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Exploring the Connection between Social Media & Body-Image and the Impact of Art Therapy Interventions on a Woman's Self- Esteem

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This thesis, written under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor and approved by the program chair, has been presented to and accepted by the Department of Art Therapy, at Dominican University of California, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy.

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**Exploring the Connection between Social Media & Body-Image and the Impact of Art
Therapy Interventions on a Woman's Self-Esteem**

By

Courtney Engelhardt

A culminating thesis submitted to the faculty of Dominican University of California in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master in Marriage and Family Therapy

Dominican University of California

San Rafael, CA

2023

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Abstract

This current study desired to illuminate the connection between social media and body-image, as well as determining if art therapy interventions may impact a woman's self-esteem. An individual's body-image and self-esteem are very much correlated, as both concepts directly influence one another. Fourteen participants were recruited through social media after meeting the qualifications: being eighteen years old and/or older, identifying as a woman, and being active on social media. A mixed-methods research design was utilized for this research using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative data was obtained through semi-structured interviews, participant's artwork, and reflections on their art. Art-based data was focused on the art assessment of self-portraits and on the art therapy intervention of found poetry with positive affirmations. Quantitative data was obtained through two questionnaires: Self Esteem Scale and the Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale. The results from this study illuminate the strong connection between social media and body-image, as well as the impact that art therapy interventions have on self-esteem. Recommendations for future research include broadening the population size, as well as expanding the age range of participants.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Social networking sites have become a very consuming part of people's lives and have had negative influential effects among them. Research conveys that today around seven out of ten Americans frequently use social media (Pew Research Center, 2021). This rise in usage has shown to be associated with indications of negative body-image and a greater body dissatisfaction (Veldhuis, Allewa, Bij de Vaate, Keijer, & Konijn, 2020). The individual's awareness of their body image has a significant impact on one's self-esteem and overall well-being. A negative body image has the potential to cause a number of psychological issues throughout an individual's life.

Problem Statement

While the effects of social media deeply affect all genders, women and woman-identified people are more likely to experience negative effects due to primarily engaging in appearance-related activities on the sites (Veldhuis et al., 2020). The problem related to this population is the way absorbing the influence of social media negatively influences the perception of body image. This study is concerned with the impact of social media on a woman's perception of their body image and how it affects their self-esteem.

Social Media

Social media is defined as applications and websites that allow users to create, post, view, and interact with original content, and provide a continuous source of communication with others (Choukas- Bradley, Nesi, Widman, & Higgins, 2019; Moreno, Kota, Schoohs, & Whitehill, 2013). On these platforms people are able to obtain information, share ideas, express creativity,

connect with others, and gain visibility. There are risks and benefits that come along with social media. This virtual tool has opened the doors to many opportunities, but it has also resulted in some harmful effects for users. The easy accessibility allows for people to be constantly on their cell phones and can trap them into an endless cycle of mindless scrolling. The habit of accessing social media has seeped into the daily routines of people's lives, especially with adolescents and young adults (Pew Research Center, 2016). Excessive usage of social media is a common phenomenon with many negative effects.

While these apps serve as a beneficial tool in communication with others, they also have the potential to negatively impact an individual's psyche in many aspects, especially when joining these platforms at a young, vulnerable age. A major risk that comes with using social media is the development of a compulsive preoccupation with physical appearance (Zimmer-Gembeck, Hawes, & Pariz, 2021). On platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, individuals are able to curate their own presentation of their lives. These appearance-based platforms encourage users to seek validation from others through "likes" and "comments" on their pictures and stimulate comparison to others.

The phenomenon of "likes" and "comments" on social media has become a popular method to receive feedback and external validation from others. Studies suggest that an individual's self-worth may be dependent on the feedback that they receive on social media (Sabik, Falat, & Magagnos, 2020). This phenomenon has distorted individual's minds in what determines their self-worth and never leaves them satisfied, with both their self-worth and the amount of likes they receive. Receiving high numbers of "likes" and "comments" becomes a mental competition, and not receiving high numbers makes an individual feel less than other

people. With this phenomenon comes mental health risks and the risk of an individual becoming addicted to others' feedback to boost their self-esteem (Diefenbach & Anders, 2021).

Many of the images that women consume daily through social media are often appearance focused, heavily edited with filters, and communicate an achieved idealized physical attractiveness (Garcia, Bingham, & Liu, 2021). This "selfie", photo-editing phenomenon has created an unrealistic consciousness among women that leaves them unsatisfied with themselves. Body-image dissatisfaction decreases self-esteem and lowers well-being. Research illuminates strong correlations between selfie-behaviors and body image, self-objectification, and self-esteem in young women (Veldhuis et al., 2020). A negative assessment of body image can create debilitating psychological effects.

Body Image

Body-image consists of an individual's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of their own body (Veldhuis et al., 2020). Individuals experience body image on a continuum from positive to negative. Those with a negative body image feel dissatisfied with their appearance and perceive a disparity between their current appearance and their idealized appearance (Rounsefel, Gibson, McLean, Blair, Molenaar, Brennan, Truby, & McCaffrey, 2020). This body-image dissatisfaction generally develops into low self-esteem, depression, low well-being, and increases the possibility of eating disorder behaviors.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is typically defined as the way individuals feel about themselves, and as individuals' attitudes toward themselves in total (Veldhuis et al., 2020). It is an essential factor

that plays into an individual's mental health and is an important component of their self-concept. Individuals with a healthy, high self-esteem generally are more likely to hold themselves in a positive regard. Being optimistic about oneself and life in general enables one to have a high self-esteem and increase their quality of life and be their best selves. Whereas low self-esteem contributes to an individual having a low value of themselves, which ends up developing into mental, physical, and emotional problems.

Many problems brought into therapy stem from a person's low self-esteem and overall unhappiness with themselves. A negative body image perception can lead to other co-occurring issues such as depression, anxiety, relationship problems, addictions, compulsions, and eating disorders. While all genders are affected by this sequence, women tend to experience these problems significantly more (Sabik, Falat, Magagnos, 2020). Society creates beauty standards for women that are often unattainable and leave their minds in a non-stop state of comparison. For decades these standards have existed but have been amplified even more since the advent of social media. These negative comparisons are due to women interacting in appearance related activities on social media where they curate their life for the eyes of other people.

Social media has turned into a virtual world where people constantly seek validation from others. Due to these visual based social media platforms, women have begun to internalize an observer's perspective of themselves and learn to focus on how their body looks as opposed to how it functions (Garcia et al., 2021). Frequent usage on these apps has women excessively monitoring their appearance which increases self-objectifying behaviors and decreases well-being and mood.

Body Dysmorphia

Body dysmorphia is a disorder of self-perception and is defined as the impairing preoccupation with a minimal or nonexistent flaw in appearance (Vashi, 2016). When an individual is constantly unhappy with their appearance, their negative inner dialogue becomes distressing and may affect their daily functioning. It is normal behavior for individuals to be dissatisfied with their appearance but having excessive concerns about it can be a sign of an underlying disorder (Vashi, 2016). Maladaptive behaviors such as excessive social media use for external validation, modifying an individual's appearance in pictures, and constantly focusing on self-presentation, play a major role in the maintenance of body dysmorphia (Ryding & Kuss 2020). These behaviors disturb and influence a negative body image perception among individuals, consequently increasing the risk for body dysmorphia to develop. Having a disturbed body image and a negative self-perception can lead to an array of psychological issues that include body dissatisfaction, distressing emotions over body image, excessive preoccupation in appearance, and a lower quality of life (Callaghan, Duenas, Nadeau, Darrow, Van der Merwe, & Misoko, 2012).

Art Therapy

The psychotherapeutic process in art therapy revolves around non-verbal communication and creative expression (Blohmdahl, Guregård, Rusner, & Wijk, 2021). This approach allows an alternative way for communication and healing when the concept of words is difficult or is not enough. Through art therapy, individuals may enable the provision of a relational space that assists them in recognizing their vulnerability and discovering their inner strength (Van Lith, 2020). Externalizing thoughts through creative expression can aid in receiving better insight

about someone's internal world. Research demonstrates that art therapy aids in an individual's psychological and social recovery through improved self-esteem, empowerment, motivation, and sense of purpose (Blohmdahl et al., 2021). Art therapy provides the opportunity for reflection (Blohmdahl et al., 2021). The process of creating art and reflecting on the finished product can stimulate feelings of empowerment, insight, and pride, which successively can positively impact an individual's self-esteem.

Art therapy provides individuals with the opportunity to explore limiting notions of themselves and help create new ways of seeing themselves (Van Lith, 2020). It allows for self-investigation and stimulates a new self-awareness that can provoke positive change. Research demonstrates that art therapy may provide new inputs, new thoughts, and thereby offer a tool to reduce obsessive thinking (Blohmdahl et al., 2021). Social media influences negative thinking patterns of comparisons to others, self-doubt, and self-criticism. Through art therapy, an individual may begin the process of viewing themselves in a positive light and manifest healthy patterns that stimulate personal growth.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) emphasizes the importance of mindful awareness in regulating and choosing one's actions and speculates how that awareness aids in achieving psychological acceptance (Masuda, Ng, Moore, Felix, & Drake, 2016). One of the core concepts in ACT is cognitive defusion, which is the ability to take a step back from difficult experiences without becoming engrossed in them (Grégoire, Chenier, Doucerain, Lachance, & Shankland, 2020). Being aware of one's usage on social media and the effects from it can aid in defusing the negative cognitions that arise from it. Current research shows

that ACT may be used to enhance body image flexibility as a major process of therapeutic change (Masuda et al., 2016). Through ACT problematic behavioral patterns and their ramifications are identified and provide opportunities to create positive behavioral change.

Excessive scrolling for hours, comparisons to unrealistic images, and curating the perfect page are problematic behavioral patterns on social media that do great harm. According to ACT these behaviors prevent an individual from achieving psychological acceptance, which is contributed to an individual's mindful awareness in regulating and choosing their actions (Masuda et al., 2016). This behavior illuminates how social media platforms have primarily become a virtual world where people seek validation from others. Through an ACT lens this validation seeking behavior could be presumed to work as a behavioral effort to get approval from others in order to feel happy with oneself. It's found that this behavioral conceptualization of body image disturbance includes intrapersonal factors that must be brought into awareness in order to change (Callaghan et al., 2012). By focusing on the ACT concepts of self as context and cognitive defusion, an individual will be able to maintain perspective of themselves within their experiences and become aware of their negative thoughts without getting stuck in them. These concepts allow individuals to become aware of and break free from those intrapersonal factors and begin the process of engaging in positive behaviors that promote change.

Methodology

For this study the researcher implemented a mixed methods design using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Using a mixed methods design offers richer insights into the study and allows the capture of information that may be missed by utilizing only one research design (Caruth, 2013). By using a qualitative research design that includes arts-based research, there is

an enhancement in knowledge and a creation of more questions for future research. The researcher had participants create self-portraits in order to assess the participant's insight of themselves. Through arts-based research, the method of self-portraits can be implemented in order to explore unique insights into participant's perceived realities and the meaning of them (Richards, 2006). This provides understandings that narrative data alone might not reveal (Richards, 2006). Self-portraiture is a form of qualitative inquiry that draws upon aspects of narrative, phenomenological, ethnographic, and arts-based methods (Travis, 2020).

To obtain quantitative data two questionnaires were utilized. A questionnaire developed for the purposes of this study was based on a pre-existing questionnaire, Multidimensional Self-Esteem Scale. This adaptation was influenced by the validated Multidimensional Self-Esteem scale that measures social contact, social-criticism, performance, physical appearance, physical ability, and global self-esteem (Rentzch & Schutz, 2021). The researcher deducted the section pertaining to physical ability due to being irrelevant to the study. This questionnaire consists of 18 items and a 7-point rating scale that measures the frequency and intensity of the subscales. The second questionnaire used with participants in this study is the Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale. The Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale is an 18-item self-report measure of online appearance preoccupation that was created through the literature of social media use and existing measures related to sociocultural and body image theories of social grooming (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2021). Since the first questionnaire was altered, it was acknowledged that the researcher cannot compare the future results to other studies that utilize the survey.

Self-affirmation is the act of boosting an individual's perception as adaptively and morally adequate (Epton et al., 2015). It is about an individual affirming the positive qualities and strengths they hold within themselves or what they hope to be. Research demonstrates that self-affirmation can strengthen intentions to change and help foster healthier behavior (Epton et al., 2015). Positively affirming an individual's self on a routine basis can increase self-esteem and raise confidence. This process aids in ACT's concept of cognitive defusion by challenging an individual's negative thoughts and beliefs about themselves with self-affirmations. Evidence supports the role of self-affirmation in the maintenance of self-esteem, which contributes to an individual's health, well-being, and success throughout life (Lannin et al., 2021). The researcher used the art therapy intervention, found poetry with positive affirmations, that is focused on self-affirmations and building self-esteem. By incorporating positive affirmations in art therapy interventions, it was hypothesized that a woman's self-esteem levels will grow.

Research Question

This research study addresses the question if the use of art therapy with women will promote a positive impact on their body image perception which will increase their self-esteem and overall well-being. An Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) theoretical framework guided the study by focusing on the core processes of acceptance, self as context, values, and cognitive defusion to enhance the women's self-esteem. The purpose of this study is to illuminate the connection between women's self-esteem and social media, and how art therapy interventions can impact a woman's perception of their body image.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the combined impact of social media on a woman's perception of their body image, the effect on their self-esteem, and overall well-being, along with art therapy interventions. The literary review explores the following topics: social media, women, body-image, self-esteem, depression, body dysmorphia, eating disorders, ACT therapy, art therapy, and positive affirmations. Overall, the research helps reinforce the strong connection between social media and body-image, and how art therapy interventions can impact a woman's self-esteem.

Social Media

History

The culture of virtual connectivity is rooted from the creation of the World Wide Web in 1991. In the nineties, the internet only served as channels for networked communication where people could send emails, visit web blogs, and form online communities (van Dijck, 2013). It wasn't until the beginning of the new century when the technological tool progressed into an interactive, two-way vehicle for network sociality (van Dijck, 2013). In the early 2000s, the creation of social platforms such as Myspace, Facebook, Youtube, Wikipedia, LiveJournal and Twitter, accelerated the tool of limitless interactions between individuals. It was then when individuals could interact with new people and share creative and communicative content exclusively. Within ten years, the rapid development of social media and its easy accessibility have had it embedded into the daily routines of people's lives. Research shows that today around seven-in-ten Americans use social media to connect with others, share information, engage with content, and entertain themselves (Pew Research Center, 2022).

The Concept of Apps

Every major website now has a mobile application version that allows users to access the website's functions from their mobile devices, and to cater to a significant number of users who do not have access to a computer (Saleh, Holmes, Bray, & Yusef, 2016). Instead of utilizing their personal computers, many individuals now prefer to use their smartphones for daily tasks (such as checking the news, social media sites, and emails) (Saleh et al., 2016). The development of mobile applications has increased the pervasiveness of smartphone usage among individuals due to their quick and convenient accessibility. Research demonstrated how this increased usage has changed the quality of social interactions and situations (Miller-Ott & Kelly, 2017). It has individuals locked to their phones, unable to be present in the moment.

Women on Social Media

Visual based social media platforms have become a big part in the daily lives of women. Particularly Instagram and Facebook, where individuals can curate a presentation of themselves through pictures. It was found in 2021 that 78% of adult American women use at least one social media site (Pew Research Center, 2022). Research demonstrates that women and young adults are the most common users of social media (Sabik et al., 2020). Women's daily consumption of social media images are frequently appearance-focused, with filters applied that communicate an achieved idealized physical attractiveness (Garcia et. al., 2021). Posting and seeing curated self-portrait images is a part of the social media norm. An unrealistic consciousness among women that leaves them unsatisfied with themselves has been created due to this “selfie” (self-taken photos), photo-editing phenomenon. It’s contributed to the images they both receive and give while using social media. A study focused on women’s Instagram usage found that habitual use was related to lower daily feelings of satisfaction with life, a higher negative affect, and a lower

well-being (Garcia et. al., 2021).

These appearance focused platforms have women feeling pressured to constantly present their best selves to others. Research shows that focusing on self-presentation behaviors on social media is associated with a lower conscientiousness and higher neuroticism, both negative aspects of an individual's personality (Sabik et al., 2020). Frequently scrolling through these apps and seeing other people's pictures lead to appearance and social comparison. Having the perfect self-presentation has become an unconscious competition within the minds of women. Due to these comparisons, it has become a widespread practice across Western and Asian cultures for many female adolescent and young adult users to edit their photos to enhance their appearance before uploading them on social media (Lee & Lee, 2021). Women internalize how the ideal female is meant to look based on what they see on social media. Through repeated exposure to female ideals on social media, women mentally absorb their societies' optimal body standards (Lee & Lee, 2021).

