-positive content may help improve young women's body image. But when it comes to self-objectification, further research is necessary to truly understand the effect it has on young women.

Fitspiration images are not only seen on Instagram, but are also present

on Snapchat. Snapchat images can also cause body dissatisfaction and affect

people's (especially young women's) perceptions of beauty due to the beauty

filters and fitspiration content users post on this platform.

Snapchat

Snapchat, like Instagram, is a visual-based social media site where

individuals can post videos and pictures for their friends. One difference between

these two social media sites, is that Snapchat images and videos disappear 24

hours after they are posted. Like Instagram, Snapchat can also affect a young

woman's self-esteem. According to Ramphul and Mejias (2018), several surgeons

have pointed out encountering young women who have asked to look like their

"filtered" Snapchat photo. A filtered photo is a term used to describe the alteration

of a picture. When a person takes a picture on Snapchat, there are different filters

users can choose from. Some filters on Snapchat are funny while others change

the appearance of the users' face, making their face look flawless with no

imperfections. There is a new term that emerged in discussing the impact of

Snapchat filters called Snapchat dysmorphia. Snapchat dysmorphia can be

defined as a person's desire to look identical to their filtered photo (Ramphul &

Mejias, 2018, p. 1). Snapchat dysmorphia was "first identified in 2018 by a London

cosmetic doctor who had noticed that patients had once asked to look like certain

celebrities-Brad Pitt's jaw or Jennifer Aniston's nose- they were now bringing in

filtered selfies" (Purtill, 2020, para. 2). To determine if this was true in Australia,

Monash University conducted interviews with teenagers aged 16-18, and "found even the youngest were wanting to get cosmetic procedures to make them look like their filtered selfies" (Purtill, 2020, para. 3). Chelsea Ritschel (2018) states that teenagers are undergoing plastic surgery to look like their filtered selfies, and it might be a sign that they are suffering from an underlying mental health condition. Authors of a study published by *JAMA Facial Plastic Surgery* found photo-editing apps like Snapchat are to blame for the level of "perfection" the filter selfies achieve. The article explains that instead of bringing in pictures of celebrities, people are bringing in their "filtered" selfies so they can be the "perfect" version of themselves. The trend is "alarming," the researchers emphasize, because filtered selfies often show "an unattainable look and are blurring the line of reality and fantasy for these patients" (May, 2018, p. 12). An article from the Boston Medical Center website explains the spread of photo-editing technology through applications like Snapchat and Facetune. The level of physical 'perfection' previously seen only on celebrity or beauty magazines are now all over social media. "Such fixes used to be just for glamour shots of celebrities. But nowadays, with flawless skin and symmetrical faces all over social media, the "beautiful people" are our peers" (Keats, 2018, para. 3). Approximately 10 to 15 years ago, filters and photo editing tools were used by photographers and magazine outlets to alter a model's photographs. Today, everyone has the ability to access these photo editing tools to use on their own pictures. As these filtered images become the norm, "people's perceptions of beauty worldwide are changing, which can take a toll on a person's self-esteem and can cause body

dysmorphic disorder (BDD), argue researchers" (Wolfson, 2018, para. 2). With

social media becoming more popular each day, Snapchat dysmorphia is

becoming a more common trend, and plastic surgeons are seeing an increase in

patients wanting to look like their filtered photo. Studies have found that the more

a person is on social media, the more likely they are to want to get cosmetic

procedures done. "Those who use social media more will show a higher desire for

cosmetic surgery than those who use it less. Additionally, body dissatisfaction has

been found to influence attitudes towards cosmetic surgery" (Wang, Rieder,

Schoenberg, Zachary, & Saedi, 2019, p. 3). In February 2020, the American

Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery released its annual survey

outcomes, which spotlights the previous year's most impactful statistics and

trends in aesthetics. " this year's results reveal that 2019 was a stand-out year for

the selfie with a full 72% of AAFPRS members reporting patients seeking

cosmetic procedures to look better for their selfies – up 15% from 2018"

("American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Inc, " 2020,

para. 1). In 2019, "74% of facial plastic surgeons reported an increase in

minimally invasive procedures (neurotoxins, fillers, skin treatments) in patients

under age 30. In fact, this year's survey revealed a 32% increase in this category

since 2016" ("American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery,

Inc," 2020, para. 6). One reason why there is an increase in plastic surgery

among young people is because people are not just comparing their images to

celebrities on social media; they also compare their images to idealized, morphed

images of peers on social media. People start to think that "this is what the rest of

the world looks like in photos" (Karel, 2018, para.12). Just like social media filters, the number of "likes" a person receives on their photos can also affect their perceptions of beauty.

Snapchat, among other apps, offers users photographic filters that change their look. While examining heavy use of selfie apps such as Snapchat. Nui, conducted a study about the effects that virtual makeovers have on college-aged females. Nui, who is originally from China, explained how these apps with filters are more heavily used in China than they are in the United States. One important part of this study is how it relates to social comparison theory; how people are most likely to compare themselves to people they perceive to look better than them. Niu believes that this different kind of comparison "may elicit a different response and cause students to lose perspective on how they actually look" (Miller, 2019, para. 11). The results of this study indicated that Chinese students who look at their enhanced filter selfies feel better about themselves than they do when they look at their actual self. After conducting her study, Niu believes that although young women may think a filtered selfie makes her closer to the societal standard of beauty, the fact is that these types of standards are always hard to meet in reality. Filters are used for many different reasons; e.g., some women use filters to gain more followers and/or "likes" on social media. The number of likes a person receives on social media can potentially have an impact on their perception of self and/or beauty.

<u>Social Media Likes</u>

Jang, Han, Shih, and Lee (2015) "reported that teens often manipulate photographs on Instagram as a way to generate more likes. If the photograph does not receive an appropriate number of likes, as decided by the poster, the post is often deleted" (p. 4042). A person's self-esteem can be affected in a negative way if they constantly compare the number of likes they receive on a photo to the number of likes their friends receive on a photo. The number of likes a woman receives on her selfies or groupies can have either a positive or negative impact on her self-esteem.

Tiggermann, Hayden, Brown, and Veldhuis (2018) were interested in the effects the number of likes young women receive on their photos have on their own body image. The researchers reasoned that the number of likes a photo receives would be taken as a reflection of the collective opinion of other Instagram users as to the worth and attractiveness of the person who posted the image/video (p. 91). Tiggermann et al.'s study examines the effect of number of likes (low/high) on Instagram images and if it influences body dissatisfaction. For this study, the researchers looked at both thin-ideal and average figures. The participants were female undergraduate students between the ages of ages 18-30. The researchers had participants examine Instagram images of women and to rate each image on the thinness, attractiveness, and visual quality of each item. The researchers also examined how participants interpreted the number of likes on mock Instagram pages. There were a specific number of likes on each

Instagram profile. Low number of likes varied from 1-10 and high likes ranged

from 100-300. The participants were asked about the type of social networking

sites they use and how much time they spend on these sites. The researchers

measured how the participants felt after viewing images on Instagram, and how

they compared themselves to the images they viewed on Instagram. Lastly,

participants were asked about their Instagram use, including the number of

pictures they upload each month. Results indicated that participants would use

Instagram approximately 30-60 minutes a day. The number of pictures uploaded

every month was approximately one to five images. Participants in the thin ideal

condition also rated the images they saw as significantly thinner than the

participants in the average condition. When it came to body dissatisfaction, the

results indicated that the number of likes on the viewed images in the study did

not result in greater body dissatisfaction. For facial dissatisfaction, viewing a

higher number of likes led to lower, rather than greater, facial dissatisfaction. The

results indicated that exposure to thin-ideal images lead to greater facial

dissatisfaction than average images. For social comparison, participants who

viewed thin-ideal images aroused more state appearance comparison than the

average images. Lastly, for Instagram involvement, the researchers concluded

that "time spent on Instagram, average number of likes, and like investment was

positively related to comparison on the basis of number of likes" (Tiggermann et

al., 2018, p. 94). The results of this study illustrated how the likes users receive

on social media can affect a user's perceptions of their own body image.

