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Thinking Matters Symposium

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## Impact of Viewing Fatphobic Messages on Facebook in Generation X

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# Impact of Viewing Fatphobic Messages on Facebook in Generation X

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## Abstract

While there have been numerous studies about contributing factors to Body Image Dissatisfaction (BID) in younger populations, there are few empirical studies about what contributes to BID in older women<sup>1</sup> and virtually no empirical studies examining the same for men and non-binary people at any age. The current study surveyed individuals from Generation X to explore if viewing fatphobic messages and images on social media impacts BID in this population.

## Methods

- IRB Approval
- Convenience Sampling (individuals born between 1965-1980)
- Survey posted to Facebook over 10 day period
- Participants randomly assigned to 1 of 3 mock Facebook pages (body positive, fatphobic, and neutral)
- Yielded 84 useable surveys for data analysis
- Unique BID pre-test developed by team
- Body Image States Scale (BISS) was used for post-test BID measurement
- SPSS Statistical Software was used for data analysis
- Spearman Tests of Correlation/ANOVA/Thematic analysis

### References

- <sup>1</sup>Ginsberg, R. L., Tinker, L., Liu, J., Gray, J., Sangi-Haghpeykar, H., Manson, J. E., & Margolis, K. L. (2015). Prevalence and correlates of body image dissatisfaction in postmenopausal women. *Women & Health, 56*(1), 23-47. doi:10.1080/03630242.2015.1074636
- <sup>2</sup>Mabe, A. G., Forney, K. J., & Keel, P. K. (2014). Do you "like" my photo? Facebook use maintains eating disorder risk. *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 47*(5), 516-523. doi:10.1002/eat.22254

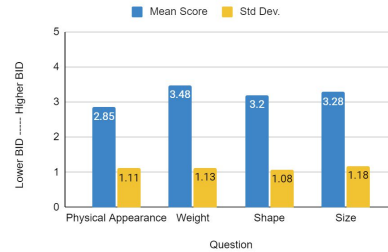


Figure 1. (N = 84) Mean Pretest BID Scores

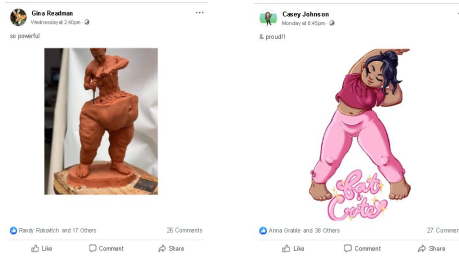


Figure 2. Left: an example of a fatphobic image from survey; Right: an example of a body positive image from survey

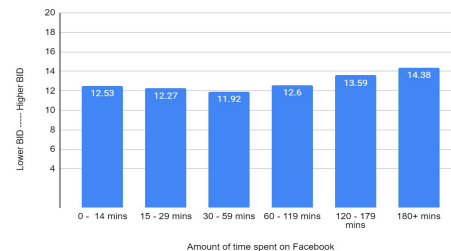


Figure 3. (N = 84) Correlations Between Facebook Use and BID

## Results

- Of 84 participants, 72 were female, 11 were male, and 1 was nonbinary; of participants who reported race, 77 identified as White/Caucasian, 5 as mixed race, and 1 as Indian.
- Pretest results did not indicate high levels of BID, with an average pretest score of 3.2 on a scale of one to five.
- There is a correlation between amount of time spent on Facebook and BID, with participants who indicated more time on Facebook also indicating higher levels of pretest BID.
- There was no statistically significant difference in posttest BID among the three treatment groups which displayed fatphobic images, body positive images, or neutral images.

## Discussion

- The current study did not indicate that BID overall was a concern among Generation X.
- The current study confirmed previous findings of a correlation between duration of social media use and BID<sup>2</sup>.
- No statistically significant differences in BID were found among the three groups, which could be due to social media having less of an effect on older generations.

**Limitations:** Convenience sampling led to a lack of diversity; the majority of participants were white women, limiting the generalizability of the results.

**Future Research:** Further studies relative to BID in Generation X are needed to confirm its presence, explore its connection to social media use, and assess risk and protective factors associated with BID.