Body-Image and Social Media

Social media plays a substantial role in defining and perpetuating an idealized body image for women (Mills, Musto, Williams, & Tiggemann, 2018). An individual's body image consists of their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of their own body (Veldhuis et al., 2020). Many studies have found that being active on social media platforms tend to negatively skew an individual's perception of their body image, especially with women (Mills et al., 2018). This is due to women using social media primarily to view others' photos, whereas men are more likely to use social media to find friends (Hogue & Mills, 2019). The frequent exposure to unrealistic beauty expectations and the opportunities for social comparison contribute to body-dissatisfaction among women (Mills et al., 2018). This dissatisfaction with body-image typically

transforms into low self-esteem, low well-being, depression, and can increase the development of an eating disorder.

It is presented on social media that the ideal beauty standards for women are to be thin, fit, and flawless. As mentioned before, it is normal practice now for women to edit their photos to enhance their appearance to achieve this perfect look. Women who use social media often internalize the “thin ideal,” causing them to strive for an unrealistic, unnatural standard of beauty and to feel ashamed when they are unable to achieve it (Kim & Chock, 2015). The commonality of the use of filters and photo editing apps leave women in a cycle of mental negativity while they try to obtain these unattainable ideals. Research suggests that modifying images of themselves makes women think more about their flaws or imperfections, which could activate feelings of self-objectification (Mills et al., 2018). Self-objectification is adopting an observer’s view of one’s body and habitually monitoring one’s appearance (Garcia et al., 2021). Photo-editing behaviors intensify the impacts of appearance-related activities on women’s body concerns and increase their tendency to self-objectify (Lee & Lee, 2021).

When there is more value placed on appearance, there is an increase in the internalization of and appearance comparison to body ideals, which negatively impacts a woman’s body image (Lee & Lee, 2021). Focusing on one’s self-presentation for an online audience consecutively have women learn to adopt an observer’s perspective on their bodies (i.e., self-objectification) and to engage in body surveillance, in which they monitor their physical selves (Choukas-Bradley et al., 2013). Self-objectification and body surveillance are in conjunction with a negative body-image because they both have women hold high, unrealistic standards for how they perceive their bodies. This distorts women into thinking that their physical appearance is a product for others to consume.

Hogue & Mills (2019) demonstrated a negative association between body image and active social media engagement, which is viewing and commenting on peer's social media. There is a stronger effect on body image when young women compare themselves to their peers than when comparing themselves to celebrities (Hogue & Mills, 2019). Research indicated that higher degrees of body image disturbance have been connected to increased social withdrawal, increased reassurance seeking, increased worry for social approval, and increased sensitivity to rejection (Callaghan et al., 2012). The desire to receive feedback through likes and comments from others is a big factor that plays into this because in the social media environment, an attractive appearance can play a pivotal role in determining one's popularity, which is frequently represented by the number of followers and likes on postings (Lee & Lee, 2021). Therefore, the number of likes, comments, and followers influences how a woman feels about their body-image. These social interactions likely draw attention to physical appearance and encourage social comparison processes based on appearance (Choukas-Bradley et al., 2013).

The Phenomenon of “Likes” & “Comments”

A major phenomenon rooted from social media is the concept of receiving “likes” and “comments” on posted content. In this virtual world, individuals are able to secure attention in ways that extend far beyond their day to day lives (Dumas, Maxwell-Smith, Tremblay, Litt, & Ellis, 2020). Social media allows individuals to provide immediate positive feedback on others' content by pressing a button to “like” it or to write comments on it (Dumas et al., 2020). In the eyes of some individuals, it has become the determinant of their self-worth and self-esteem. Individuals are also associating the number of “likes” and “comments” with their social status and with the acceptance from others. Social status is defined as the admiration and respect from others (Diefenbach & Anders, 2021). Research demonstrated that putting high value on other

users' feedback on social media is associated with low self-esteem and a low perceived social status (Diefenbach & Anders, 2021). An individual having their self-worth dependent on social media feedback is associated with using social media for status-seeking (Sabik et al., 2020). Status-seeking is attempting to achieve status through posts on social media and the feedback given from peers (Sabik et al., 2020).

The competition of receiving social media feedback has some individuals engaging in deceptive behaviors to increase "likes" and "comments". Deceptive like-seeking behaviors involve manipulative acts to gain attention (e.g., buying followers, likes, and comments, and modifying an individual's physical appearance in photos), are common on social media (Dumas et al., 2020). Another deceptive behavior is the strategy of "follow-2-follow" and "like-for-like", where a user likes another user's picture to receive a like on their own picture in return (Diefenbach & Anders, 2021). Research demonstrated that 60% of young adults engage in at least one deceptive like-seeking behavior (Dumas et al., 2020).

Engaging in these deceptive behaviors and focusing on the concept of "likes" and "comments" is dangerous because individuals experience a decline in feelings of peer connection and low self-esteem from it (Dumas et al., 2020). While these behaviors are an individual's attempt to increase their self-esteem, it ends up contributing to them experiencing stress and depression (Sabik et al., 2020). Social recognition in the form of likes and comments may initially promote self-esteem, but since an individual gets used to others' positive feedback, the positive effects decrease and a decline in likes leads to reduced self-esteem (Diefenbach & Anders, 2021). The phenomenon of "likes" and "comments" is used as an outlet to receive external-validation and is quite similar to a drug. It becomes addicting in that the effects are short-term and are not as fulfilling as they were in the beginning. Self-esteem may increase

momentarily, but then an individual becomes dependent on digital gratification in the form of likes and comments (Diefenbach & Anders, 2021).

Effects of Social Media on Well-being

Two personality constructs that are major indicators of well-being are self-esteem and depressive tendencies (Ozimek & Förster, 2021). Self-esteem is defined as the way individuals feel about themselves, and as individuals' attitudes toward themselves in total (Veldhuis et al., 2020). Rather than just focused on body perception, self-esteem relates to every aspect of an individual. Social media is very influential on self-esteem because it has its users in a constant state of comparison. These comparison processes on social media are a central factor in affecting self-esteem (Diefenbach & Anders, 2021). Depressive tendencies are characterized as relatively mild or short-lived depressive symptoms that occur frequently or occasionally (Ozimek & Förster, 2021). These symptoms include a negative mood state, loss of appetite, insomnia, despair, loss of interest in activities, poor concentration, and low energy levels (Ozimek & Förster, 2021).

Research demonstrated that social media exerts a negative impact on users through social comparison processes: individuals see that others on social media appear to be experiencing more positive outcomes, and consequently feel worse about themselves (Midgley, Thai, Lockwood, Kovacheff, & Page-Gould, 2021). Social media platforms are an opportunity for individuals to post the highlights of their lives, while the negative parts are rarely shared. Although it may look like individuals live perfect lives online, it is only because they carefully choose what they want others to see and that includes hiding the challenging parts of life. This tends to make individuals feel that their lives are not as great as others, which ultimately lowers their self-esteem and increases depressive tendencies.

Self-Esteem. Research suggests that self-esteem is related to body-image and self-objectification and bolstering self-esteem has been identified as a key motivator for selecting specific forms of media (Veldhuis et al., 2020). Specific forms of media being appearance focused social media apps like Instagram and Facebook, which has become an outlet where people seek feedback from others in order to increase their self-esteem. Young adult women indicated posting selfies as a motive to push forward a positive self and increase self-esteem, which exemplifies the value that social media users have placed on likes, comments, and followers to obtain social acceptance (Vedlhuis et al., 2020). As mentioned earlier, social recognition in the form of likes, comments, and followers may boost self-esteem at first, but as an individual becomes accustomed to positive feedback from others, the positive benefits fade, and a drop in likes leads to lower self-esteem and well-being (Diefenbach & Anders, 2021).

Research suggests that addictive social media use reflects the need to feed the ego and is an attempt to prevent a negative self-evaluation (i.e., self-esteem) (Andreassen, Pallesen, & Griffiths, 2017). Self-esteem is a result from an individual's positive or negative evaluation of themselves, which also depends on social acceptance and affirmation by others (Diefenbach & Anders, 2021). The increasing integration of social media into an individual's need satisfaction repertoire could lead them to need more and more feedback to satisfy their need for status and self-esteem (Diefenbach & Anders, 2021). Frequently seeking out external validation on social media leaves users in a cycle of trying to obtain these unfulfilling, short-term effects. The external validation may initially boost an individual's self-esteem, but the feeling is only temporary.

Depressive Tendencies. Having low self-esteem develops into depressive tendencies within an individual, which ultimately lowers their well-being. A positive correlation between

intensity of social media usage and depressive symptoms has been reported in several studies (Diefenbach & Anders, 2021) (Dumas et al., 2020) (Garcia et al., 2021) (Ozimek & Förster, 2021) (Sabik et al., 2020). The amount of time spent on social media is an important factor related to effects on self-esteem and the development of depressive tendencies (Garcia et al., 2021). More frequent usage tends to lower self-esteem and increase depressive symptoms. Depression represents a negative mood state, which is reflected in dejection, sadness, and gloominess (Ozimek & Förster, 2021). Some symptoms of depression are low energy, inability to concentrate, sleeping problems, irritability, changes in appetite, and a decrease of wanting to do things one typically enjoys (APA, 2022). There is a significant association between the amount of time spent on appearance-related social media and experiencing depressive symptoms (Choukas-Bradley et al., 2019).

How Social Media Effects Body-Dysmorphia & Eating Disorders

Body Dysmorphia. As mentioned earlier, social media plays a substantial role in defining and perpetuating an idealized body image for women (Mills et al., 2018). Typically, it influences a negative body image perception among women. Body image disturbance is a concept that comprises an array of psychological factors including body dissatisfaction, distressing emotions over body image, overinvestment in one's appearance and a poorer quality of life (Callaghan et al., 2012). These factors lie on a continuum with the extreme end being Body Dysmorphic Disorder (Callaghan et al., 2012). "Body dysmorphic disorder is an obsessive-compulsive disorder that is characterized by preoccupation with one or more perceived flaws in one's own appearance that are not observable or appear slight to others and this is accompanied by repetitive behaviors (e.g., mirror checking, excessive grooming, reassurance seeking) or mental acts (e.g., comparing their appearance with others) in response to the appearance

concerns" (Dehbaneh, 2019, p. 1). This disorder leads to significant distress in an individual and impairs their daily functioning. One study recently identified a variant of body dysmorphic disorder, called "Snapchat dysmorphia", that is incited by selfie filters that reflect unrealistic sociocultural standards (Tremblay, Essafi-Tremblay, & Poirier, 2021). These filters are also on other appearance based social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, distorting the minds of users worldwide. This continuous exposure to filtered images provokes the risk of blurring the lines between fiction and reality when it comes to body image (Tremblay et al., 2021). Not meeting up to these fictional standards leaves users in a vicious cycle of comparison to others, negative internalization of unattainable standards, and trying to obtain those ideals. It enacts an unhealthy obsession about their physical appearance and receiving reassurance about it from others. Once negative body image views are formed, they are reinforced by the continual usage of social media tools that promote an unrealistic body image (Tremblay et al., 2021).

Research demonstrated that individuals with body dysmorphia are more likely to resort to unnecessary cosmetic procedures (Debbaneh, 2019). With the rise of body image distortion, cosmetic medicine and mental health professionals have started to warn against the increasing role that social media applications play in the way individuals perceive themselves (Tremblay et al., 2021). This is exemplified by how botox and fillers have become increasingly common cosmetic procedures among women today. It is found that many individuals who modify their appearance with these procedures would meet the criteria for a diagnosis of body dysmorphia (Mohr & Messina, 2015). Statistics show that the number of surgical and nonsurgical cosmetic procedures in the United States has significantly grown over the last decades, from around 1.6 million procedures in 1997 to over 5.5 million in 2020 (Michas, 2022). The rapid development and popularization of social media is an influential factor in this growth (Tremblay et al., 2021).

As mentioned earlier, seeking out external validation on social media has short-term effects that never fully satisfy the individual and influences them to just seek more, and the same cycle applies to those with body dysmorphia that resort to cosmetic procedures. Individuals with body dysmorphia are likely to be dissatisfied following a cosmetic intervention and will focus very quickly on new physical defects (Mohr & Messina, 2015). These external attempts to manage distress about body-image never actually benefit an individual and end up hurting them more. Maladaptive behaviors such as excessive social media use for external-validation and constantly seeking out cosmetic procedures play a major role in the maintenance of body dysmorphia (Ryding & Kuss, 2020).

Advertisements and promotions for cosmetic procedures are also now very common to see on social media platforms and television commercials. The advertising for cosmetic surgery emphasizes image “flaws” and deviations from societal ideals (Ashikali, Dittmar, & Ayers, 2017). The normalization of these ads in media add to women micro analyzing their physical appearance and leave them dissatisfied with their natural selves, making them feel that they need to alter themselves in order to be attractive. This misconception dangerously fuels women to internalize these ideals and can influence the development of body dysmorphia and other maladaptive behaviors like eating disorders (Ryding & Kuss, 2020).

Eating Disorders. Conceptualizations of eating disorders have determined body image dissatisfaction as a common antecedent to disordered eating (Sandoz et al., 2013). The societal ideal of being thin is internalized in the minds of many women and puts pressure on them to achieve it. Research exemplifies the strong association that appearance focused social media use has with increased disordered eating and body dissatisfaction (Ryding & Kuss, 2020). As mentioned earlier, comparisons to others are a common maladaptive behavior practiced on these

appearance focused platforms. The most eating disorder symptoms were reported by American women who undertook frequent body surveillance and appearance comparisons with others (Teo & Collinson, 2019).

Research suggests that body image distortions are key to eating disorders and could even be the core of it (Ryding & Kuss, 2020). While eating disorders may be an attempt to achieve the societal ideal of thinness, they could also be a coping mechanism towards these body image distortions. These maladaptive behaviors give individuals a sense of control over their bodies. For example, anorexia nervosa is a self-related condition in which caloric restriction is utilized to alleviate severe self-doubt in order to maintain a cohesive sense of self. (Tremblay et al., 2021). Through binge eating, individuals reduce emotional and physical pain by overindulging in food (Wagener & Much, 2010). With purging disorder individuals attempt to redeem themselves through compensatory behaviors, such as self-induced vomiting, misuse of diet pills and laxatives, and excessive exercise (Masuda et al., 2016). “There are several ways in which eating disorders serve as coping mechanisms: self-soothing, discharge of emotions, self-cleansing, self-punishment, avoidance of feelings, providing structure or routine, and serving as an identity” (Wagener & Much, 2010, p. 203).

Connection Between Eating Disorders & Trauma. Traumatic life events are often associated with a variety of psychological problems, including eating disorders (Lejonclou, Nilsson, & Holmqvist, 2014). Weight-based victimization such as cyberbullying and verbal teasing are examples of traumatic experiences that increase an individual’s risk of developing an eating disorder (Hicks White, Pratt, & Cottrill, 2018). Cyberbullying is another negative situation that some individuals face on social media. Research demonstrated that eating disorders may serve as a mechanism to self-soothe or distract an individual from the negative effect of trauma

(Holmes, Johnson, & Johnson, 2019). Investing time and energy in strict eating habits and overvaluation of appearance and weight may help individuals avoid distressing emotions (Holmes et al., 2019). Individuals that develop eating disorders experience a lack of belief in their own ability to live their lives and a lack of control over their body (Groth, Hilsenroth, Boccio, & Gold, 2020). Therefore, the distorted eating unhealthily turns into a mechanism for individuals to cope and feel a sense of control of themselves yet debilitates them further.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is a therapeutic approach that has its foundations in behavior analytic psychology, and is grounded in contextual behavioral science (Hayes, Barnes-Holmes, & Wilson, 2012). In this perspective, actions must be looked at functionally, where the context that determines function includes the observable and unobservable as well as past events and present motivators (Twohig, Ong, Krafft, Barney, & Levin, 2019). Here the context is very influential to an individual's behavior and aids in an explanation of their experiences. ACT's intention is to encourage participants to develop psychological flexibility, defined as the ability to be mindful of experiences in the present moment, in an accepting and nonjudgmental way, while behaving consistently with an individual's values, even when their thoughts and feelings are resistant to taking valued action (Grégoire et al., 2020). It is about working on being open and accepting of all life experiences, and the importance of being present.

The three major aspects focused on in ACT are openness, centeredness, and engagement. These are subdivided into six interrelated psychological processes: acceptance (i.e., willingness to experience unpleasant emotions), contact with the present moment (i.e., being aware of one's experiences), self as context (i.e., maintaining perspective of oneself

within one's experiences), cognitive defusion (i.e., being able to step back from unpleasant experiences without becoming stuck in them), and committed action (i.e., maintaining behaviors that move toward important goals. (Grégoire et al., 2020).