This literature review provides insight into how social media can have an impact on young women and how they perceive themselves. Filters and fitspirations are popular content on social media. The studies in this literature review have a few common themes; women *compare* themselves to others on social media and they want to *look a certain way to be accepted by their peers*. These themes connect with a few theories that will help better explain my current study. Social comparison and expectancy violation theories explain how young women on social media want to look a certain way due to the images they view and filters use while using these platforms.

Theoretical Perspective

Many individuals deal with self-esteem and body image issues when viewing beauty content on social media because they are comparing themselves to others. Two communication theories that are helpful in explaining those connections among heavy users of social media are social comparison theory and expectancy violation theory. Social comparison theory helps scholars understand why individuals compare themselves to others. Social comparison theory was first proposed by Festinger (1954) as an attempt to understand how "social activities influence an individual's self-evaluation. Festinger argued that people are motivated to evaluate themselves to reduce uncertainty" (as cited in Liu, Li, Carcioppolo, & North, 2016 p. 619). Social media is one of the most common platforms in which social comparison takes place; sites such as Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook allow users to upload photos of themselves

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which can sometimes cause a person to compare themselves and their photos to their peers and public figures. In a study conducted by Cramer, Song, and Drent (2016), the researchers explained the link between college students, social comparison, and self-esteem. "Social comparison motivations were explored in relation to self-esteem and affective consequences of comparison" (Cramer et al., 2016, p. 739). The scholars examined how students with lower self-esteem compared themselves more than those with higher self-esteem. The results of the study showed that there was a relationship between self-esteem and social comparison practices (i.e., activity and motivations) on Facebook. There was no significant relationship between self-esteem and social comparison activity on Facebook (meaning that self-esteem was not related to individual's engagement of social comparison on Facebook). For this study, self-esteem was not associated with Facebook usage, posting, and reading messages. Although some may think positive content would increase self-worth and self-esteem, it could cause others the opposite and make them feel worse about their life.

On social media, many individuals encounter positive posts; e.g., posts of people presenting the positive side of their life. Some use their platform to encourage others and uplift them. Viewing these positive posts can have either a positive or a negative effect on the user's mood. When someone posts on the positive side of their life, it can cause others to be envious of them because they are now comparing their life to those they see on social media. "A growing body of research studying social media from a social comparison perspective suggests

that browsing others' positive posts has negative effects on mood through envy and the feeling that others have a better life" (de Vries, Möller, Wieringa, Eigenraam & Hamelink 2018, p. 223). De Vries et al.'s study examined the effects of viewing strangers' positive posts on Instagram. This experiment investigated the emotional consequences of viewing these posts. When it comes to Instagram, the researchers believe that "from a social comparison perspective, strangers' positive posts on social media are expected to negatively affect viewers' emotions" (de Vries et al., 2018, p. 222). From a cognitive perspective, the researchers believe that strangers' positive posts should positively affect viewers' emotions. The researchers recruited 130 college students to participate in their study. Participants were assigned to one of the three conditions which were positive post, neutral post, or no post. Using a 5-point scale, participants were presented with 20 different emotional states and indicated how much each emotional state corresponded with how they felt at that moment (p. 234). Lastly, to measure social comparison orientation, the researchers used a shortened version of Iowa–Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM) (INCOM measures the likelihood that an individual will make comparisons). The results of this study indicate that individuals who tend to compare themselves to others reported lower positive effect when viewing positive posts on social media, which was in support of the social comparison perspective. Individuals who tend not to engage in social comparison reported higher positive effects after viewing positive content on social media, which supports the emotional contagion perspective. "These findings indicate that individual differences in processing

tendencies lead people to respond to social information on social media in opposite ways" (de Vries et al., 2018, p. 239).

Viewing positive content on social media can also affect an individual's self-esteem and self-worth. Stapleton, Luiz, and Chatwin (2017) conducted a study at Bond University in Australia. The researchers looked at the relationship between self-worth, self-esteem, and Instagram use. The participants in this study were young adults between the ages of 18-29. Approximately 237 young adults participated in this study. "This study aimed to test the merits of previous research proposing mediation models in relation to social media use, social comparison, and self-esteem or self-worth" (Stapleton et al., 2017, p. 143). After reviewing prior research, the authors anticipated:

> There would be a significant relationship between intensity of Instagram use and self-esteem, and that this would be mediated by social comparison on Instagram. There would be a significant relationship between contingent self-worth and self-esteem, and that this would be mediated by social comparison on Instagram. The relationship between intensity of Instagram use and social comparison on Instagram would be significantly moderated by self-worth contingent on approval from others. That is, the more the individual's self-worth is contingent on approval from others, the stronger the relationship between intensity of Instagram use and social comparison on Instagram. (p. 143)

For this study, the 11-item Iowa-Netherlands Comparison

Orientation Measure was used to examine individual differences in social

comparison habits. Participants were asked about how often they compare

themselves to other Instagram users. To measure Instagram use, Stapleton

et al. (2017) used the Facebook Intensity Scale (FIS). Since there is no

scale for Instagram, the researchers replaced the word Facebook with

"Instagram" and changed Facebook friends to "Instagram followers." To

measure self-esteem, the 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was used

to measure the participants' global evaluation of the self. Lastly, for self-

worth, the researchers used the 35-item Contingencies of Self Worth Scale,

which measures the approval from others when it comes to self-esteem (p.

144). The results indicated that individuals who base their self-worth on

others' approval are more likely to engage in social comparison on

Instagram. For those who engage in more social comparison on Instagram,

they are more likely to experience low self-esteem. How often people

compare themselves to others on Instagram is determined by how much the

opinions and approval of others matter to them and their self-worth. The

researchers concluded that people who use Instagram more often tend to

engage in social comparison, compared to those who do not use it as much.

In a qualitative study conducted by Solomon (2016), the study examined the

way in which a person is impacted by social media and the images they are

exposed to while using it. The study also examined how exposure to social

media images have the potential to affect the individual's self evaluation of

self. The participants in this study were eight young adult women ages 24-30. The researchers used semi-structured interviews that would "help capture the essence of individual experience with social media use, social comparison and social evaluation" (Solomon, 2016, p. 41). There were a few themes that were identified during this study. These themes include, "purpose of using social media, online social expectation, real identity vs. online identity, social comparison through viewing others' social media profiles, and the impact that social media has on its users" (Solomon, 2016, p. 44). The results indicated that all the participants used Facebook and Instagram to post photographs, filter photographs, and look at others' profiles. "Additionally, all participants identified that they look at others' profiles more than they post photographs or update their own status" (Solomon, 2016, p. 42). When it comes to posting a "status" on their social media pages, the results indicated that participants post photographs on their Facebook and Instagram more than they post a status. Like social comparison, expectancy violation theory has been used by researchers to understand the way individuals communicate and interact with others on social media.

In the book *Engaging Theories in Interpersonal Communication* (2015), the authors introduced Burgoon's (1993) expectancy violation theory (also known as EVT). "According to Burgoon (1993), expectancy is the communication sense that denotes an enduring pattern of anticipated behaviors" (Braithwaite & Schrodt,

2015, p. 218). EVT is a communication theory that tries to explain the unexpected

behaviors of individuals while they are interacting. Researchers can use EVT when

trying to understand social media and the expectations users have when using it.

Expectations can be violated in a negative way if a person posts a picture on

Instagram and the picture does not receive the attention and/or "likes" they initially

anticipated. This can cause someone to be insecure about their appearance. For

example, if a woman is self-conscious about her body and decides to post a

picture on social media and she does not receive the number of likes she

anticipated, it can lead to body dissatisfaction and negative body talk. It can also

increase her chances of using photo-editing tools for the near future. Alternatively,

if a woman posts a picture and receives many comments and likes, then her

expectations were violated in a positive way. Although posting a photo is not a

verbal interaction, the user is still interacting with her social media friends in a

nonverbal way. Each picture an individual post on social media connotes a

meaning.

Many social media users anticipate the kind of responses they will receive

from their friends, peers, etc. when they post content on social media. French and

Natalya (2018) explained two types of response expectancy violations: amount

violations and audience violations.