ACT emphasizes the importance of an individual's mindful awareness in regulating and choosing their actions and speculates how that awareness aids in achieving psychological acceptance (Masuda et al., 2016). Awareness of social media usage and its effects on mental health may help to alleviate the negative cognitions that come from it. Social media psychoeducation is important in helping users anticipate, understand, and maintain greater control over their social media usage (Teo & Collinson, 2019). Mindfully regulating social media usage may help an individual stay present in the moment on a daily basis. Research demonstrated that those who are psychologically flexible (an ACT concept) during their day-to-day routine have less stress and higher levels of well-being (Grégoire et al., 2020).

Many studies demonstrated the effectiveness of ACT in improving well-being, mental health, and psychological flexibility (Grégoire et al., 2020) (Linde, Ruck, Bjureberg, Ivanov, Djurfeldt, & Ramnero, 2015) (Masuda et al., 2016) (Twohig et al., 2019). Treatment is connected with significant changes in psychological flexibility, and significantly improved associated symptoms such as depression and quality of life (Linde et al., 2015). ACT interventions are proven to be among the most promising for promoting mental health on school campuses (Grégoire et al., 2020), because it introduces individuals to a range of skills, the six psychological processes, that can help them maintain good mental health.

ACT, Women, and Body Image

As mentioned earlier, women tend to use more appearance focused social media platforms and with frequent use it can negatively affect their body image perception. Research

has shown that ACT may be used to enhance body image flexibility as a major process of therapeutic change (Masuda et al., 2016). Body image flexibility is the individual's ability to have disturbing thoughts/feelings about the body and not let it impact health and well being (Sandoz, Wilson, Merwin & Kellum, 2013). The first step is becoming aware of the negative cognitions that arise from excessive usage, comparisons to unrealistic images, and trying to curate a perfect self-presentation on these social media platforms. The awareness is a prerequisite for achieving a fulfilling life through the development of repertoires for psychological acceptance and the ability to choose meaningful patterns of behavior (Masuda et al., 2016). Through ACT problematic behavioral patterns and their consequences are identified and provide opportunities to create positive behavioral change.

Research indicated that higher levels of body image disturbance have been linked to increased social withdrawal, reassurance seeking, concern for social approval, and sensitivity to rejection (Callaghan et al., 2012). Individuals engage in problematic activities to avoid or lessen unpleasant emotions as a result of distorted experiences of such emotions, according to an ACT perspective (Dehbaneh, 2019). Comparisons on social media have women feeling insecure about themselves, and to feel better they post pictures to receive assurance and approval from others. Their value of worth is then placed on the amount of likes or comments received, and while it may be proven effective briefly, it eventually puts the individual in harmful situations and causes more distress (Dehbaneh, 2019). Through an ACT lens, this validation seeking behavior could be viewed as a behavioral effort to get approval from others in an attempt to feel happy with oneself.

In ACT it is encouraged that an individual step out of their comfort zone and look at themselves and their difficulties from a different perspective (Grégoire et al., 2020). ACT

intends to help individuals flexibly learn from their experiences as well as from societal rules and expectations, as they both have advantages and disadvantages (Twohig et al., 2013).

Through this approach, women can begin to become aware of their true self and their values and separate them from the expectations of society and social media. These expectations are thoughts that turn into beliefs in an individual's mind. Cognitive defusion techniques from ACT help individuals see their thoughts as thoughts, feelings as feelings, memories as memories, and physical perceptions as physical perceptions only (Dehbaneh, 2019). This technique aids individuals in decreasing the power that their thoughts hold over them by creating a space between them and their thoughts.

Art Therapy

Art therapy is defined as the therapeutic use of art making by individuals suffering from sickness, trauma, or life issues, as well as people seeking personal development, in the context of a professional relationship (Edwards, 2014). Individuals can improve self-awareness, manage symptoms, stress, and traumatic experiences, boost cognitive capacities, and enjoy the life-affirming delights of making art through creating art and reflecting on the art products and processes (Edwards, 2014). Art also plays a role in meaning making, communication, and emotional regulation (Drake & Winner, 2012). This expressive type of therapy is beneficial and effective with a variety of populations. Art therapy is flexible in its use, allowing it to adapt to an individual's ever-changing life (Bitonte & De Santo, 2014).

An individual may learn to see themselves in a new way and improve their self-esteem through art therapy (Blomdahl et al., 2021; Van Lith, 2020). Making art may help in transforming a negative self-perception into a positive one. Research demonstrated how the use of a mannequin for people living with eating disorders may help in deconstructing and

reconstructing their body image (Van Lith, 2020). When an image is created, an inner dialogue begins to develop a space where it is possible to meet oneself (Blomdahl et al., 2021). Making art stimulates insight and provides a way for an individual to learn about themselves (Kaimai, Muniz, & Ray 2016). The process allows for the reflection of the internal world and the manifestation of a better self.

The Use of Self-Portraits in Art Therapy

Throughout time, artists have created self-portraits as a means of understanding themselves (Muri, 2007). The essential concept behind self-portraits is that the individual expresses how they perceive themselves through art. In art therapy the implementation of self-portraits can be utilized to reveal insight about an individual. It is a valuable tool in discussing and analyzing body-image and self-concept, as well as a means to identify an individual's concerns and develop therapeutic goals (Cockler, 1994). This introspective tool can be beneficial with various populations because it is a way for individuals to self-reflect and work on self-acceptance (Muri, 2007; Pivac & Zemunik, 2020). The self-portrait functions as a tool of self-awareness, as well as a mediator of communication with the self and a medium of self-investigation (Pivac & Zemunik, 2020). In art therapy, self-portraits can provide the therapist with information on the client's perception of themselves and their internal environment (Muri, 2007).

After creating a self-portrait, an individual can acknowledge the emotions expressed in the art, and distance the self from those feelings (Muri, 2007). Through this method, individuals become aware that their emotions do not define them but are only a part of them. This is due to an increase in an individual's observational skills during the process of creating self-portraits (Muri, 2007). The therapeutic benefits of art and the diagnostic evaluation within the therapeutic

process cannot be separated, it provides both information and healing (Cockle, 1994). Research demonstrated that the art therapy method of self-portraits is an artistic motif, a projective diagnostic, and therapeutic tool (Pivac & Zemunik, 2020). As an artistic motif, self-portraits portray an individual's summary of their external characteristics, while as a projective diagnostic they aid in assessing individuals (Pivac & Zemunik, 2020).

The Use of Positive Affirmations in Art Therapy

An individual's thoughts have the power to impact their feelings, behaviors, and perceptions of themselves. Practicing positive affirmations can strengthen positivity in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and increase self-esteem. When art making is combined with a positive focus (e.g., a directive that instructs the individual to attend to something positive), there is a positive influence on mood and the healing of negative emotions (Wilkinson & Chilton, 2013). The artistic creation of positive affirmation statements and imagery lays the foundation for reducing fear and maintaining optimism as part of the healing process (Hunter, 2016), allowing individuals to identify, and become aware of their strengths in a creative manner. Art therapy is often associated with identifying and capitalizing on an individual's strengths (Wilkson & Chilton, 2013).

As mentioned earlier, the perception of an individual's body is significantly impacted by idealizations internalized by society and social media. Multi-media art processes that include the use of positive affirmations help individuals deflect these idealizations, while also strengthening the connection to the inner self (Hunter, 2012). Practicing positive affirmations helps to transform beliefs about an individual's self and create new habits, and it is through the routine of practice where a negative perception can turn into a positive one.

Effect on Self-Esteem

Art has the power to reveal the destructive powers of self and others, and make connections to the larger system (Joseph, 2006). Research demonstrated through art therapy self-awareness and resilience increase, which increases an individual's self-esteem and self-acceptance (Hinchey, 2018). Individuals that become self-aware of their maladaptive behaviors allow for change to occur, which in turn will improve their self-esteem. Art therapy may help individuals break free from negative patterns and focus on meeting their basic needs as self-sufficient individuals, who are positively connected to themselves and their surroundings (Haeyen, 2019). Through the process of art therapy an individual has the opportunity to strengthen their self-esteem and fulfill their potential.

Feelings of confidence, competence, and creativity are influential factors on an individual's self-esteem. Research has demonstrated how art-based interventions can be used to promote life-skills in orphaned children, finding that an increase in life-skills increases self-esteem as well as a reduction in emotional and behavioral problems (Amjad & Jami, 2020). This exemplifies that feeling competent in skills enhances an individual's confidence, ultimately increasing their self-esteem. Additionally, art has been demonstrated to be useful in boosting the self-esteem of young female juveniles who have been institutionalized since a young age, as creating art provided them with a sense of accomplishment that they had previously lost (Amjad & Jami, 2020).

Self-expression, self-actualization, attaining a more integrated self, preparing a sense of autonomy, decision making, self-worth, and enhancing self-esteem are all reported by art therapists as benefits of the arts (Roghanchi, Mohamad, Momeni, & Golmohamadian, 2013). Through the healing power of art an individual can begin to feel content with themselves. Art

plays the role in activating self-awareness and discovering creative representations (Roghanchi et al., 2013). The creative experience allows an individual to identify the beauty of their feelings, emotional needs, knowledge, and free-will (Roghanchi et al., 2013). Qualitative researchers suggest that visual data, like art, offer a valid way of understanding an individual's experiences and thinking (Richards, 2006).

Through art individuals may become aware of their body sensations and can confront their physique. When an individual disengages themselves from their bodies, they radically alter their body-image and experience feelings of emptiness (Anzules, Haenni, & Golay, 2007). Art reawakens and rekindles an individual's creative potential, while art therapy provides tools that help individuals restore contact with themselves and their own values (Anzules et al., 2007). Old patterns can be redefined, and new attitudes can emerge after creating and reflecting on one's artwork, which can lead to increased self-esteem and psychological development (Brooke, 1995). This creative therapeutic approach allows individuals to strengthen their personalities and improve their self-esteem (Anzules et al., 2007).

The Effect of Positive Affirmations

Affirmations are short statements that contain positive thought patterns that have an impact on the subconscious mind (Amalia, 2020). Positive affirmations are created from within the individual by focusing more positively on self-strength in order to develop good feelings and adaptive behavior (Amalia, 2020). The act of enhancing an individual's image of themselves as adaptively and morally sufficient is also known as self-affirmation (Epton et al., 2015). Self-affirmation, according to research, can strengthen intentions to change and create better behavior (Epton et al., 2015). Positive self-affirmation on a regular basis may boost self-esteem and

confidence. Self-affirmation appears to have a role in maintaining self-esteem, which benefits an individual's health, well-being, and success throughout life (Lannin et al., 2021).

Self-affirmations increase self-resources, broaden individual's perspectives on information and events in their life, and lead to the disengagement of the self and the threat, which reduces the threat's influence on the self (Sherman, 2013). Research has shown that positive self-affirmation may help counteract the negative effects of rumination about perceived threatening situations (Brandrick, Hooper, Roche, Kanter, & Tyndall, 2021). The affirmation process is used to transform negative impressions into motivation to highlight more positive aspects of an individual's self (Amalia, 2020). This cognitive defusion exercise is hypothesized to work by expanding an individual's range of possible responses to a stimulus that previously only had a limited range of response functions (Masuda, Hayes, Sackett, & Twohig, 2004).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Restatement of Research Question/Hypothesis

The purpose of this study is to illuminate the connection between women's self-esteem and social media, and how art therapy interventions can impact a woman's perception of their body image. This research study addresses the question of whether the use of art therapy with young adult women will promote a positive impact on their body image perception, thus increasing their self-esteem and overall well-being. By incorporating positive affirmations within art therapy interventions, it is hypothesized that a woman's self-esteem levels will increase. After observing self-portraits created before and after the art therapy intervention, it is speculated that the researcher receives better insight into the participants and the impact of using positive affirmations in art therapy interventions.

Population and Sample

The population used in this sample consisted of women and women-identified people who are eighteen-years old or older. Since social media usage is more common among adolescents and young adults, the researcher expected most of the participants to be in the age range of eighteen to thirty. The research was intended for participants of all ethnicities, sexual-orientations, religions, and occupations. Being of adult age, identifying as a woman, and active use on social media were the only specific characteristics required to be a part of this research. The researcher found fourteen participants for the study that were woman-identified adults.

Participants were primarily recruited virtually through various social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. Word-of-mouth strategies were also used by asking obtained participants to post the recruitment flier on their social media sites and to ask their peers to participate in the study.

Participant Consent Process

Informed consent forms that provide all the information and risks of the study were given to participants before beginning the research process. Participants were also informed through the form on why the research conducted was important. Once they consented to participation the research process continued.

Location

Research was carried out individually with each participant via Zoom, a video conferencing platform. The researcher encouraged participants to set up for the interview process in a comfortable place where they can safely talk and create art. The researcher conducted these interviews in a private location to protect participant confidentiality.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality of information collected from research participants was heavily maintained throughout the whole process and afterwards. Participants were always referred to anonymously and their identity was consistently protected. The data collected from participants was stored and heavily secured on Google Drive. The researcher used their university Google account that has a strong password and Two-Factor Authentication. All the communication conducted between the researcher and participants was done through this secure Google account. After the thesis was completed, all the data obtained from participants was deleted to ensure confidentiality.

Research Design

A mixed-methods design with arts-based, qualitative, and quantitative research was used in this study. Through a qualitative research approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain information about a participant's experience with social media and their

thoughts and feelings about it. Short reflections were also conducted following the creation of each art piece. An arts-based research approach was used to analyze all the collected artwork. The researcher observed specific themes and emotions within the artwork. The specificities were analyzed through the content, color, form, and texts used within the art. Both self-portraits were compared together to observe if an impact occurred from creating the found poetry with positive affirmations. Quantitative research was implemented by the utilization of the two questionnaires.

Procedures & Data Collection

After recruiting participants through social media, the researcher gave them a detailed description of what the research process entailed via email. Simultaneously, the researcher also shared the informed consent form and discussed the potential risks of the study. The researcher also shared resources of support if they were needed after the process. Resources being referrals to therapists, support groups, meditation apps, and art classes. After they consented to participation the research process continued. After receiving the signed consent form, the researcher securely stored them on Google Drive in a folder designated for the consent forms.

The researcher had all the research entirely conducted online. To connect with participants, research was carried out individually with each participant via Zoom. Before the research sessions began, the researcher contacted participants to assess what art materials they had. The researcher then mailed out the needed art supplies to participants; collage materials including, cutout texts and quotes, cutout images, and glue sticks. If participants didn't have colored pencils or markers, the researcher also provided those. Research sessions ranged from taking forty-five minutes to an hour and a half.

The first interview session with participants began with them completing two questionnaires: Self-Esteem Scale, and Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale (Zimmer-

Dembeck et al., 2021). After completing the questionnaires, a semi-structured interview was conducted. Participants were asked about their experience with social media, their feelings about it, and if it has affected their body-image perception. At first the researcher recorded the spoken data via pen and pencil, and later converted them into a typed document. The questionnaires and semi-structured interview data were securely stored in folders designated for each of them.

After the questionnaire and interview portion was completed, the process continued onto the art portion. For an art assessment, the participants were prompted to complete a self-portrait of themselves using blank paper, colored pencils, markers, and/or pens. Participants were free to choose whatever materials they wished to create with. To decrease possible feelings of pressure, the researcher provided participants the option of drawing within a time limit or to not set a time limit. After creating their self-portrait, the researcher conducted a short reflection, asking the participant how they felt about their art and what the process was like for them. The researcher took notes of their responses via pen and pencil, and later converted them onto a typed document.

After the art assessment was completed, the research process continued onto the art intervention, found poetry with positive affirmations. As mentioned before, the researcher provided the collage materials that were needed for this intervention. Participants were prompted to find cutout texts and/or quotes and form them into a poem, being free to use the materials provided by the researcher and/or their own images they had. After creating the poem, participants were prompted to incorporate it into an art piece, art being, collage cutouts of images and/or their own drawings/doodles. They were to glue or tape the poem and art together to create one overall art piece. Another short reflection was completed after they were done creating. Again, they were asked how they felt about their art and what the process was like for them. The

researcher took notes of their responses via pen and paper, and later converted them onto a typed document. Participants were asked to take photos of both their self-portrait and found poetry with positive affirmations, and to email them to the researcher. The documents of their short reflections and their images were securely stored in their designated folders.

A week later, a second research session was conducted using the same procedure, with the inclusion of three alterations. The differences being that the self-portrait art assessment was conducted after the art therapy intervention and following that was an ending semi-structured interview and the two questionnaires. Instead of asking questions about social media, there were questions concerning the overall experience of the process and if participants felt impacted by creating the art. Before the second session, participants were prompted to create just one found poetry with positive affirmations on their own time within that week timespan. They were to use the provided collage materials and/or images and texts they had themselves. At the end of the second session, the researcher informed the participant about resources of support if they were needed.

All the collected qualitative and quantitative data was individually analyzed by the researcher. A panel of art therapy students was used to aid the researcher in observing any emerging themes and emotions within the self-portraits. Students were guided by the thesis professor to ensure reliability.

Measures, Assessments, and Interventions

A questionnaire developed for the purposes of this study is based on a pre-existing questionnaire, Multidimensional Self-Esteem Scale. This adaptation is influenced by the validated Multidimensional Self-Esteem Scale that measures social contact, social-criticism, performance, physical appearance, physical ability, and global self-esteem (Rentzch & Schutz, 2021). This questionnaire consists of 18 items and a 7-point rating scale that measures the

frequency and intensity of the subscales. The second questionnaire used with participants in this study is the Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale. The Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale is an 18-item self-report measure of online appearance preoccupation that was created through the literature of social media use and existing measures related to sociocultural and body image theories of social grooming (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2021). Since the first questionnaire was altered, it is acknowledged that the researcher cannot compare the future results to other studies that utilize the survey.

Self-portraits were used to visually assess a participant's internal perspective of themselves and to gain more insight. Participants were instructed to simply draw a picture of how they perceive themselves in that moment. The self-portraits helped to observe if a participant views themselves more negatively or more positively. Comparing the two self-portraits afterwards aided the researcher in analyzing if an impact was made through the art therapy intervention, found poetry with positive affirmations. Found poetry with positive affirmations was the only art therapy intervention used. The intervention consists of using a collaboration of different texts and/or quotes to create a poem that sparks self-affirmations of positivity, confidence, empowerment, and self-love. Collage materials of images and/or drawing were also incorporated with the texts/and or quotes to create it into an art piece. Short reflections about the art piece were done after completing the self-portraits and found poetry. Participants were asked questions about how they felt about their art and how they felt about the process.

Materials

Digital materials used for this study were Zoom and Google. The video conferencing platform, Zoom, was used to conduct interviews and research with participants. A heavily secured Google drive was used to store all the participant's data collected. A Gmail account was used to connect with participants beforehand and to send links for the Zoom meetings.

Art materials for this study consist of blank white paper, glue or tape, colored pencils, markers, and/ or pens, as well as collage materials of images, texts, and quotes. The collage materials were specifically used for the art intervention of creating found poetry with positive affirmations. Participants were free to use any of the listed above materials and/or anything else they wished to use to create.

Data Analysis

Analysis was mainly emphasized on the two self-portraits and observing if creating found poetry with positive affirmations impacted the participant. An arts-based approach guided the researcher in analyzing the self-portraits. While comparing and analyzing the two self-portraits, the researcher observed if the noted themes and emotions remained the same or changed. Through a qualitative approach, the study analyzed interviews and reflections on the artwork. The researcher focused on the emotions, thoughts, and themes that they observe in the collected data.

To analyze the measurements and scales, a quantitative approach was applied since number scales are involved. When analyzing the questionnaires, the researcher focused on the participant's self-esteem levels and social media appearance-preoccupation levels. The researcher compared the questionnaire levels from the first and second session to observe if there was any difference. Google sheets were used to analyze the numerical data. The purpose of the comparison was to see if the participant's self-esteem and social media appearance-preoccupation levels were impacted at all from creating the art, and if their social media appearance preoccupation level changed after the reflective practices in the study.

Risks and Benefits

Potential risks to participants were minimal and more prevalent if they had a vulnerable self-esteem state and co-occurring symptoms. Co-occurring symptoms include depression, anxiety, eating disorders, body dysmorphia, and other psychological disorders. Participants were made aware of the risks before consenting participation to the study. They were also warned about the possible stress or trigger-induced questions that were involved in the interviews and questionnaires. The risks were stated on the consent form, and the researcher also explicitly discussed this when going over the consent form.

A major benefit of this study included the participant gaining a better insight about themselves and their potential. Participants became more self-aware of the time they spend on social media sites and how it affects their mentality. Through this study they had the possibility of strengthening their self-esteem through the combination of positive affirmations and art making. From this study they learn the tool of practicing positive affirmations, which they can choose to incorporate into their life to care for their overall mental health. Another benefit of the study is the positive effect that comes with creating art. Through creating art, participants experienced feelings of mental calmness and a decrease in stress. For some it also stimulated an artistic interest within them and motivated them to continue making art in their own time.

Protection of Human Participants

The protection of the human participants in this study was always a priority of concern. Potential risks were made aware of before signing consent to participate and the researcher minimized these risks to their best ability. The researcher followed the ethical guidelines of the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, the American Art Therapy Association, the Art Therapy Credentials Board, and Dominican University of California.

Chapter 4: Results

Restatement of Research Question

The purpose of this study was to illuminate the connection between women's self-esteem and social media, and how art therapy interventions can impact a woman's perception of their body image. This research addressed the question if the use of art therapy with women will promote a positive impact on their body image perception which will increase their self-esteem and overall well-being. The art therapy intervention, found poetry with positive affirmations, that is focused on self-affirmations and building self-esteem, was implemented by the researcher to create this impact. By incorporating positive affirmations in art therapy interventions, it was hypothesized that a woman's self-esteem levels will grow. The hypothesis was supported with the data, as it was found that 71.4% of the participant's self-esteem levels increased after completing the study. The self-portraits also provided evidence that the majority of participants experienced a positive change. It was discovered that 42.9% of participant's self-portraits had no change (neutral), 28.6% presented a positive progression, 21.4% shifted from negative to positive, and 7.1% presented a negative regression. None of the participant's self-portraits showed a positive to negative change. Overall, half of the participants experienced a positive shift within their self-portraits.

Participant Demographics

Each participant in the study was only required to answer one demographic question about themselves, their age. There were 14 participants that ranged from 22-30 years old, and then there was one participant who was 51 years old. The average of participants in the study was 27.3 years. Since the study was focused on women and women identified people, the

population was 100% female. Participants were not asked any further questions that could reveal specific demographic information, as it was irrelevant to the study.

Research Session #1 Semi-Structured Interview

First Social Media Account & Age of Creation

To start off each interview, participants were asked of their age. Participants were then asked how old they were when they first created a social media account and what it was. Myspace was the first social media account created for 57% of the participants, following with three participants first on Facebook, one on Twitter, one on Youtube, and one on Instagram. A big majority of participants created their first account as a preteen, with the youngest being eight years old and the oldest being 32. The average age of participants creating their first social media account was 10.4 years old.

Most Used Social Media Platform

Instagram was the most popularly used social media platform among the participants, with 78.6% participants listing it as their first choice. Eleven participants said Instagram was what they frequented the most, while three others listed Facebook, Twitter, and Tik-Tok as their first. Tik-Tok was mentioned to be a close tie to being first with three participants. Only one participant out of the fourteen said that they do not use Instagram at all. Other social media platforms used by participants are Snapchat, Discord, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and Marco Polo.

Feelings About Social Media

Participants were asked to elaborate their feelings about social media. There were many similar themes discovered among their answers. Many claimed that there are both positive and negative sides to social media, with two describing that they have a love-hate relationship with it. The various pros and cons reported have some participants feeling conflicted about social media.

Fifty percent of participants mentioned they love seeing what friends and family are doing on it. The aspect of connection with others is a major benefit and it is how participants feel that they are “in the loop”. While it is nice to stay connected to others virtually, Participant One said, “it’s hard to stay off because everyone uses it and it’s how you primarily talk to people nowadays.”

Another major benefit found among responses was social media being an outlet for creativity. Two participants mentioned how platforms, like Instagram, were a great way of being caught up with trends and finding new clothes. Additionally, it was reported as a benefit for promoting personal businesses and following like-minded people in one’s career field or personal interests. Several participants mentioned how social media is a convenient way to receive and share information, but how it sometimes can be overwhelming and contribute to information overload.

The concept of comparison with others was a major concern held with social media. Many mentioned how social media just portrays people’s highlights and how the platforms create unrealistic expectations. Expectations about what one’s body-image should look like and making them feel as if they should be doing more in life. Participant Eleven said, “it creates a lot of jealousy and a sense of competition in people and sets a lot of expectations in people’s minds.” Some participants claimed they are not fans of it and wish it did not exist because of the comparison aspect, but that the early exposure to it makes it hard to stay off and that it is addicting. Participant Eight said she cannot quit because she “always feels the need to keep up with my image on social media.” A couple of participants mentioned how it is so easy to get “caught in scrolling”. Mindless scrolling through people’s curated images and highlights “is damaging when you’re in a negative mindset”, and “leaves you feeling *ugh* about yourself.”

One interesting discovery was made by Participant Two who said:

From 2009 to 2017 I used to run group therapy for young women and noticed a huge change among them with body-image and self-esteem issues in 2013 because of the rise of social media. Body image, self-esteem, and unhealthy relationships became the top issues among teens in 2013.

She found the correlation between these arising issues and social media to be very strong. This observation was found through the participant's past work experience.

The Influence of Social Media on Body-Image

One hundred percent of the participants answered yes to the question, "do you think using social media has affected your body-image?" The concept of comparison to others was a major factor discussed in participant's answers regarding the influence of social media on their body-image. Six out of the fourteen participants mentioned how comparison on these platforms affected how they view themselves. Participant One said, "I constantly compare myself to others, especially on Instagram. It's hard not to when it is constantly in your face." Participants Ten and Eleven both talked about how they catch themselves comparing themselves to "fit insta girls" and workout influencers.

Unrealistic body ideals on social media were also found amongst participants to be negatively influential towards their body-image. Participant Eight said, "Seeing Instagram models makes me want to achieve their body-image, but it's unrealistic and stresses me out." Participant Thirteen said, "Social media only projects one body image, it's not real." Participant Three said, "You can make your body look a certain way, you can curate it to how you don't look like normally. You constantly see other bodies like that and think I should look like that." It is heavily evidenced amongst participants that social media is notorious for promoting these unrealistic body ideals to its users which in consequence negatively affects their body-image.

Five participants mentioned how social media had a bigger influence on their body-image when they were younger in their teenage years. Participant Seven said, “It influenced me a lot in the past when I was more moldable and not confident within myself.” Participant Nine said, “Yes it definitely did, but not so much now because I now feel more secure about myself.” Participant Twelve said, “Yes, especially as a teen because of the need for external validation, but that is not so much needed anymore.” Participant Fourteen said, “Comparing my body type on Myspace and Instagram definitely impacted me and influenced anorexia and bulimia within me starting in the 6th grade. It made me feel like I had to look or be a certain way in order to be included.” These answers give evidence to how an individual’s age plays a big factor into the influence social media has on their body-image. They demonstrate how it is especially influential and harmful among adolescents.

Research Session #2 Semi-Structured Interview

Feelings About the Overall Process

Thirteen out of the fourteen participants indicated an answer that they liked or enjoyed the whole process. Participant Thirteen was the only one who answered differently by saying, “I was having issues with what I looked like during the first session and during the second time I was thinking about the whole process a lot.” Several participants mentioned how they enjoyed how reflective this process made them be about themselves. Participant Fourteen said, “this was grounding, helped me center my thoughts, and remind me what I forgot to work on about myself.” Participant Four said, “it was a way to think about yourself outside of the traditional norm, and it was fun to look at myself through a different lens.” This process was beneficial for some by fostering a new sense of self awareness.

Becoming aware of one's social media usage and its effects was a benefit found for some during this process. Participant One said, "It made me look inwards more, how social media affects me and how seeing other people on social media makes me feel. This whole process made me see how I can make the whole outlook on myself more positive." Meanwhile Participant Six talked about how, "the questionnaires were a great reflection for me on my social media usage." This process allowed participants to develop an awareness of their social media usage and how it may negatively affect them.

Five participants elaborated about how creating art was what they liked best in the overall process. Participant Seven said, "I feel like I gained a lot of knowledge on how helpful doing art is. I enjoyed unwinding after a busy day and expressing myself through art." Participant Three said, "this process was really fun and fulfilling because it brings out your inner child doing art stuff. It helps you get creative and do something different that's not in your day-to-day routine." Participant Ten said, "it was nice to forget about everything in the outside world and do this art for myself." Creating art was experienced in a positive manner for these five participants in that it gave them an outlet to express their creativity and to ease their minds from daily life stresses.

Several participants talked about how they enjoyed all the positive content given to them to make the found poetry and how it made them want to think more positively. Participant Nine said, "this was an overall great experience in reflecting and moving forward from negativity, letting go, and having to face your pain, this I especially saw with the found poetry." Participant Eleven said, "looking at all the positive words and bright colors lifted me in a better mood." Participant Ten said, "It was nice to take the time to really look at the words of affirmation, it made me feel really nice." Reflecting on the positive content aided participants in thinking in a more optimistic way.

Favorite Part of the Process

Eleven of the fourteen participants claimed that Found Poetry with Positive Affirmations was their favorite part of the process. Several of them really enjoyed working with positive affirmations and reflecting on the choices they made with words. Two of the participants liked collaging better because they found creating self-portraits to be stressful and difficult. Participant Twelve reported she found the collages to be easier with the pre-assembled materials that were provided. Three of the participants especially enjoyed the Found Poetry that they did independently in between the two research sessions. Participant Ten completed the directive during the week when she was feeling stressed and reported it made her feel better. Meanwhile Participants Three and Eleven found it nice to complete it by themselves so they could put more time, thought, and effort into it.

The other participants provided different answers on their favorite part of the process. Participant One said, “my favorite part was how I got to get out of my normal life and focus on something that is creative. Being creative makes my mental health better.” Getting exposed to art therapy and its impact was Participant Five’s favorite part, and Participant Thirteen primarily enjoyed the comfortable environment that the researcher created. Every participant overall enjoyed the process, and all were able to identify a favorite part.

Feelings About Social Media Changing

Participants were asked if their feelings about social media changed at all. Four participants answered in a way that indicated a clear yes, five participants answered in a way that indicated a clear no, and the rest gave various answers as to what it did to their feelings on the topic. Seven participants shared that it did provide them an overall better awareness on the effects of social media, especially how it impacts them and others. Participant one said, “From

this I realized the negative effects it has on my self-esteem and mental health, and that there are other things I can do that can help me grow.” This process reportedly made Participant Eight more reflective on her self-image and how she views herself and prompted her into trying to stay off social media.

Two of the participants claimed that the questionnaires they did had them realize the negative habits they do on social media. Participant Three said, “I thought I was pretty self-aware of my social media usage, but then I realized I compare myself a lot more than I thought I did, and I didn’t think I would rank so high on a lot of the questions.” Meanwhile Participant Eleven said she found herself saying “wow I do that lot” when going through the questionnaires. This awareness was experienced positively for most participants, but one did not feel the same way. Participant Twelve said, “I felt more self-conscious this week because I was thinking about it and noticed my reactions to seeing fitness influencers. I was also feeling more left out seeing people out on vacations.” This process amplified this participant’s awareness of social media as a negative factor in that it made her more observant and critical of herself by comparing herself to others on the platforms.

Impact from Creating Artwork

Thirteen out of the fourteen participants answered yes to the question, “Did you feel any impact from creating the artwork?” Participant Thirteen was the only one who did not say yes, explaining that it is hard for her to be positive with herself and that she thinks she was avoiding herself. Going into the artwork she said, “I didn’t view it as creating artwork for myself because I don’t have positivity for myself. I made it by thinking, how would I want my students to view me?” Since it is difficult to look at herself in a positive light, she focused on her student’s perspective of her as a teacher.

The majority of the participants found that creating artwork had a positive impact on themselves. Focusing on positive content while making the found poetry with positive affirmations contributed to feelings of encouragement and optimism. Participant Seven said, “I felt very centered, relaxed, and grounded after making the found poetry. The positive affirmations really stuck with me throughout the evening.” The positive affirmations were reported to be great reminders among participants.

Participant Ten talked about how doing the found poetry was a helpful reminder to love yourself and to be proud of yourself and felt that it really did have an impact on her self-perception. Creating found poetry made Participant Eleven feel proud about herself, as indicated by her reason.

I had more connection to the collage rather than the drawing because I am not usually that creative and making that brought me back and reminded me I can be creative. It made me feel good at the end of the day, that I created my own art. Having the opportunity to be creative through making art stimulated positive feelings of pride and joy amongst most participants.

Three participants talked about how this experience encouraged them to want to make more art. Two of them expanded that thought by saying that engaging in creativity on a daily routine basis would be beneficial. From being great reminders of positivity, to encouraging them to engage in more creativity, to making them feel relaxed, there were many impactful effects discovered among the participants.