> Amount violations occur when the number of responses received
>
> on a post either exceeds (i.e., positive violation with more
>
> responses than expected) or, in contrast, fails to meet

expectations (i.e., negative violation with fewer responses than expected). Audience violations occur when there was a discrepancy between one's expected responsive audience and the actual audience who responded to a post. (pp. 1-2)

Prior research suggests that an individual's initial expectancies shape how outcomes are experienced. "In other words, people experience more positive emotion when positive events are unexpected and more negative emotions when negative events are unexpected" (French & Natalya, 2018, 2018, p. 2). Negative amount violation, positive amount violation, and audience violation were tested for this study. The participants in this study were college students ranging in age from 18-37. In order to test the hypotheses, the participants had to complete the sampling assessments and a retrospective survey. The results indicated a significant relationship between negative response violations for expected likes, response, and satisfaction. French and Natalya's findings indicated that there was an interaction between negative violation and satisfaction was only present for likes and not comments. Like negative violations, the researchers found that when dealing with positive amount violations, greater satisfactions was associated with a post that received more comments than expected, compared to a post that received the expected number of comments. "There was no difference in reported satisfaction between exceeding one's expectations for likes and meeting one's expectations for likes" (French & Natalya, 2018, p. 6). Lastly, when it comes to audience vioaltions, the results indicated that "people were less

satisfied with "likes" they received when some or all their expected responsive audience did not respond" (French & Natalya, 2018, p. 7).

EVT connects to my present study of social media, filters, and self-esteem, because many young people expect to look a certain way on social media and expect to get a certain number of likes on their photos; and if they do not, their expectations are now violated in negative way which can cause low self-esteem. Social comparison theory connects to the present study because it is common for people to compare their images on social media to their peers and even celebrities. In the literature review section above, the studies explain how young people tend to compare their bodies and their facial appearance to their peers which can cause a person to have low self-esteem because they are comparing themselves to their friends/social media influencers. Although most of the studies mentioned are quantitative studies, these studies still connect to the theme of my current study and how people interpret the images they view and post on social media, and how it affects their perceptions of beauty and body image.

Research Questions

Based on the previous literature review, here are my research questions:

RQ1: How do female college students perceive beauty in general?

RQ2: How do female college students perceive beauty when using beauty filters on Snapchat and Instagram?

RQ3: Are these beauty images and filters affecting female college students' self-esteem and body image?

RQ4: How do female college students interpret the fitspiration beauty images they view on Instagram?

RQ5: Do the number of "likes" female college students receive on their filtered photos versus nonfiltered photos affect their perceptions of beauty and their self-esteem?

By asking these questions, I hope to understand if these beauty filters female college students use on Instagram and Snapchat affect their self-esteem and body image. I want to better understand female college students' perceptions of beauty when they use filters and view filtered images on social media, as well as view fitspirations on social media. When my participants use beauty filters, I want to know how these filters make them feel versus how they feel when they post pictures without using filters. By asking these questions, I hope to get my participants thinking about how these beauty filters and beauty images shape their perceptions of beauty.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

This study was conducted using narrative interviews, which are "open-ended, relatively unstructured interviews that encourage the participant to tell stories rather than just answer questions (Tracy, 2013, p. 141). Allowing my participants to express their experiences using social media will help me answer my research questions. According to Kellner (2014), one aspect of cultural studies that gives a unique perspective on media consumption is audience analysis. "Members of distinct genders, classes, races, nations, regions, sexual preferences, and political ideologies are going to read text differently, and cultural studies can illuminate why diverse audiences interpret texts in various, sometimes, conflicting, ways" (p. 14). Instagram and Snapchat are the two social media platforms that I focused on for my study because both social media sites are popular among young people. By using a qualitative research method for my study, I was able to individually interview each participant and better understand how the beauty images and filters they view and/or use on these platforms affect their perceptions of beauty and body image.

Participants

The participants for this study consisted of 18 college female students between the ages of 18 and 30 from a California university. To get different perspectives on this study, I interviewed a variety of students from different age groups and ethnicities. Participants' ethnicities varied (4 African American, 2

Asian, 5 Caucasian, and 7 Hispanic). All participants were in active student status ranging from undergraduate to graduate level.

Recruitment

Snowball sampling was used to recruit my participants. I first approached some of my peers who I believed qualified to be a part of my study and proceeded to ask them to spread the word to any of their friends who attend CSUSB. As a graduate teaching associate at my university, I informed my students who qualified to participate in my study if they would be interested in taking part in it. To decipher if they qualified for my study or not, I told them that they had to be a female college student at least 18-years of age, and had to be an active social media users who checked social media on a daily or weekly basis (e.g., spend 30 minutes to an hour on social media daily, or 8 hours a week). Social media sites included Snapchat and Instagram.

Data Collection

Participants were individually interviewed for approximately 25-30 minutes; interview length depended on each participant and how much they decided to disclose and share. Each interview was audio recorded. I asked each participant approximately eight interview questions. (Appendix A). As a researcher, I provided a quiet and safe environment to conduct my interviews where my participants felt comfortable sharing their social media experiences. After I completed all the interviews, I began the transcription process for easier narrative

analysis. After all the interviews were transcribed, I analyzed the data to identify common patterns and themes in relation to the theories of social comparison and expectancy violation.

Institutional Review Board

This study followed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures by ensuring that all the participants, as well as the study process, were treated according to the IRB ethical guidelines. Each participant was asked to sign a consent form and an audio consent form. The consent form provided information to the participants explaining what the study was about, potential risk and benefits of the interview process, and it also requested participants' permission to allow me to use their interview to conduct my study. The audio consent form, like the original consent form, informs my participants that with their permission, I would be audio recording each interview so I could better analyze data and transcribe interviews. The forms also gave detailed information about participants' privacy protection. The purpose of the consent form was to give each participant a better insight on what my study was about and to assure them that their safety and privacy are important. I reminded each participant that what is said in the interviews will only be used for my research study and nothing else. The interviews and audio recordings were locked in a safe and secure place where only I had access to. To ensure the privacy of my participants, I will not be disclosing any of my participants' government names in this study. A copy of both consent forms is attached to this study (Appendix B).

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis was used for this study. A "thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data. It is usually applied to a set of texts, such as interview transcripts. The researcher closely examines the data to identify common themes" (Caulfield, 2019, para.1). During each interview, I took brief notes. After I finished interviewing all my participants, I reviewed my notes and audio recordings. After reviewing my audio recordings, I transcribed each interview and looked for common patterns. Each pattern/theme was examined to better understand my participants' social media experience and how the filters and beauty images they view and use on social media had an impact on their self-perception. During each interview, I was attentive and listened to what each participant had to say. During the interview process, I jotted down parts of the interviews that stood out to me the most. As a researcher, I paid close attention to what my participants had to say, making sure I had a clear understanding of what they were saying so I can look for common themes and ask any follow up questions if needed. Once I identified the common patterns, I was able to answer my research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

In this study, my findings confirm that my participants believe that social media and society put unrealistic beauty standards on young women. These unrealistic beauty standards may cause young women to feel insecure about their appearance, causing them to use filters to hide their imperfections and photoshop their bodies, and compare themselves to others while using these social media platforms. Each participant in this study is an active social media user who uses Instagram and/or Snapchat daily or weekly. The time spent on social media varied. Approximately 5 out of my 18 participants spend at least one to two hours per day on Instagram and/or Snapchat while my other participants spend approximately three to five hours on these platforms. Approximately 9 out of my 18 participants said that they prefer using beauty filters when they take photos because they like the way they look with a filter versus without a filter. Instagram and Snapchat have a variety of beauty filters that people can choose from. Filters include those that change a person's complexion (making their face/body lighter); that alter a person's nose or jaw line, and that hides blemishes, and that enhance lips and eyes. My findings helped me better understand how my participants interpret the beauty images they view on these platforms and how these beauty images affect them (either in a negative or a positive way). In this section, I will be presenting my main findings and explain

the patterns that I identified while conducting my interviews, linking those findings back to my research questions.

Findings

RQ1: *How do female college students perceive beauty in general?*

Beauty is a word that has different shades of meaning depending on the person(s). For my study, many of the participants used one word to describe beauty which is "confidence."