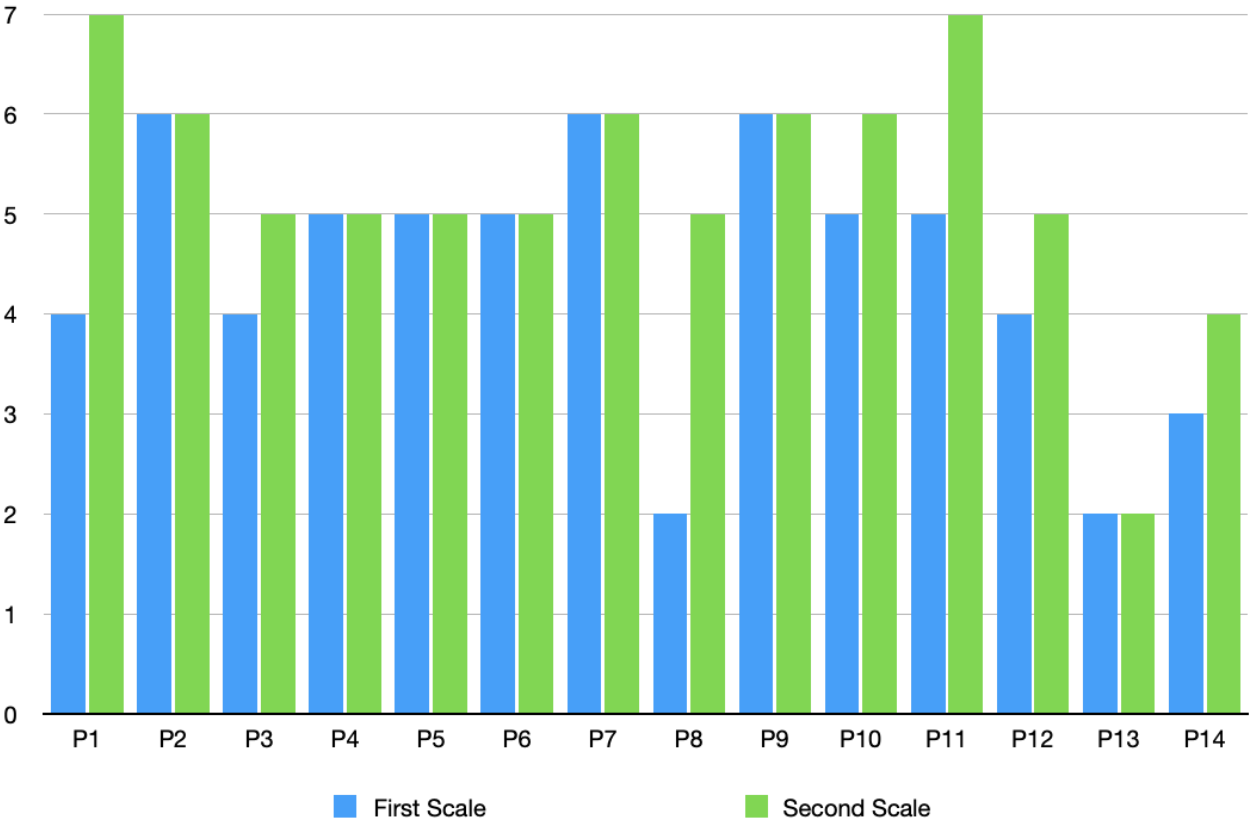
Self-Esteem Scale

Participants were prompted to complete the Self-Esteem Scale during the second part of the first research session and at the end of the second session. A questionnaire developed for the

purposes of this study was based on a pre-existing questionnaire, Multidimensional Self-Esteem Scale. This adaptation was influenced by the validated Multidimensional Self-Esteem scale that measures social contact, social-criticism, performance, physical appearance, physical ability, and global self-esteem (Rentzch & Schutz, 2021). The researcher deducted the section pertaining to physical ability due to being irrelevant to the study. The questionnaire used for this research consisted of 18 items and used a 7-point rating scale that measured the frequency and intensity of the subscales. This scale was implemented to measure participant's self-esteem, and to assess if any changes occurred.

After comparing the two scales of each participant the overall results demonstrated that 71.4% of participants showed a positive change and 28.6% showed a negative change. The highest score a participant could receive for this scale was 126. For the first Self-Esteem Scale that participants completed the average score was 70.5 and for the second one they completed the average score was 78.9. For the first Self-Esteem Scale the highest score was 99, while the second Self-Esteem Scale's highest score was 113. Lastly, for the first Self-Esteem Scale the lowest score was 33, while the second scale's lowest score was 41.

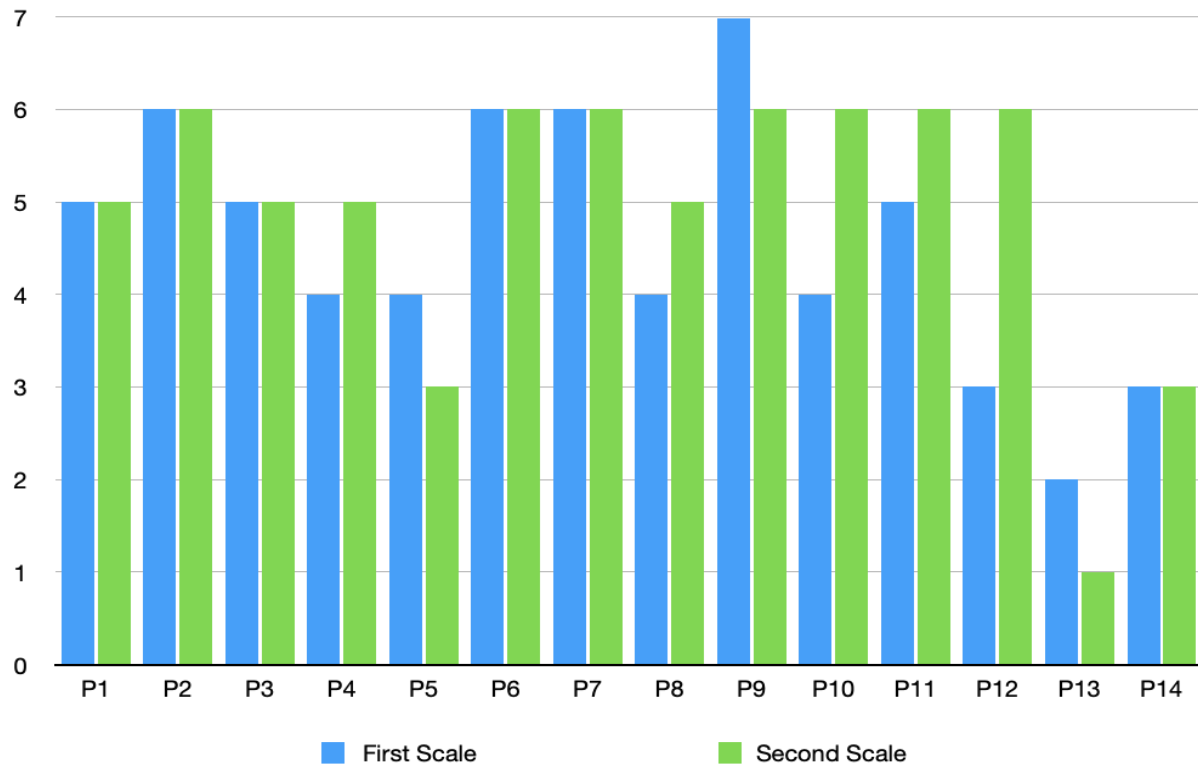
Figure 1 Do you have a positive attitude toward yourself?



First Scale Average	4.4	First Scale Range	4
Second Scale Average	5.3	Second Scale Range	5

Seven participants had no change in their score, and seven participant’s scores increased. There were no decreases in scores. The average score of participants decreased and the range increased.

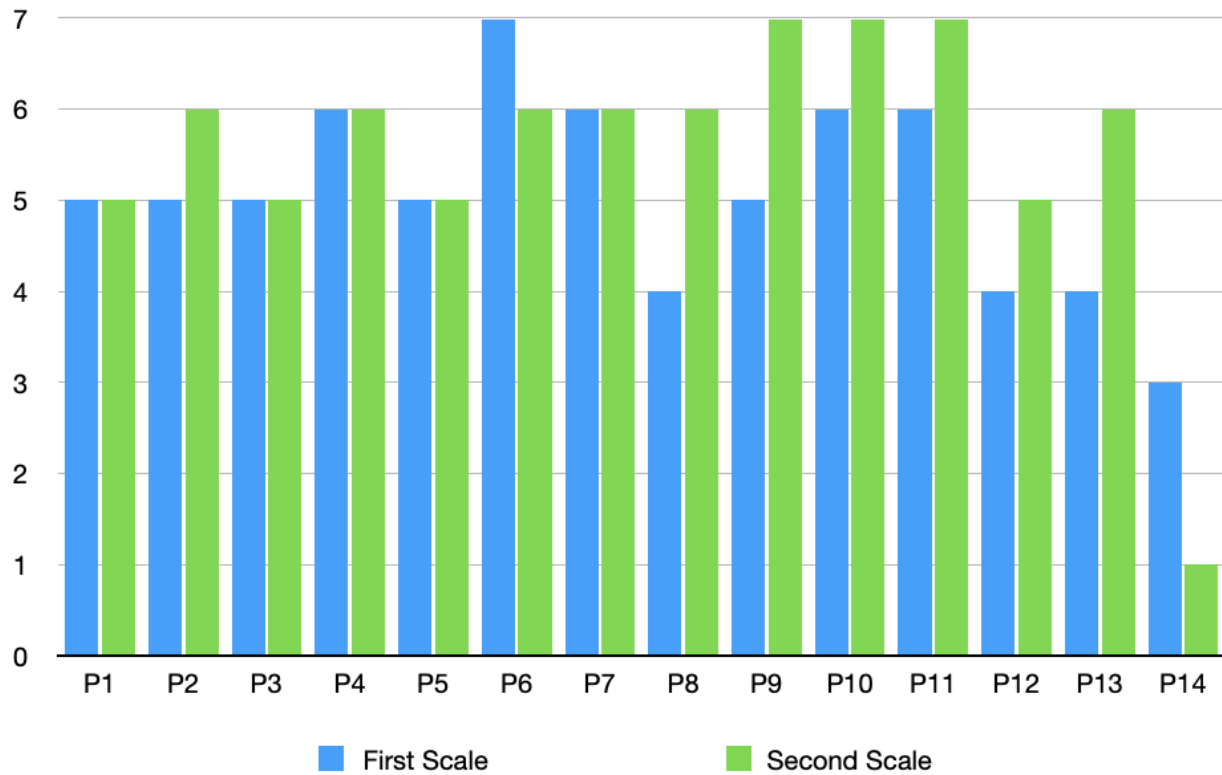
Figure 2 How happy are you with your appearance?



First Scale Average	4.6	First Scale Range	5
Second Scale Average	4.9	Second Scale Range	5

Six participants had no change in their score, five participant's scores increased, and three participant's scores decreased. The average score of participants increased and the range remained the same.

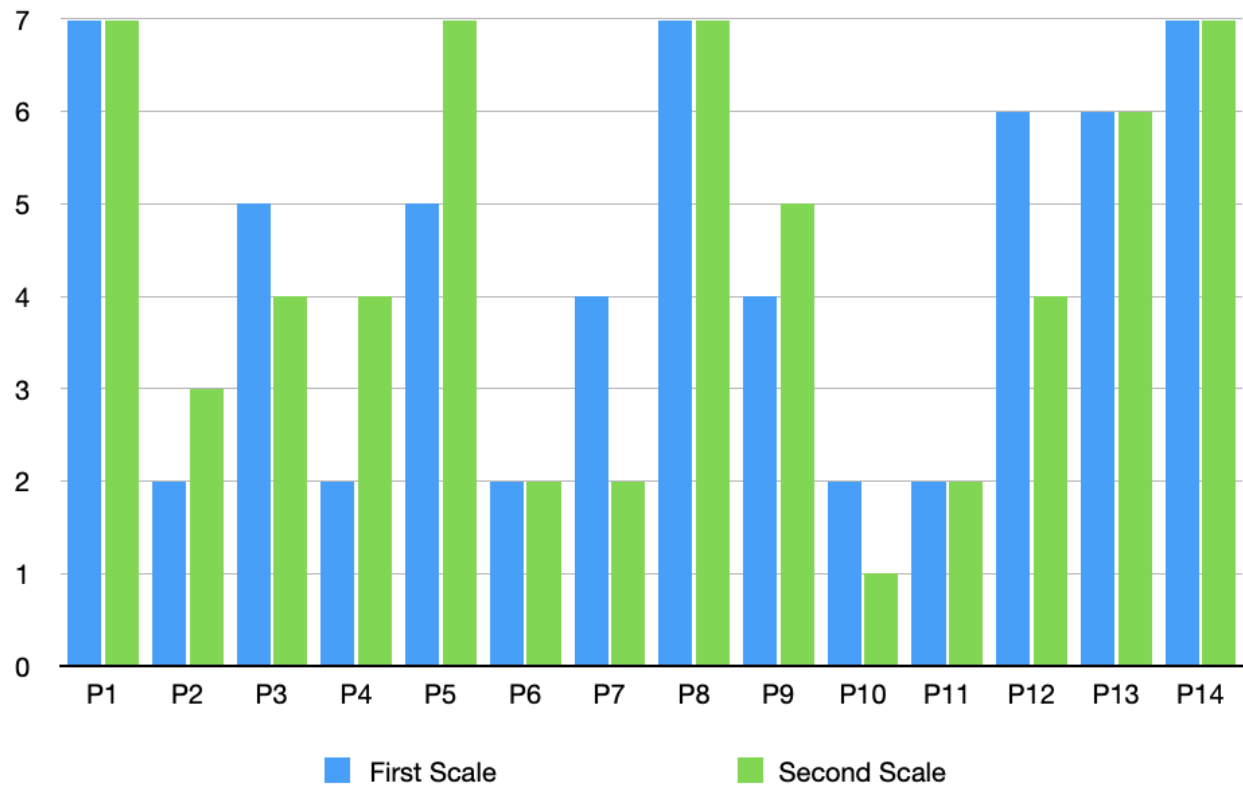
Figure 3 Do you feel self-sufficient?



First Scale Average	5.1	First Scale Range	4
Second Scale Average	5.6	Second Scale Range	6

Five participants had no change in their score, seven participant's scores increased, and two participant's scores decreased. The range and the average score of participants increased.

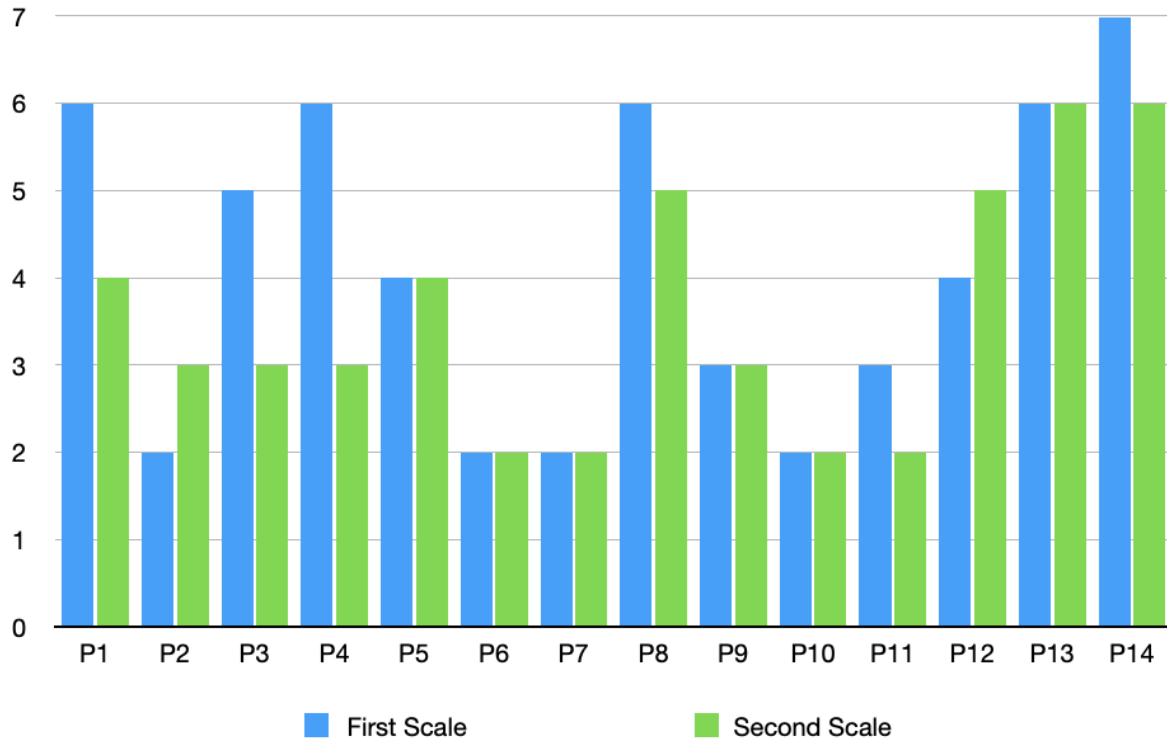
Figure 4 How often do you think that other people criticize you?



First Scale Average	4.4	First Scale Range	5
Second Scale Average	4.4	Second Scale Range	6

Six participants had no change in their score, four participant's scores increased, and four participant's scores decreased. The average score of participants remained the same and the range increased.

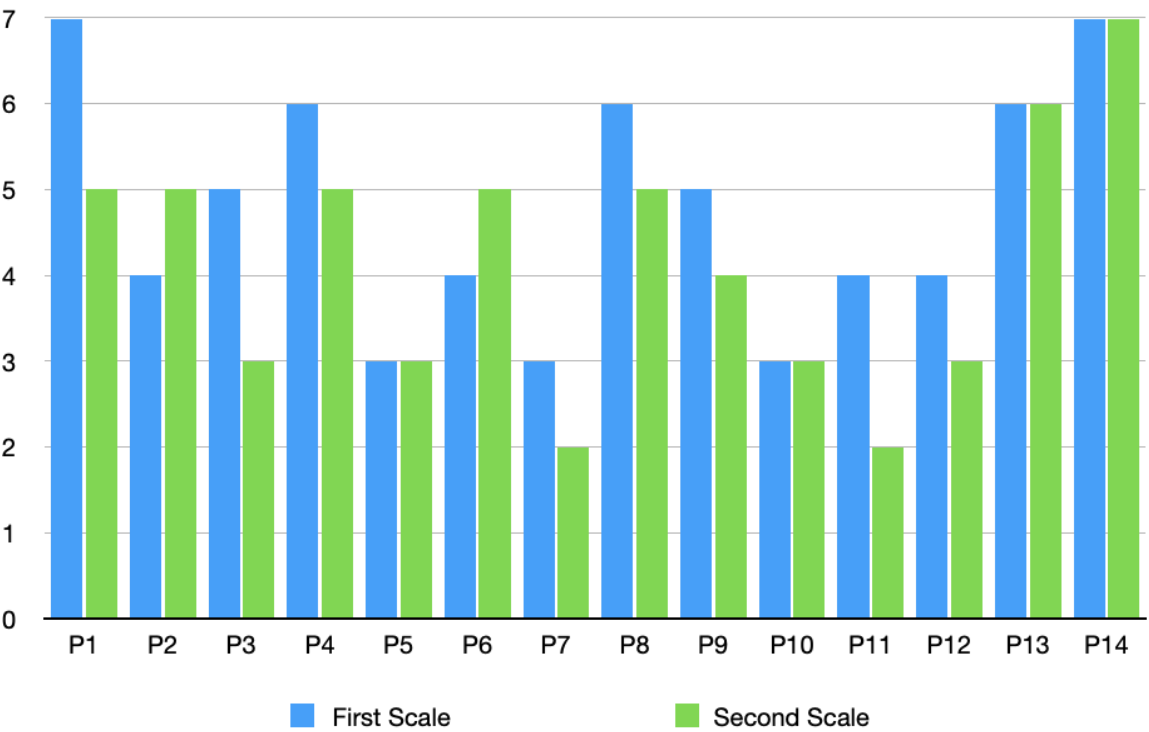
Figure 5 How often are you unhappy about yourself?



First Scale Average	4.1	First Scale Range	5
Second Scale Average	3.6	Second Scale Range	4

Six participants had no change in their score, two participant's scores increased, and six participant's scores decreased. Both the range and average score of participants decreased.

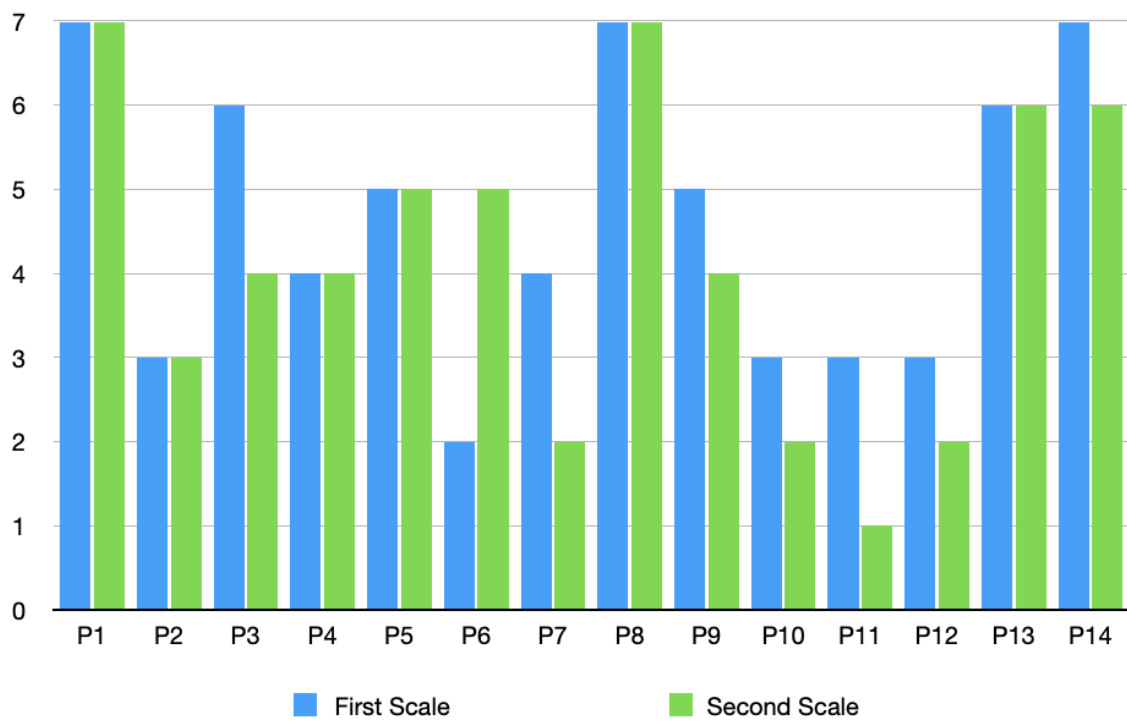
Figure 6 Do you have doubts about yourself?



First Scale Average	4.8	First Scale Range	4
Second Scale Average	4.1	Second Scale Range	5

Four participants had no change in their score, two participant’s scores increased, and eight participant’s scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range increased.

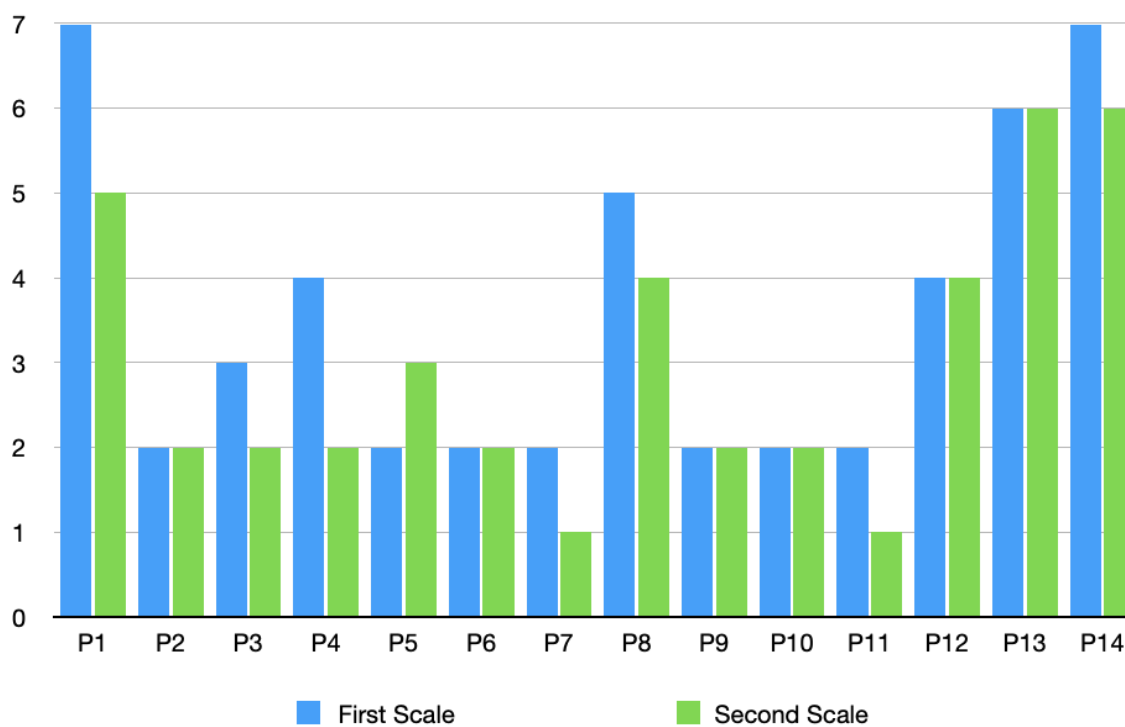
Figure 7 How frequently do you worry about what other people think of you?



First Scale Average	4.6	First Scale Range	5
Second Scale Average	4.2	Second Scale Range	6

Six participants had no change in their score, one participant’s score increased, and seven participant’s scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range increased.

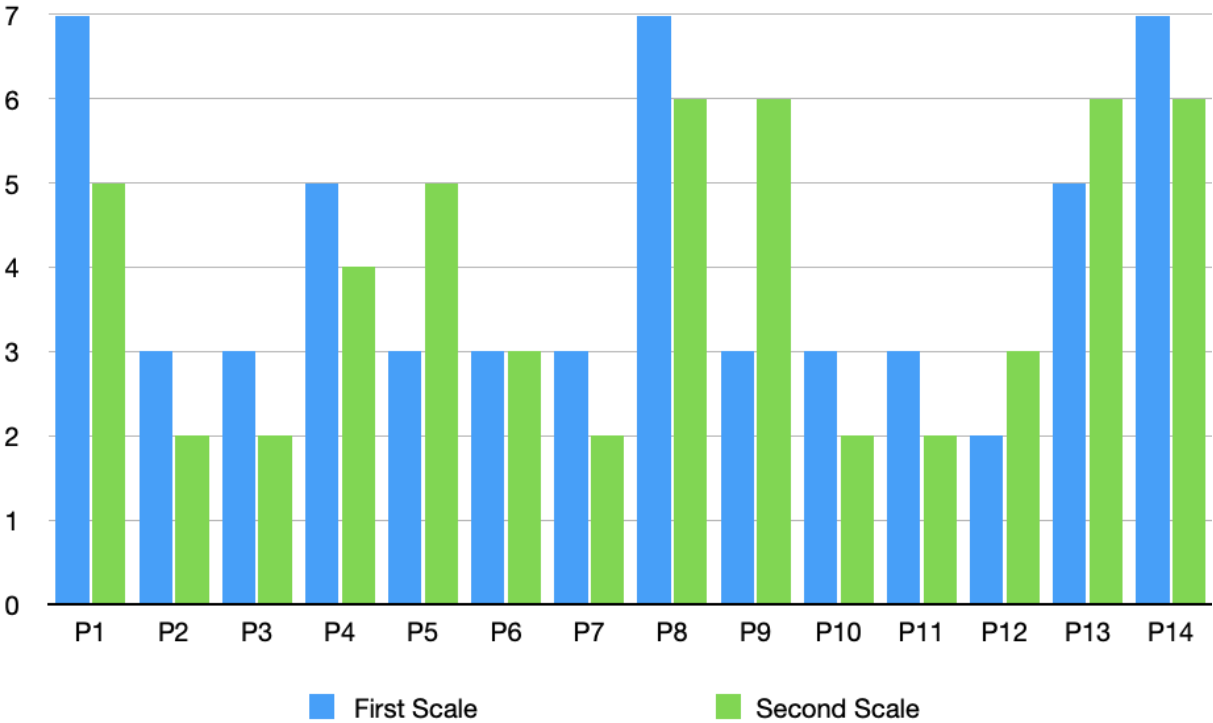
Figure 8 How often do you not like yourself?



First Scale Average	3.6	First Scale Range	5
Second Scale Average	3.1	Second Scale Range	5

Six participants had no change in their score, one participant's score increased, and seven participant's scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range remained the same.

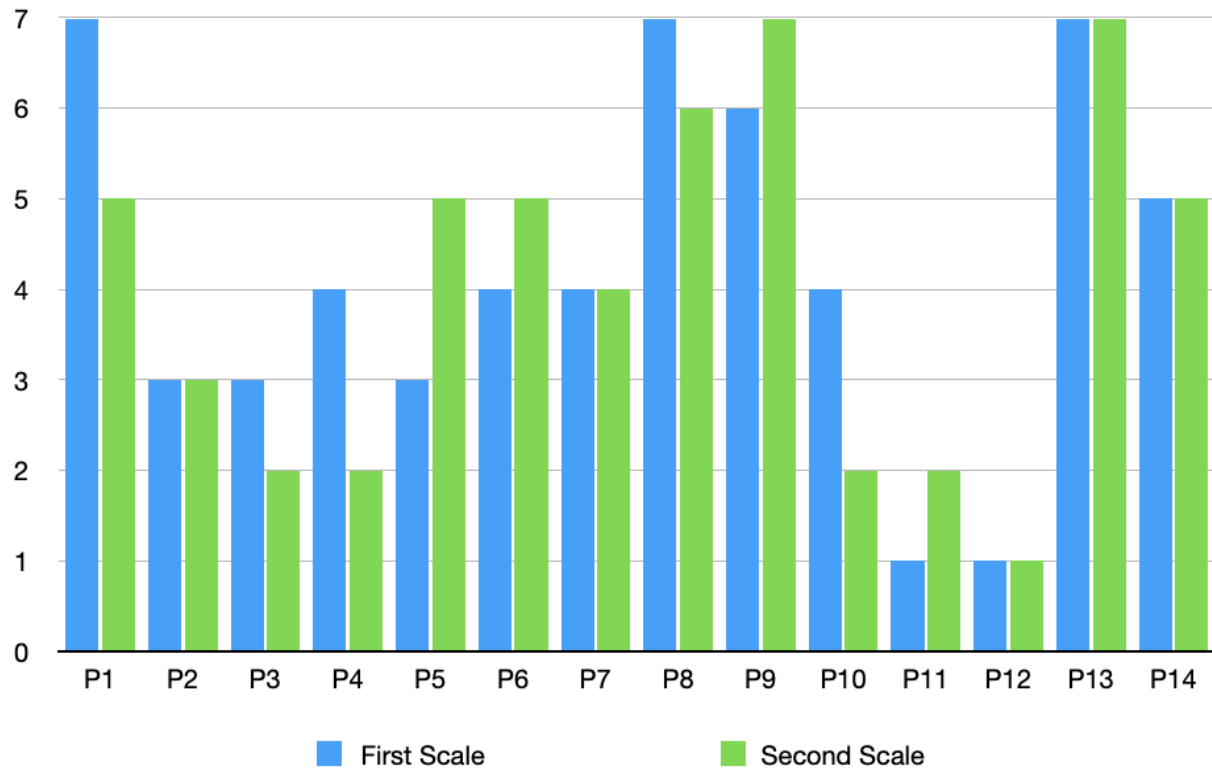
Figure 9 Are you often self-conscious?



First Scale Average	4.1	First Scale Range	5
Second Scale Average	3.7	Second Scale Range	4

One participant had no change in their score, four participant’s scores increased, and nine participant’s scores decreased. The average score and range of participants' scores decreased.