Participant 1 said: *To me, beauty is the confidence someone presents no matter how they look like. Some people will go under the knife and change their look and still not be happy.*

Participant 3 said: *Beauty is having confidence in yourself. But it is hard to have confidence when you go on Instagram. There are times I find it exhausting going on Instagram and seeing overly attractive females. It sucks sometimes going on Instagram and seeing these girls looking perfect and sometimes it takes them 20 minutes to take that perfect picture. They try to show us this reality they live but it is not their true reality.*

Participant 6 said: *Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. We all define beauty differently. I do not follow a lot of celebrities, so I am not affected by what they post as much. Lately I have come to see everything as beautiful.*

Participant 16 said: *I really think beauty comes from within and is more about someone's spirit and the attitudes they naturally exude. I feel like people are beautiful when they are comfortable being themselves, when they feel confident and it shows.*

Participant 18 said: *To me confidence is what makes a person beautiful. Not letting social media or anyone tell you that you are not beautiful. If you feel beautiful that is all that matters.*

My participants believe that confidence makes someone beautiful and knowing that they are beautiful despite society's standards. A few of my participants expressed how constantly being on social media every day does undermine their confidence, because they are constantly comparing themselves to these beauty images. After talking about their perceptions of beauty, we discussed Instagram and Snapchat and if the beauty filters they use on these platforms changed their perceptions/views of beauty.

RQ2: *How do female college students perceive beauty when using beauty filters on Snapchat and Instagram?*

Out of my 18 participants, approximately 15 of them use beauty filters while on social media. All 18 participants have used some type of social media filters (such as silly filters that give users dog ears and dog nose). Results indicated that my participants who were in their 30s did not use beauty filters at all compared to my participants who were 18 to 25-years old. Many of my participants explained

why they used beauty filters; they love the way these filters hide their blemishes and how they restructure their faces, and give them the looks that they want without having to go get any cosmetic procedures done. Many participants explained how they feel beautiful when they use these beauty filters. My participants feel confident using beauty filters because these filters are giving them a certain "look" that makes them feel confident about their appearance. What beauty means to them while using these filters is having no flaws and looking their best self. Approximately 12 out of my 18 participants explained how they loved that these beauty filters give them bigger eyes and fuller lips, but they are also aware that these filters are not how they realy look like.

Participant 1 said: *I wish I can snap my fingers and my face would be smooth like these filters, but I know that cannot happen unless I pay an expensive dermatologist.*

Participant 2 said: *While using Instagram and Snapchat I love the filter that makes my lips look fuller, the one that stretches my eyes out making them bigger; there is this one filter that contours your face, and the filters that make my skin look flawless. I love using those.*

Participant 8 said: *My perception of beauty has changed a lot. I think these filters are providing beauty standards that people cannot meet and many people can't afford to change their appearance. It is hard to fit in, in a world that tells you that you need to be perfect.*

Participant 18 said: *When I use beauty filters on Instagram and Snapchat, I feel flawless. There are so many filters that make my skin look beautiful, that is one reason I like to use them.*

My younger participants love using beauty filters that change their appearance, while my older participants love the cute/silly ones. Two of my participants who are in their 30s explain how they only use the silly and cute filters.

Participant 13 said: *I love the cute Instagram and Snapchat filters. I like the teddy bear filter and the one that gives me glasses. I like those two filters because they are cute. I only use cute ones like the dog ears. I do not care to use beauty filters. The reason I use Snapchat is to be cute and funny. Not to change my appearance. I am not a fan of Snapchat filters that change my appearance and make me look like something I am not.*

Participant 17 said: *I have never put filters on my selfie. I am not really a big selfie person anyways. I feel like it [selfie] should be real. I have seen the cute silly ones. I do not mind using those.*

One of my participants, an international student from China explained how using beauty filters in China is normal; while taking pictures, it is normal for them to use a filter to alter their images.

Participant 7 said: *Filters are very common in China. It is not popular, it is common. Majority of all Chinese females use it. They use it to make themselves*

look slimmer and tone their face. I use a lot of filters as well. There is a Chinese

app with thousands of filters that we can download and choose from.

Participant 7 explains how she does not like to use Instagram filters and

that she prefers the Chinese beauty filters.

Participant 7 continues: *I have tried Instagram filters and I do not like the way*

they make me look. I love filters that make my eyes bigger, but filters on the

Chinese apps versus Instagram filters are different. Chinese filters are like make

up effects and Instagram filters change your whole entire face. Chinese filters

can make me look like I am wearing lipstick and eye shadow even though I am

not wearing any.

Next, I wanted to better understand if these beauty filters my participants

use on social media have an impact on their self-esteem and their body image,

which leads me to my next research question.

RQ3: *Are these beauty images and filters affecting female college*

students' self-esteem and body image?

All 18 participants agreed that beauty filters and altered images can indeed

affect self-esteem and body image, and they have personally affected some of

them as well. My participants explained how they sometimes compare

themselves to others on social media due to the beauty images they view. Out of

my 18 participants, 10 believed that these filters had a negative effect on how

they view themselves. They feel that they must look a certain way in order to be

viewed as "beautiful." They believe many beauty companies put these beauty

filters on social media because that is how society wants women to look. All 18

participants believe society puts pressure on young women to look a certain way and that is one of the main reasons they use beauty filters.

Participant 2 said: *I do believe beauty images and filters on Instagram and Snapchat affect self-esteem; it has affected my own self-esteem in a negative way. These beauty filters and images make me feel like I have to look a certain way in order to look beautiful. Also, many beauty images I view on social media affects how I view my body. I do not look like my peers or these Instagram models who are skinny, so I am very insecure about my body.*

Participant 3 said: *I absolutely believe these beauty images and filters have a negative impact on self-esteem and body image. Some people are obsessed with using filters. The fact that we want to use it and have access to look for specific filters that make us feel beautiful and sometimes different is deceitful. It is also harmful because I have seen many young women on campus sitting there swiping through beauty filters that they plan on using for their selfie. I have witnessed this many times. When I traveled abroad I saw these girls using filters so they can look "perfect" in all their photos.*

Participant 4 said: *People use beauty filters so they can look perfect. I believe filters are a problem and it will become a bigger problem in the future because females have a desire to look perfect and change their appearance. One thing I am learning is that it is important to love yourself the way you are.*

Participant 18 said: *I think there needs to be more programs and more messages from these social media platforms that encourages us (as social media users) to love ourselves. Because sometimes we can get a little too*

comfortable using these filters that we sometimes forget our identity. We need to love ourselves more than we love these beauty filters.

Participant 9 said*: I do think these filters are affecting the way we define beauty, because these social media platforms are creating filters that make us look a certain way. We do not look like these filters. My opinion on beauty filters, it does more harm than good. When I use filters, I start to compare myself, wishing I looked like these pretty filters all the time.*

Participant 10 said: *I agree that beauty filters affect college females (young women in general) self-esteem and body image. It has affected the way I look at myself. I blame society. Society has this higher expectation for young women. We get judged more than men. We get judged by how we look, dress, and our body shape. That is one reason many women are getting plastic surgery, because the pressure to look perfect like these filters, and it is really sad.*

Results indicated that beauty filters can do more harm than good, and society's beauty expectations for young women is one reason why many young women use beauty filters. They have a notion that they are more beautiful with these filters than without them. As we discussed beauty filters and beauty images affecting self-esteem and body image, I proceeded to ask them about fitspirations (fitness inspirations). I wanted to know if these fitspirational contents they view on social media motivate them or lower their self-esteem and cause body dissatisfaction.

RQ4: *How do female college students interpret the fitspiration beauty images they view on Instagram?*

My participants had different views on fitspirations. Fitspirations are fitness inspirations that are intended to motivate people to live a healthier lifestyle and work out. Out of my 18 participants, two have never come across any fitspirations while on social media; 13 out of 18 say fitspirations motivate them to live a healthier lifestyle and to work out; and three out of 18 believe fitspirations are false advertisements that can make young women feel bad about their appearance.

Participant 3 said*: I rather follow fitspirational pages on Instagram than follow Instagram models. With fitspirations I feel the content they release is more natural compared to Instagram models who alter their face and photoshop their body. When I come across fitspirational pages it motivates me to do the workout and follow the diets.*

Participant 4 said: *I think it depends on the page. Some fitspiration accounts like to push diets on others, I do not like that. But there are some accounts that encourage us to get up and be active. When the message is encouraging it helps encourage me to workout.*

Participant 6 said: *Honestly, I am not a fan of fitspirations. They make me feel bad about my appearance. I start to compare my body to my peers who work out or the fitness influencers and it makes me look down on myself… Some*

fitspirational pages have diets we can follow and when I follow the diets and I see
no results I feel discouraged.

Participant 8 said: *I recently started following fitspirations for motivation to work*
out. I used to put myself down and body shame myself when I would look at
images of fit women because I wanted to look like them. So, I started following
fitspirational pages on Instagram; with the workouts and diet plans these pages
give, it motivates me to keep pushing to reach my fitness goals. I do not compare
myself, instead I tell myself I can get there if I work hard.

Participant 11 said: *In a way they [fitspirations] push me to want to be in better*
shape and healthier, especially when these fitness influencers post their before
and after pictures. It makes me feel like I can reach my goals if I work hard. But
again, I feel like it [fitspiration] glorifies what society believes young women
should look like and it makes women feel insecure about themselves. Society is
showing us that a "gym body" is how all females should look like, and as women
we are not considered healthy or pretty if we do not look like these fitness
models.

Participant 12 said*: I do see them as inspirations. It motivates me and shows*
me if these fitness influencers can do it I can too.. For example, one fitness
influencer Chloe Ting, she inspires me to go out and lose weight. I do not feel
insecure about my body when I watch Chloe Ting workout videos and other
fitness influencers, because I know if I work out and eat healthy my body can
change.

My final research question is about social media "likes" and if the number of likes people receive on their photos have an impact on how they perceive themselves.

RQ5: *Do the number of "likes" female college students receive on their filtered photos versus nonfiltered photos affect their perceptions of beauty?*

Results indicated that the number of likes my participants receive on their photos (filtered versus nonfiltered) does affect their perceptions of beauty. Out of my 18 participants, 14 said that the number of likes they receive on their photos does affect their perceptions of beauty. For example, they explained that if they were to post a picture of themselves using a beauty filter and that picture receives more likes than their nonfiltered photo they posted, it would make them feel insecure about their appearance, making them feel that people prefer their filtered self instead of their natural self. They also explained how, in general, not receiving the number of likes they are expecting on a photo can make them feel insecure and possibly delete the picture. Meanwhile, 4 out of my 18 participants do not care for social media likes. Having many likes on their photos does not affect their perceptions of beauty.

Participant 3 said: *Honestly, it does affect my perception of beauty. Because it makes me feel like I have to put on a "face" in order to be liked. Like everything must be pleasing for people to like. I feel like I am catering to people when I use filters just to get likes. When I am sending photos to friends and family I feel like I*

do not have to put a filter on my photos. But when I post on my actual Instagram page I feel like I have to please my audience.

Participant 4 said: *I do like "likes". If I don't get a certain number of likes per minute I get insecure about the picture I posted, and I start to second guess it and delete it. When it comes to my filtered versus nonfiltered photo of course it would affect how I view myself if my filtered photos received more likes than my nonfiltered photos. I would feel like I am not good enough and I have to change my appearance for my peers to find me pretty.*

Participant 5 said: *I feel pretty with or without a filter. But it has happened once where my filtered photo received more likes. It honestly made me feel bad about myself. I felt like I was being told I look prettier with a filter on.*

Participant 6 said: *It would affect me. I would feel my regular self is not good enough. I posted two selfies with no filters and it didn't get that many likes, so I ended up deleting it. I would compare my friend's photos to myself. My friend would get all these likes and I would not. It would make me feel bad about myself. It is very sad how society is telling people that the way they look naturally with no filters is not okay.*

Participant 10 said: *When I take a picture with no filter and that picture does not receive the number of likes I am expecting, it makes me feel bad about myself. Like for me to look "perfect" and "liked" I need to take pictures with filters. In general, I feel insecure about my pictures I post if I do not receive at least 200*

likes. Since I have 800 followers on Instagram, I would need over 200 likes or I feel my followers didn't think I looked good in my photo.

Participant 13 said: *There have been many times where I would have more likes with filters and I would have lots of comments from guys, friends, and peers saying how beautiful my face looks in the picture. They are complimenting my filtered photo where my acne is not showing, and I look like I have perfect skin. I have noticed my number of likes increase when I post pictures with filters on them. Not just me but most girls. I have noticed most of my friends only post selfies with filters.*

In my literature review section, I introduced a term called Snapchat dysmorphia. Instead of wanting to change their appearance to look like a celebrity, many people are taking their filtered photos and asking their plastic surgeons to change their appearance to look just like their filtered photo. I discussed this trend with my participants where many of them gave their opinion on this matter and answered if they cosmetically changed their appearance to look more like their filtered photos. Out of my 18 participants, 5 said they would alter their appearance cosmetically to look like their filtered photos.

Participant 2 said: *The lip filter on Instagram is my favorite filter, because I like the way it makes my lips look. I am insecure about my lips. I would get my lips done if I could. On Snapchat there are so many filters that make my face look flawless and perfect and give me the perfect cheekbones. I would get my cheekbones done if I had the money.*

Participant 3 said: *I don't think I would cosmetically change my bone structure. But this one filter that makes you look like you have make up, yes I love that! I love the way it makes my face look smaller. If a surgeon could make me look like I have permanent make up on I would do it because I am too lazy to do my makeup every day and my face just looks smaller and I like that.*

Participant 5 said: *I feel like every girl loves the lip filters. The filter gives you a glimpse of life with fuller lips and I like that one. Also, I have a lot of acne and there is this one filter on Snapchat I love to use that covers my blemishes. If a doctor can give me this face (with no acne) I am in!*

Participant 7 said: *No, I would never do that. First, I think beauty is a trend. People change their nose, eyebrows…. But I think in two to three years this would not be a trend anymore. Also, if young women practice different makeup techniques, they can have a certain look they want without the surgery. I do not believe all females are made to look the same, we can look different. I feel like plastic surgery is risky and dangerous thing so I would not want to do it.*

Participant 10 said: *Would I change my face cosmetically? Hmm yes and no. Yes, because the person that I see in the (filtered) pictures I love, and I feel more confident and want to post it and the way I look right this second, I would not post it. But I use makeup to cover my imperfections. I haven't thought about what I would get done cosmetically but I would also want to if I had money to look like my filtered photo so I can be confident in myself. I also say no, because at times I do not care what people think about me, but at times it does get to me. If I could*

change my lips I would. I have a double chin that I would love to change and also

my nose, there is filter I use that help shape my nose and makes it look better.

Participant 11 said*: Honestly, no. I would never alter my face, but I know if I*

take care of my face it would look like the filters. If I change myself to look like

these filters, I feel like that is saying I do not love myself and how I was created

Having presented the results of my study, I will now point out the common

patterns that I was able to identify in my interviews. One common pattern that

kept reoccurring in my study is that all 18 participants connected filters, self-

esteem, "likes" and body image to society. Just like Jean Kilbourne explains in

her film *Killing me Softly*, the magazines, televsion and internet and other media,

that many young women view can potentially cause more harm than good by

making them feel like they have to change their appearance to fit into what

society believes they should look like. Each participant had something to say

about society putting pressure on women to look a certain way. Pressure to look

a certain way made them feel insecure about their appearance, which leads me

to the next pattern. Many of the participants explained how beauty images made

them feel insecure about how they looked because they were comparing their

bodies and wanting to look like their peers and social media influencers. The

pressure to look perfect is one reason why many of my participants use beauty

filters. Although not all 18 participants use beauty filters, the most common

reason for those that do was that they use them to hide their acne and help

smooth out their skin. Now that I have noted the patterns in my data, I will

expand on these patterns in my discussion section.