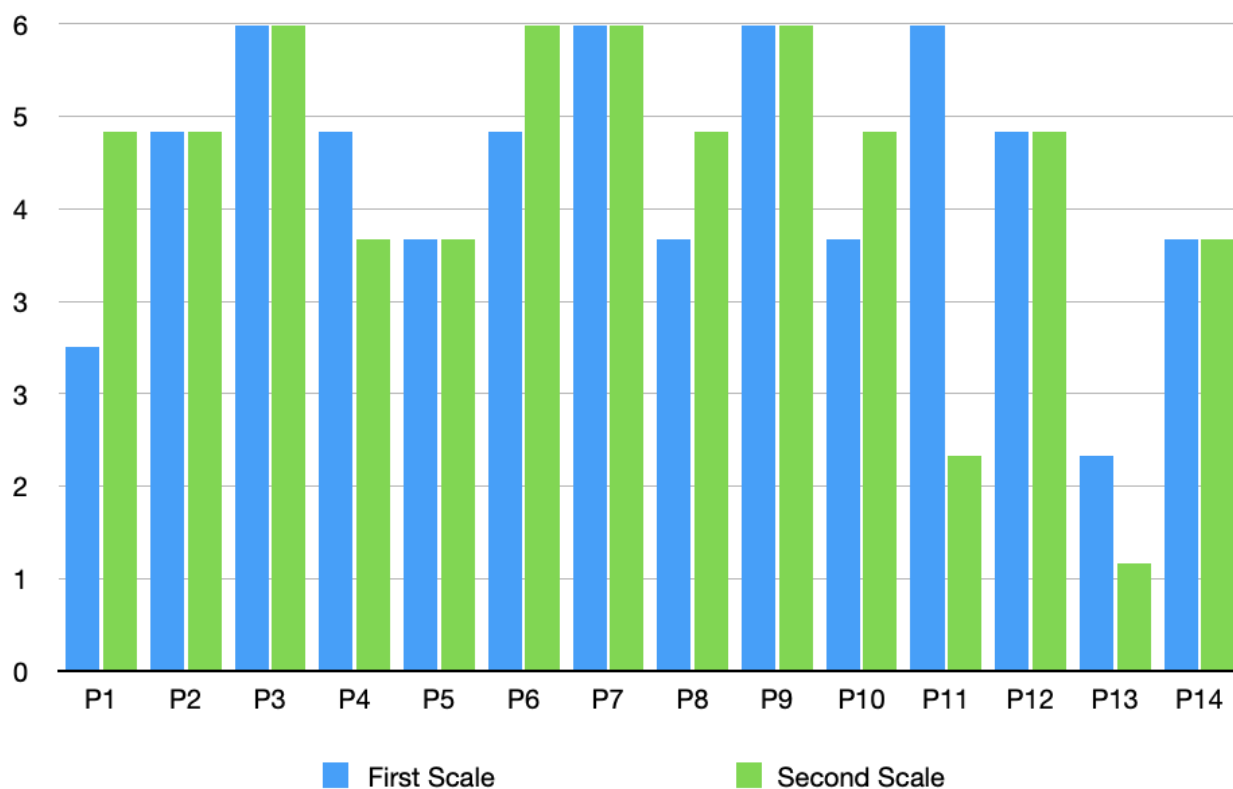
Figure 10 Do you feel anxious or self-conscious when you walk into a room full of people?



First Scale Average	4.2	First Scale Range	6
Second Scale Average	3.8	Second Scale Range	6

Five participants had no change in their score, four participant's scores increased, and five participant's scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range remained the same.

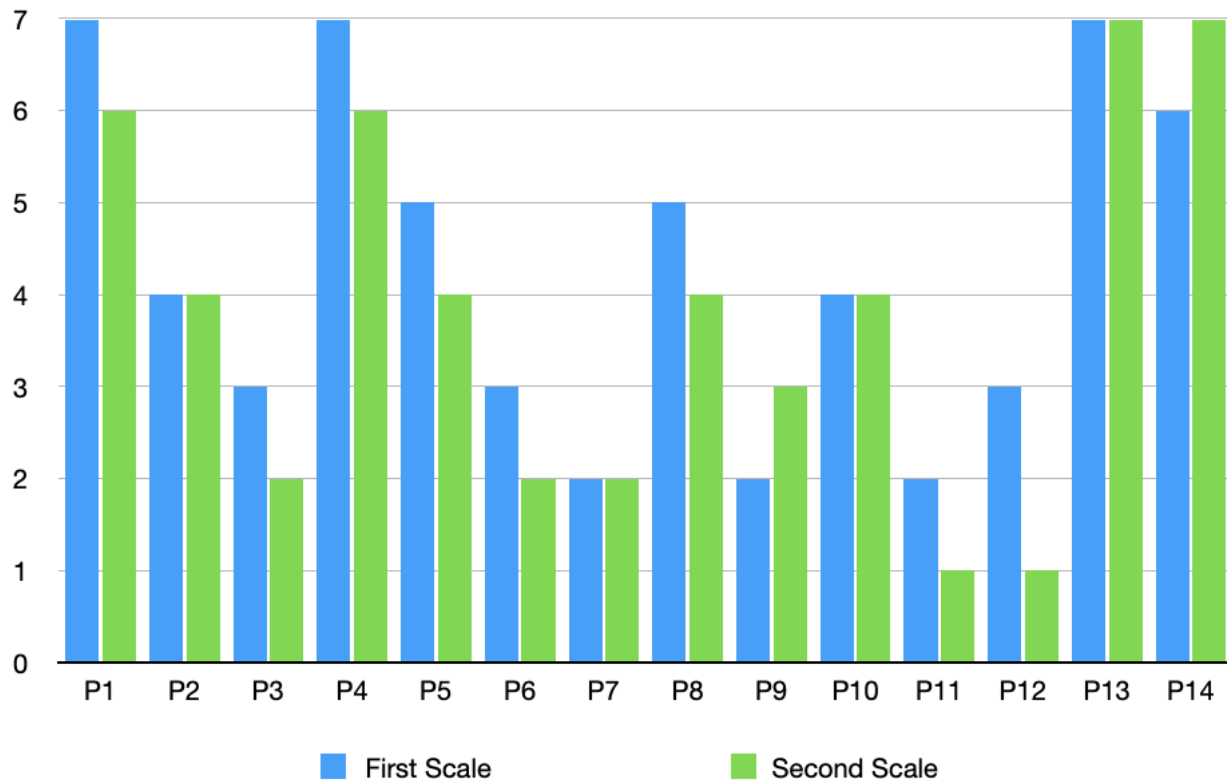
Figure 11 What percentage of the time do you think you're an attractive person?



First Scale Average	4.6	First Scale Range	4
Second Scale Average	4.5	Second Scale Range	5

Seven participants had no change in their score, four participant's scores increased, and three participant's scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range of scores increased.

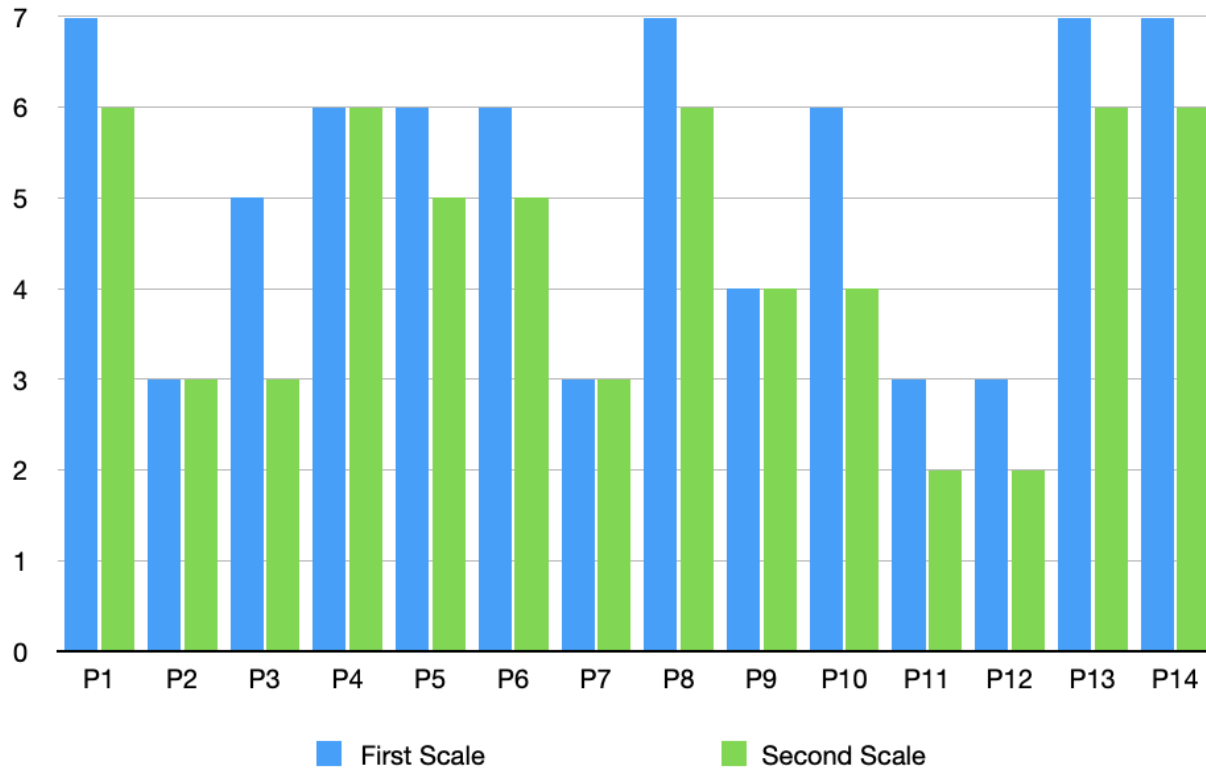
Figure 12 Do you get the impression that the majority of your friends are more attractive than you?



First Scale Average	4.3	First Scale Range	5
Second Scale Average	3.8	Second Scale Range	6

Four participants had no change in their score, two participant's scores increased, and eight participant's scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range of scores increased.

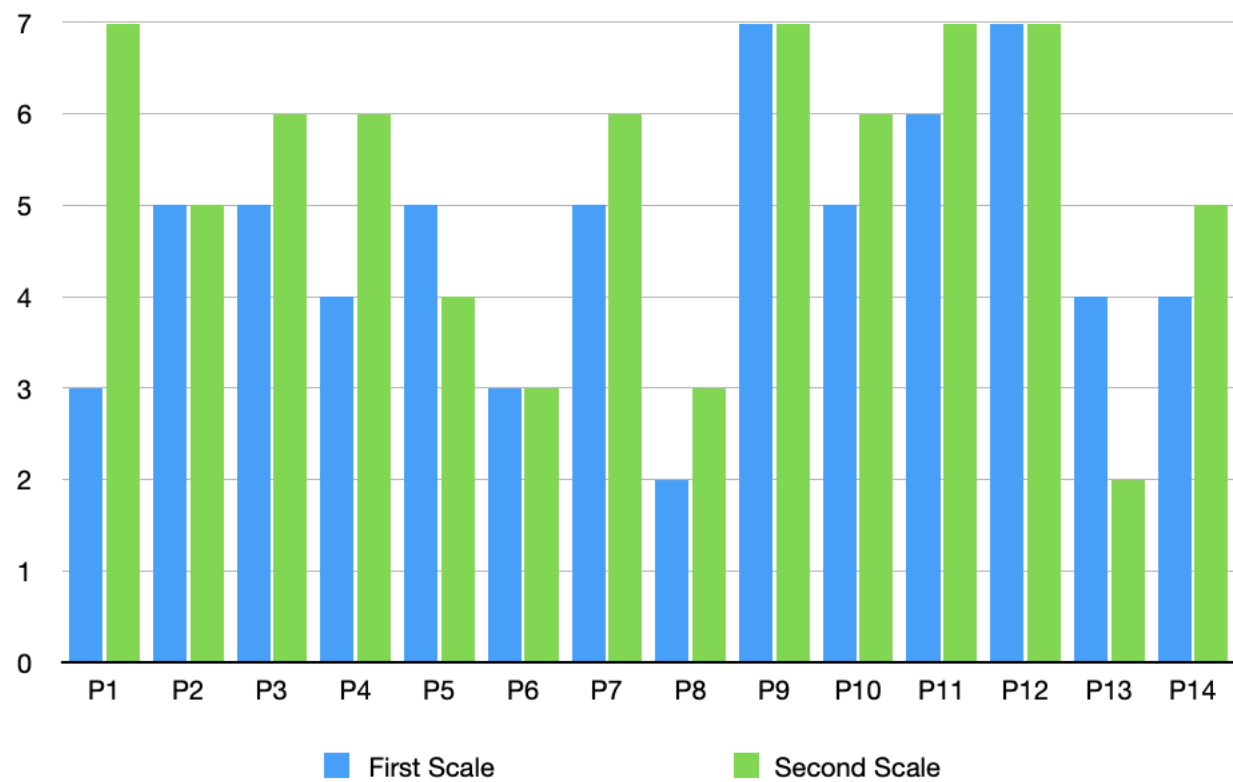
Figure 13 Do you often catch yourself comparing yourself to others?



First Scale Average	5.2	First Scale Range	4
Second Scale Average	4.4	Second Scale Range	4

Four participants had no change in their score and ten participant's scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range remained the same.

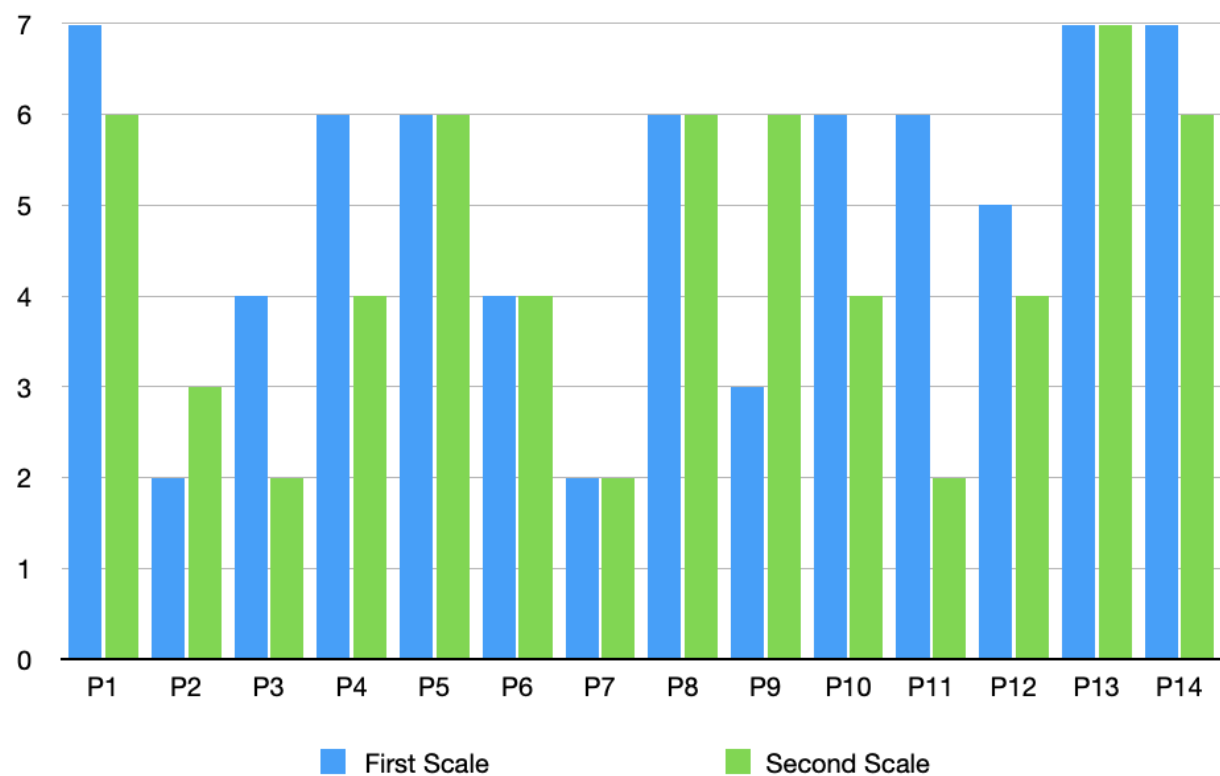
Figure 14 When you meet new people do you feel at ease in your own skin?



First Scale Average	4.6	First Scale Range	5
Second Scale Average	5.2	Second Scale Range	5

Four participants had no change in their score, eight participant’s scores increased, and two participant’s scores decreased. The average score of participants increased and the range remained the same.