CHAPTER FIVE

DICSUSSION

In the previous section, I summarized my findings and identified the main patterns that I gleaned out of my interviews. Next, I will expand on the patterns that were identified in the study, then I will discuss the limitations and suggested direction for future research. For my study, a qualitative research method was used to answer my research questions and analyze my findings. In the results section, one theme that kept reoccurring is the pressures interviewees felt from society's beauty standards for women. Many participants explained how they felt society puts pressure on women to look a certain way. My participants explained how society's definition of beauty is usually of someone who has nice lips, beautiful shaped body (e.g., fit), nice eyes, etc. some of these young women in my study felt they did not fit the description of society's beauty standards and sometimes felt pressured to change their appearance. After interviewing my participants I realized that defining beauty as "confidence" is powered by false appearance perfection. Many of my participants feel confident when they are using beauty filters. They know the filters are not how they truly look like, it just hides their imperfections. Many young women use beauty filters for various reasons. Due to this pressure, my participants believe that young women alter their photos and use beauty filters so they can fit in and fit the description of what society calls beautiful; they modify their self-presentations to fit in. Hong et al. (2018) expands on how people modify their self-presentations so they can fit in with others and look more favorable and/or desirable to their peers and strangers, and Hong et al. explains how social media

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filters are becoming the new norm. Many of my participants agreed that beauty filters are becoming a very common tool people use to alter their images. When asked how they define beauty, the majority of them responded that beauty is the confidence someone exudes. Despite this, many of them still struggle with confidence while on social media; because of the pressure to look like the beautiful young women on Instagram. For many of my participants it is hard for them to be confident when society puts pressure on them to look a certain way. These beauty filters also affect their confidence because as soon as they remove the filter, they start to compare their appearance with a filter versus without one. Adam (2019) explains how "these digital tweaks that obscure your flaws are setting an unrealistic standard of beauty and that can take a toll on one's self-esteem" (para. 3). During the interviews, many participants expressed how they have lower self-esteem due to not looking like their filtered photo, and not fitting society's description of beauty. In an interview with Jean Kilbourne she explains the pressures young women go through due to society's beauty standards, which come from sources other than social media. These beauty standards come from other areas besides social media. Many magazines post images of women looking "seductive" and their "perfect" bodies. These images can influence young women start to compare themselves to these models, and wish they looked more like them. "Advertising, in many ways, has gotten worse over time. The tyranny of the ideal image of beauty has persisted and become even more pervasive through digital retouching" (Kilbourne & Timke, 2018, para. 8).

Many of my participants explained how beauty filters made them feel insecure about the appearance of their face and body; they were comparing their appearance to their peers, and especially social media influencers. Many participants explained how they would start to compare their body to what they see on Instagram and feel insecure and discouraged because they feel they are not as attractive as the women online. In my literature review, I introduced a theory by Festinger (1954) called social comparison theory. This theory helps scholars understand why people compare themselves to others. In this case, many of my participants compared themselves because they wanted to feel and look just as "beautiful" and "fit" as the women they saw on these social media platforms. During the interviews many participants explained how the use of beauty filters makes them compare themselves to the filters they use. They start to compare how their appearance looks with a filter versus without a filter. Comparing can lead to negative body talk and insecurities (when it comes to body image), but after interviewing my participants, my results indicated that not all beauty pages on Instagram (such as fitspirations) made young women feel insecure about their body. Many of my participants explained how the fitspirational content they viewed motivated them and did encourage body positivity. They explained how these inspirational contents helped motivate them to live a healthier lifestyle and to work hard. This is similar to Cohen et al.'s (2019) study that examined body positive images on social media. The results indicated that body positive content might help improve young women's body image. Although some of my participants explained that fitspirations and fitness influencers on social media motivated them, a few of my participants did not agree. Some of my participants expressed that they did not feel confident about their bodies which led to

negative body talk. Negative body talk usually occurs when a person experiences body dissatisfaction and talks negatively about their body (e.g., body shaming), sometimes comparing themselves to their friends, wishing they could look just as skinny and/or as fit. As noted in my literature review, Arroyo & Brunner (2016) conducted a study about negative body talk and concluded that their participants who were more exposed to their friends' fitness posts constantly compared themselves to others and experienced more of a negative social media experience and were more likely to experience negative body talk. Similarly, my participants experienced negative body talk when they were exposed to their friends' as well as social media influencers' accounts. Negative body talk can also lead to a young woman wanting to cosmetically change her flaws. Now many young women are seeking plastic surgery to fix their imperfections. Rather wanting to look like celebrities, now "more and more people want to look like themselves -- a phone-edited version of themselves, that is" (Rogers, 2018, para. 1). After interviewing my participants a few of them expressed how they would love to get their lips cosmetically enhanced to look like their filtered photos. There are many filters on Snapchat and Instagram that enhance a person's lips. Many young women have expressed how much they love these lip filters. There are a few filters on social media that completely alters a person's entire face (altering jawlines, contoured nose, and perfect cheekbones, etc..). These types of filters are unrealistic and make young people feel self-conscious about their nonfiltered appearance. Quoted in Rogers (2018) Neelam Vashi, MD, is the director of the Cosmetic and Laser Center at Boston University; expressed concerns with beauty filters. "People want to look beautiful. That's a natural part of living in our society, however, I really do believe that social media is

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propagating and accentuating these unrealistic expectations of beauty" (para. 7). Vashi says patients often complain about their facial features from certain selfie angles. Some people want their nose to look a certain way, with a specific angle that Snapchat filters give them. "Giving them the nose they want in a manipulated selfie would mean giving them a really small and weird-looking nose in real life…" (Rogers, 2018, para. 14). Vashi explained how she would have to tell patients seeking a smaller nose like their filtered selfie that having a nose that small would probably give them breathing issues. Although many people love how they look while using these beauty filters, some of these filters are unrealistic and can potentially cause health problems (such as breathing issues when it comes to wanting a smaller nose). As Wang, Rieder, Schoenberg, Zachary, and Saedi (2020) noted "Despite it being nearly impossible to look like filtered selfies, people often go to great lengths to emulate their idealized images" (p.1129). It is also important for plastic surgeons and other health care practitioners to warn patients about these unrealistic filters and to explain possible health risks. Wang et al. (2020) explain how it is important for these esthetic practitioners to recognize the filtered selfie trend when they evaluate patients. "If presented with a highly filtered photograph, practitioners should screen patients for warning signs and unrealistic expectations. Medical practitioners have professional and bioethical obligations to hold the safety of patients above all else" (Wang et al., 2020, p. 1130). Obsessing over the way one looks is a red flag for plastic surgeons and psychiatrists. Experts explain, "the greatest danger of Snapchat dysmorphia is that it can trigger body dysmorphic disorder (BDD)" (Rogers, 2018, para. 18).

In my results section, many of my participants explained how the number of likes they receive on their photos does affect their perceptions of beauty. If they receive less likes than expected it makes them feel insecure about their picture. Burgoon (1993) expectancy violation theory explains that expectancy is the communication sense that denotes an enduring pattern of anticipated behaviors. My participants expectations can be violated in a negative way if they do not receive the number of likes they are anticipating. Their expectations can be violated in a positive way if they exceed the number of likes received on their photos, or they receive the number of likes they were anticipating.

Lastly, another pattern that kept recurring in my study is the reason why many of my participants love using beauty filters. Many participants expressed their reasoning behind their love for beauty filters; that is, to hide their blemishes. My participants explained how these beauty filters hide their acne by smoothing out their skin, making them look like they have no blemishes. Having smooth skin is what many of my participants (young women in general) desire to have to make them feel confident about themselves. As I interviewed my participants, I realized that using beauty filters is becoming a norm for many people (especially young women), not just people in the United States but all over the world. Consistent with Nui's study, one of my participants who is an international student from China explained how using filters is very common for young Chinese women. For many women, beauty filters fix "their problems" temporarily and make them feel beautiful, while for others, it is creating a bigger problem which can lead to low self-esteem issues, and negative body talk. My

participants agree that social media filters are increasingly an issue for young women and how they perceive themselves. Creating programs that help spread awareness and promote self-love and confidence are one way that could help young women feel confident without the use of beauty filters. Today, there are a few social media campaigns that promote self-love and are trying to change the narrative of society's perceptions of beauty. One company that promotes self-love and confidence for young women is Dove. Dove is not just a company that promotes skincare products, but also promotes campaigns on social media that encourage people (especially young women) to embrace their (natural) beauty. My Beauty My Say and the Dove Self-Esteem Project are two campaigns that promote self-confidence and encourage people to love themselves and not let society define their definition of beauty. Dove encourages young people to use the hashtag #MyBeautyMySay on social media so they can join the conversation and be a part of the beauty movement. The Dove website explains:

> It has become the norm to judge women based on their appearance and use their beauty against them. With #MyBeautyMySay campaign we feature stories of amazing women who stood up for their own beauty. Help encourage women everywhere to stand up for their own beauty by sharing your story using #MyBeautyMySay. (para. 2)

The mission of Dove's Self-Esteem Project "is to ensure that the next generation grows up enjoying a positive relationship with the way they look—helping young people raise their self-esteem and realize their full potential" ("Welcome to Dove", para. 2). Dove has partnered with experts in the field of psychology, health, and body image to

create different programs, including parenting advice, to help young people overcome body image issues and promote self-love. Dove has reached over 20 million young people with their campaigns and education.

Although some beauty companies such as Dove encoruage young people to embrace their natural beauty, not all companies will do the same. Many companies are selling ideas and values, not goods or products. Many beauty brands such as Covergirl and Mac cosmetics want women to feel beautiful with their products, therefore they will sell this notion that wearing their brands will make women feel and look confident. They are selling the idea to women that with their products they can look their best and look like these celebrities and models they see in the magazines and television.

Many beauty products target women and make them feel a need to buy their products. The message behind many of these beauty products, such as foundations, is that women can have the "filter effect" without having to use filters, if they (young women) buy these products. Many young women are not comfortable getting cosmetic procedures done, so they would rather spend money on beauty products. Many beauty companies need their consumers to "want" to buy their prodcuts; therefore, they use social media influencers such as Kim Kardashian and Kylie Jenner to sell their products, hoping that it will encourage consumers to buy the products. These beauty companies specifically target women and make them feel a need for change by promoting a specifc product tailored to them."The system of production often determines, in part, what sorts of artifacts will be produced, what structural limits will determine what can and cannot be said and shown, and what sorts of audience effects the text may generate" (Kellner,

2014, p.10). Political economy of production, according to Kellner, explains how businesses benefit from the production of a specific media messgae.These companies are benefiting from consumers because women want to buy their products to look "picture perfect" without having to get plastic surgery. A few of my participants expressed how they wear make up because it shapes their face without having to spend thousands of dollars on cosmetic surgeries. A few noted that they can not afford to spend that kind of money on surgery so they would rather spend the money they have on make up products. Kellner (2014) explained how "the products of media culture require multidimentional close textual readings to analyze their various forms of discourses, idealogical positions, narrative strategies, image construction, and effects" (p. 12). How young women interpret the messsges that are being tailored to them can potentially have a negative impact on them because they desire to look like something they are not.

Women have always been the target audience for beauty campaigns. One way these companies make women feel a need to buy their products is by attaching a celebrity who looks "flawless" with no imperfections to the product, now making women feel they can look just like that celebrity if they buy the product(s). For example the beauty company Covergirl uses celebrities like Zendaya to promote their products. Zendaya is a former Disney star and many of her fans are young girls. When young girls watch Zendaya and other celebrities they look up to wearing these products they now want to buy them because their favorite celebrity is promoting them. This is similar to what Kellner (14) concluded: "Looking toward entertainment, female pop music stars

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such as Madonna, Britney Spears, Beyonce, and Lady Gaga deploy the tools of the glamour industry and media spectacle to become icons of fashion, beauty, style, and sexuality, as well as purveyors of music" (p. 11). Beauty companies love to use celebrities to promote their products due their large fanbase and because their fans desire to look like them.

Today, celebrities get paid to promote products on their social media platforms. The level of stardom of those celebrities and their fanbase would determine how much money they would receive to promote a product on social media. Kylie Jenner is one celebrity who has a big fan base. According to her Instagram page, as of June 2020, Kylie has approximately 183 million followers. Hills (2020) explains how Kylie Jenner "stands to earn approximately $983,400 per sponsored post" (para. 2). Out of all her siblings, Kylie has the most valuable Instagram account. Many companies want Kylie to promote their brands due to her explosive fanbase. The majority of Kylie's fans are young girls who aspire to be and look like her; therefore they buy any products that she promotes. Kylie even has her own lipstick line that young girls obsess over. In June 2020, Kylie introduced a new lipstick in collaboration with her sister Kendall Jenner. After the drop of their new line, "nearly eight-hours later, Kylie, 22, took to her Instagram Story to announce that the entire collection had officially 'sold out' on the brand's web store" (Johnson, 2020, para. 2). Companies know Kylie has a massive fanbase who buy her products within minutes;therefore, companies will use Kylie to promote their own products.

Kim Kardashian is another celebrity with a huge fanbase. In June 2020, Kim took to Instagram to post a picture of herself wearing a corset. This corset made her waist look smaller than usual. These are the types of images young women view on social media. Many young women have body issues and experience negative body talk due to viewing images (such as the one Kim posted) and compare their bodies to these celebrities. Fitness and health companies benefit off of Kim promoting their products because her fans want a body like hers. Kim Kardashian explained on her Instagram post that she wore a similar corset at the 2019 Met Gala. Although many fans see Kim with a slim waist and the perfect figure when she wore her corset, she explains how she never felt so much pain in her life, and that the corset "left physical marks on her torso" (Harding, 2020, para. 5).

In March 2020, Kim launched her solution-focused shapewear, and within 24 hours, her shapewear sold out. "Over 1 million people have signed up for the waitlist in anticipation of the latest drop" (Warner, 2020, para. 1). Is it a coincidence that Kim Kardashian posted a video wearing a corset that showed off her small waistline. Many young women buy her shapewear hoping that their waistline will look just as slim.

In my study I explain how the filters and images young women use and view affect their perceptions of beauty due to wanting to look like their filtered photos and comparing themselves to their peers and social media influencers. Many of these images young women view are altered photos. Society's beauty standards for young women make it hard for many women to appreciate their natural beauty. The way we see the world, our peers, and celebrities is different from how we view ourselves. Hall

(1974) explains how "all edited or manipulated symbolic reality is impregnated with values, view- points, implicit theorizings, common-sense assumptions" (p. 23). Many young women create their own meaning to the images they view. In my literature review section, I talk about heavy users of social media. Someone who spends approximately four hours per day on social media is considered a heavy user. The correlation between heavy versus light consumption of media and impact of media images connects to my current study because the more time young women spend on social media, the more they are exposed to these filtered and editied images making them feel insecure about their own appearance, which can potentially cause them to edit their photos and use filters. With light viewers, they are not as exposed to these images, so the images they view do not have an impact on them the same way they do on heavy viewers.

Limitations

Although I had an acceptable sample size, I would have liked to have more variety of women in different age groups and ethnicities. The majority of my participants were 18 to 25-years-old. I would have liked to interview more older women in their late 20s and early 30s to see how these beauty filters affect older women and not just younger ones. My only two participants who were in their 30s do not use beauty filters, so I would have liked to get different views from women who are older and use filters. After conducting my study, I realized that age does play a role in how young women view themselves. Beauty filters do not have an impact on how my older participants view themselves. My younger pariticpants seem to compare themselves more to their peers and what they see online. Also, my older participants are light viewers of media;

they do not spend that much time on social media, while my younger pariticpants spend a few hours a day on these platforms. My participants were diverse, but I would have liked to interview more women from underrepresented and marganizled backgrounds to see how social media affects them personally and whether they view themselves differently from others due their ethnicity, body shape, etc. Also, although I was able to interview an international student who attends CSUSB, I would have liked to interview more international students to see how beauty filters are viewed in their countries compared to the United States.

<div align="center">Future Research</div>

First, I wish to expand this study; instead of examining young women and how beauty filters and images on social media affect their perceptions of beauty, I would like to look at how social media affect young men and their perceptions of masculinity. Many of my participants expressed how social media have affected their perceptions of beauty and how beauty filters/images cause them to become insecure about their appearance. I want to know if men go through the same struggles on social media when it comes to masculinity and if they compare themselves to other men on these social media platforms, and if they have any experience with altering their images or using any filters. I want to know if men alter their face cosmetically to look like their filtered images or if it is more common for women to do it. In my current study I examine how the beauty images young women view does affect their self-esteem. For future research, I would like to know the types of images and videos that have an impact on men. Pornography is one example; I would like to know the influence of pornography on

young men's views of women and if it affects their perceptions of masculinity and self. Kellner (2014) explains that the media images we view shape our views of the world and those around us. "Radio, television, film, popular music, the Internet and social networking, and other forms and products of media culture provide materials out of which we forge our very indentities, including our sense of selfhood…" (Kellner, 2014, p. 7). The images people view and how they interpret these images can potentially have an impact on how they view the world.To stay consistent to this current study, I would keep the age range the same. I would then compare my findings from this current study with my new study and see how much social media affect both men and women and compare my results.

In addition to the qualitative methods used in the present study, I could use I would also like to use a quantitative methods in which participants would analyze beauty images on Instagram and answer a questionnaire about how the images they viewed made them feel. This could compliment the current study and perhaps yield statistically significant results and thereby greater generalizablity. The quantative orientation and the overall approach I would use in my future research might be media effects or evolutionay psychology.

In my study, I introduced a term called Snapchat dysmorphia. After doing research and conducting my interviews, I realized that Snapchat dysmorphia is not a common term that many scholars have researched. I would like to see future research introducing Snapchat dysmorphia and how it is affecting young women's and men's perceptions of beauty. Plastic surgeons around the world have expressed that people

do not want to look like celebrities anymore. After interviewing my participants a few of them expressed how they would love to cosmetically get their lips enhanced to look like their filtered photos.

I would like to expand on how political economy of production connects to these beauty companies and how these companies benefit from consumers wanting to feel and look confident. Many companies take advantage of social media platforms to sell and promote their products. I would like to expand on this and do some research on how the use of social media and social media influencers/celebrities influence young women to buy the products that are being promoted, as well as the percentage of women who buy products based on who is promoting them and the types of product that is being sold.

Conclusion

My goal for conducting this research was to help raise awareness of an issue that many may know about but fail to understand. Social media filters and beauty images have the potential to affect many young women's self-esteem and their perceptions of their own body image. Many of my participants expressed how the beauty images they view on social media affect how they view themselves; while others expressed how they would cosmetically change their appearance to look just like their filtered photo, and when it comes to fitspirations some are motivated by fitspirational content while others expressed it made them feel insecure about their body. Nothing is wrong with being a social media influencer, or being an active social media user, but it is about being more cautious about what content we post on social media and the

message it gives out to people (especially young women). Like many of my participants said, we live in a society that has high beauty standards that are hard for women to fulfill, and going on social media should not make them feel worse about their appearance. Spreading awareness about self-love, confidence, and natural beauty on these social media platforms is one way we can help young women all around the world and generations to come to love themselves, and not let society or any beauty images/filters on social media tell them that they are not beautiful enough. With the right resources we can help the younger generation find beauty within themselves and not these beauty filters. My hope is with more resources and campaigns (such as the Dove campaigns) we can educate others about beauty filters, Snapchat dysmorphia, and other social media content that affect young women's perceptions of beauty. We need to teach the upcoming generations that society's standard of beauty does not define who they are.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Hello, my name is Janella Eshiet. I am a graduate student here at CSUSB. For the next 20-30 minutes (approx. time), I will be interviewing you regarding social media and your experience using different social media platforms and filters. Before we get started, do you have any questions?

(a.) What type of social media sites do you use?

(b.) How many times a day do you check your social media/how many hours a day do you spend on social media?

(c.) Are there beauty filters you wish you can keep forever that make you feel better about your appearance?

(d.) While using Instagram and Snapchat filters, are there any filters that you would use to alter your appearance cosmetically?

(e.) Do you prefer using filters or no filters while taking selfies? Can you ever take pictures without filters?

(f.) How does the use of social media influence your perception of body image? How does social media influence your perception of "beauty" in general?

(h.) Do you view fitspirational images on Instagram? If so, how do these types of images make you feel? Do they motivate you to want to live a healthy lifestyle or do you start comparing yourself to others?

(i.) Do the number of likes you receive on your filtered photo versus a non-filtered photo have an effect on your perception of beauty (in other words, how you view yourself)

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORMS

College of Arts and Letters
Department of Communication Studies

Student Informed Consent

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate Social media: beauty filters, body image, and self-perception. This study is being conducted by Janella Eshiet under the supervision of Dr. Ahlam Muhtaseb, Professor of Communication, California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: To understand how female college students interpret the beauty images and beauty filters they view/use on social media. I want to know how my participants define beauty while using these beauty filters versus when they are not using filters. I want to understand if these images have an impact on self-perception and body image.

DESCRIPTION: I will be interviewing you regarding your social media experience and beauty images and/or filters you have used or come across while on social media. I want to know how you define beauty and how these images shape your definition of what beauty is and how you perceive yourself (while using beauty filters v. without filters).

PARTICIPATION: Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to skip any questions you are not comfortable answering.

CONFIDENTIAL: Your interview will be confidential. Anything that is said in the interview will only be used for thesis purposes. I will be the only one who has access to your interviews and audio recordings. All documents, notes, and audio recordings will be locked away and only used for research purposes. I will destroy all audio recordings after I complete and submit my thesis. All files will be destroyed after submission. For audio recordings I will delete all files from the audio recorder and shred notes from the interview.

DURATION: The expected duration of the interview is approximately 20-30 minutes.

RISKS: Levels of discomfort you may experience while participating in this study will depend on the experiences you have gone through while using social media. Some participants might've had a bad social media experience, that talking about it makes them emotional. Due to levels of discomfort you might feel during this interview, if there are any questions that make you feel uncomfortable or emotional talking about you are free to skip the question, and we can move on and I will ask another question. At any time during the interview you feel uncomfortable answering any more questions please let me know and we can stop the interview.

BENEFITS: Shine light on an important topic. Social media can cause young women to feel insecure about their body and their overall appearance. With these new beauty filters on Instagram

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College of Arts and Letters
Department of Communication Studies

VIDEO/AUDIO/PHOTOGRAPH: I understand that this research will be audio recorded
Initials___

CONTACT: If you have any questions regarding the study please contact Janella Eshiet.
Email: 004439343@coyote.csusb.edu

RESULTS: Once thesis is completed results will be published and open to the public via CSUSB
ScholarWorks. Website: https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/

CONFIRMATION STATEMENT:

I understand that I must be 18 years of age or older to participate in your study, have read and
understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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AUDIO USE
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
FOR NON-MEDICAL HUMAN SUBJECTS

As part of this research project, we will be audiotape recording you during your participation in the experiment. Please indicate what uses of this photograph/videotape/audiotape you are willing to consent to by initialing below. You are free to initial any number of spaces from zero to all of the spaces, and your response will in no way affect your credit for participating. We will only use the photograph/videotape/audiotape in ways that you agree to. In any use of this photograph/videotape/audiotape, your name would not be identified. If you do not initial any of the spaces below, the photograph/videotape/audiotape will be destroyed.

Please indicate the type of informed consent

☐ Photograph   ☐ Videotape   ☐ Audiotape

(AS APPLICABLE)

The photograph/videotape/audiotape can be studied by the research team for use in the research project.

Please initial: _____

I have read the above description and give my consent for the use of the photograph/videotape/audiotape as indicated above.

The extra copy of this consent form is for your records.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL

February 6, 2020

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Expedited Review
IRB-FY2020-166
Status: Approved

Ms. Janella Eshiet and Prof. Ahlam Muhtaseb
CAL - Communications
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Ms. Eshiet and Prof. Muhtaseb:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Thesis: Social media: filters, body image, and self-pecpetion" has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The informed consent document you submitted is the official version for your study and cannot be changed without prior IRB approval. A change in your informed consent (no matter how minor the change) requires resubmission of your protocol as amended using the IRB Cayuse system protocol change form.

Your application is approved for one year from February 5, 2020 through February 4, 2021.

Please note the Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is up for renewal and ensure you file it before your protocol study end date.

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following four requirements as mandated by the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 listed below. Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located on the IRB website under the forms menu. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following by submitting the appropriate form (modification, unanticipated/adverse event, renewal, study closure) through the online Cayuse IRB Submission System.

1. If you need to make any changes/modifications to your protocol submit a modification form as the IRB must review all changes before implementing in your study to ensure the degree of risk has not changed.
2. If any unanticipated adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research study or project.
3. If your study has not been completed submit a renewal to the IRB.
4. If you are no longer conducting the study or project submit a study closure.

Please ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required. If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Donna Garcia

Donna Garcia, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

DG/MG

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