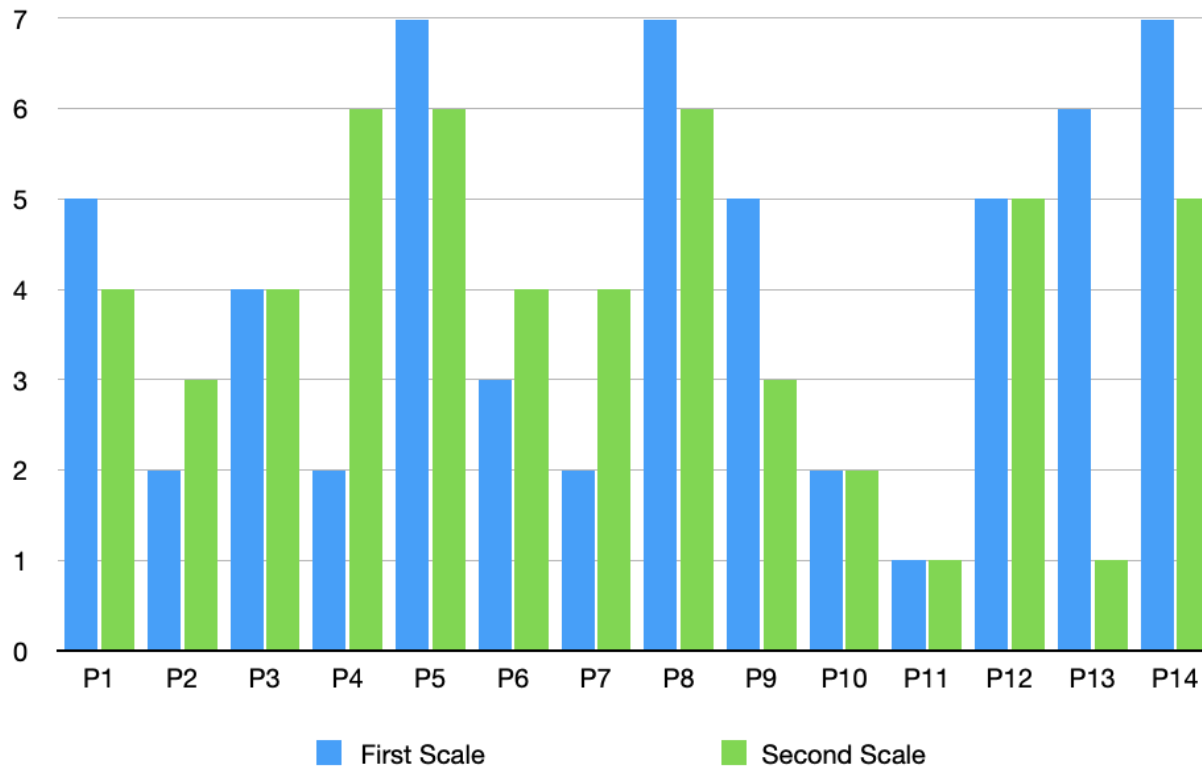
Figure 15 How often do you feel self-conscious about your physical appearance & body shape?



First Scale Average	5.1	First Scale Range	5
Second Scale Average	4.3	Second Scale Range	5

Five participants had no change in their score, two participant’s scores increased, and seven participant’s scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range remained the same.

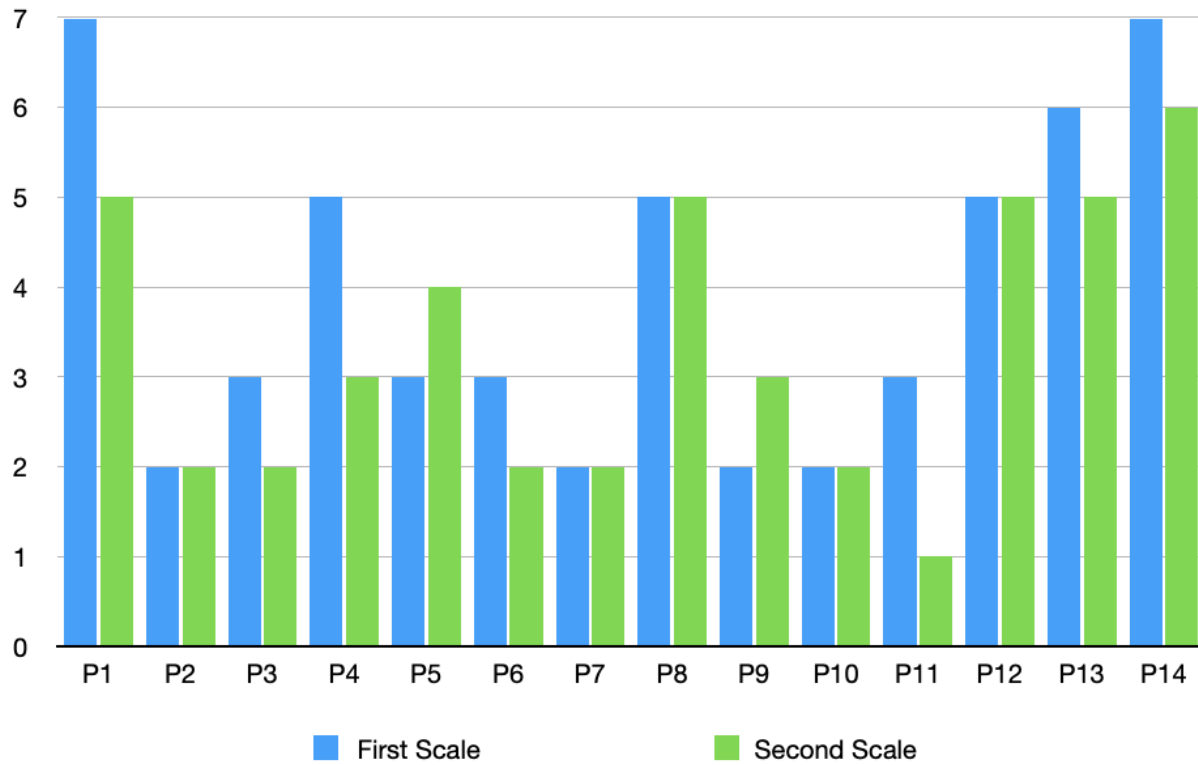
Figure 16 Do you wonder often if people enjoy being in your presence?



First Scale Average	4.1	First Scale Range	6
Second Scale Average	3.9	Second Scale Range	5

Four participants had no change in their score, four participant's scores increased, and six participant's scores decreased. The average score and range of participants decreased.

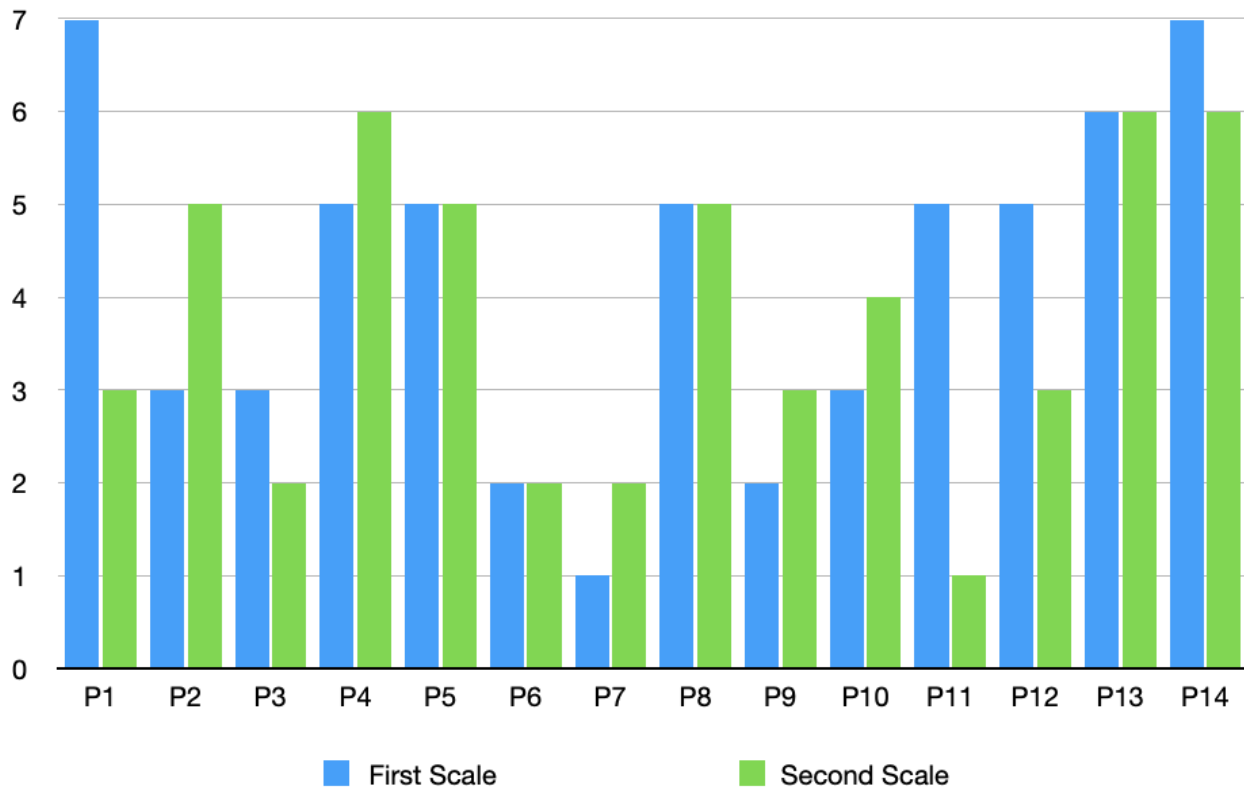
Figure 17 How often do you feel bad about yourself?



First Scale Average	3.9	First Scale Range	5
Second Scale Average	3.4	Second Scale Range	5

Five participants had no change in their score, two participant's scores increased, and seven participant's scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range remained the same.

Figure 18 How often do you wish you looked different?



First Scale Average	4.2	First Scale Range	6
Second Scale Average	3.8	Second Scale Range	5

Four participants had no change in their score, five participant's scores increased, and five participant's scores decreased. The average score and range of participants decreased

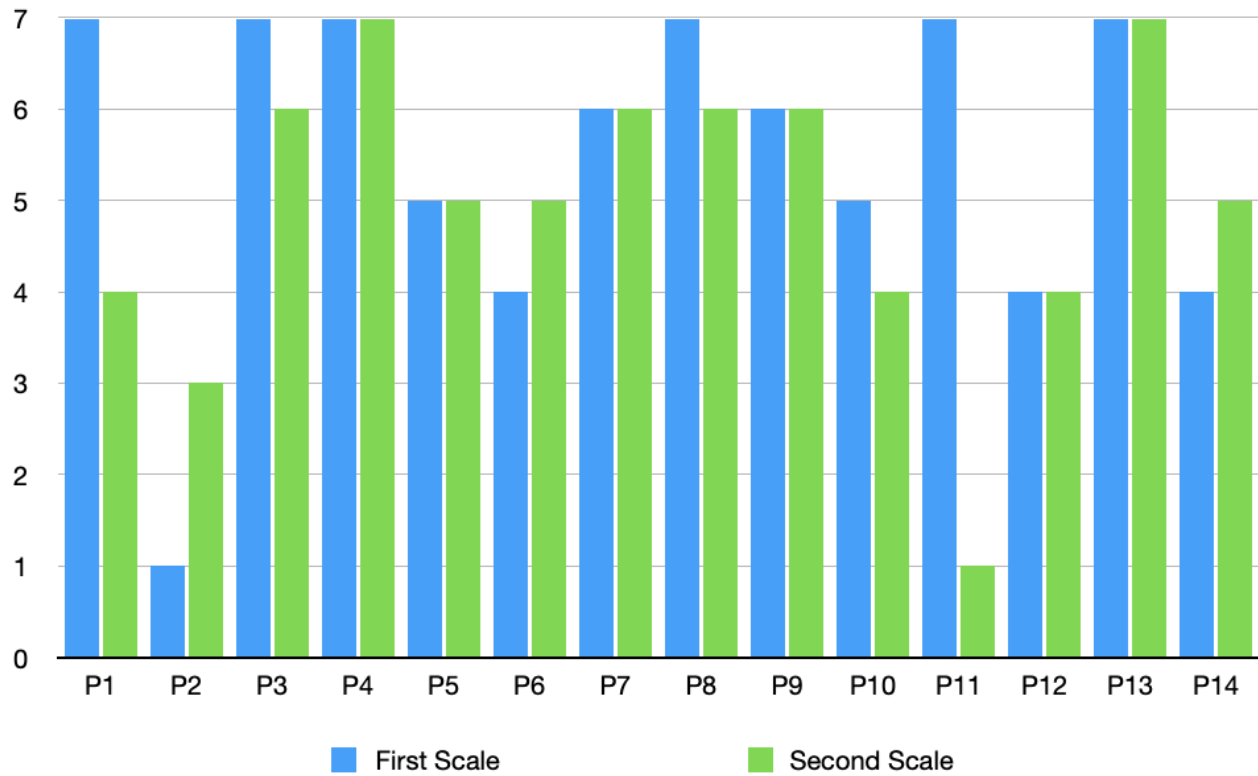
Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale

Participants were prompted to complete the Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale during the second part of the first research session, and at the end of the second session. The Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale is an 18-item self-report measure of online appearance preoccupation that was created through the literature of social media use and existing measures related to sociocultural and body image theories of social grooming (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2021). The questionnaire utilized consisted of a 7-point rating scale that measured the

frequency and intensity of each statement. This scale was implemented to assess participant's preoccupation with online physical appearance, and to observe if any change occurred from the overall process of this study.

After comparing the two scales of each participant the overall results demonstrated that 78.6% of participants showed a positive change and 21.4% showed a negative change. Eleven participants' scores decreased, and three participants' scores increased. The highest score a participant could receive for this scale was 126. For the first Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale that the participants took the average score was 76.9 and for the second Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale they completed the average score was 69.9. For the first Social Media Appearance Scale the highest score was 112, while the second Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale's highest score was 104. Lastly, for the first Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale the lowest score was 40, while the second Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale the lowest score was 37.

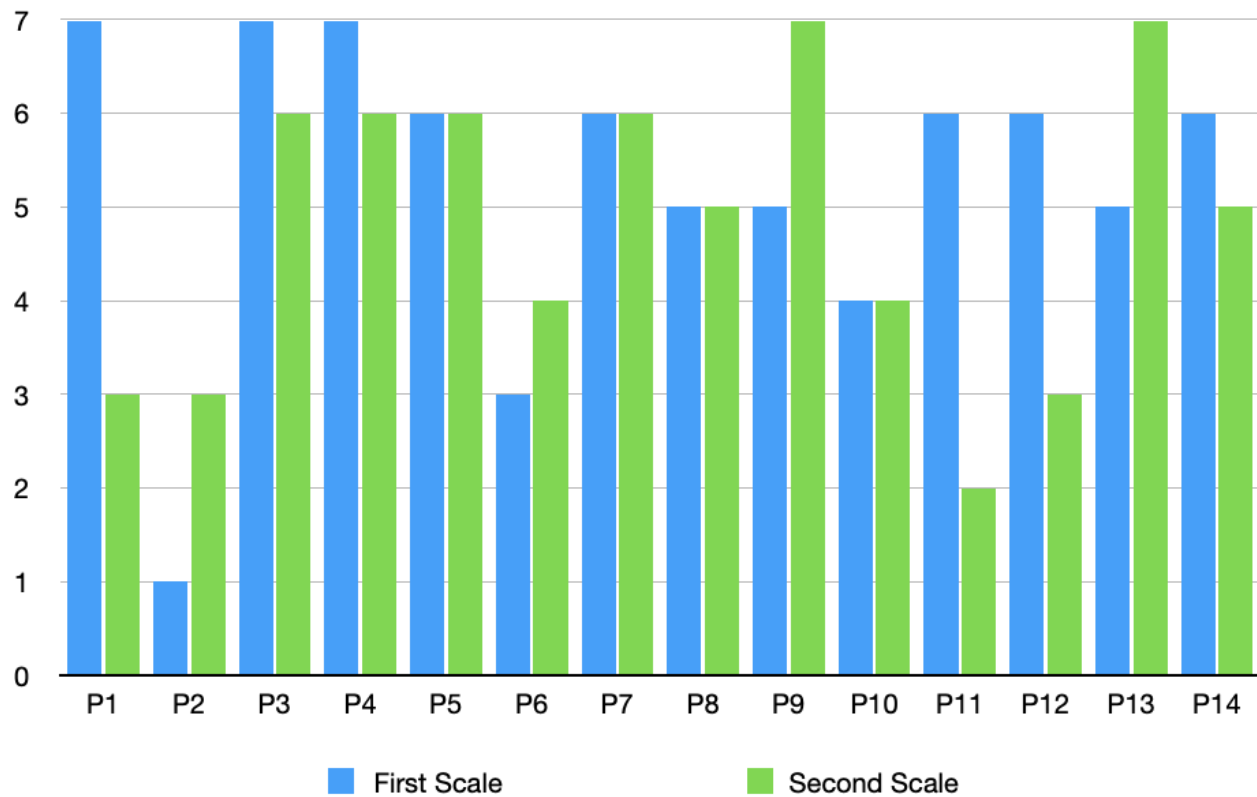
Figure 19 I prefer to only upload photos of myself to social media where I look physically attractive.



First Scale Average	5.6	First Scale Range	6
Second Scale Average	4.9	Second Scale Range	6

Six participants had no change in their score, three participant's scores increased, and five participant's scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range remained the same.

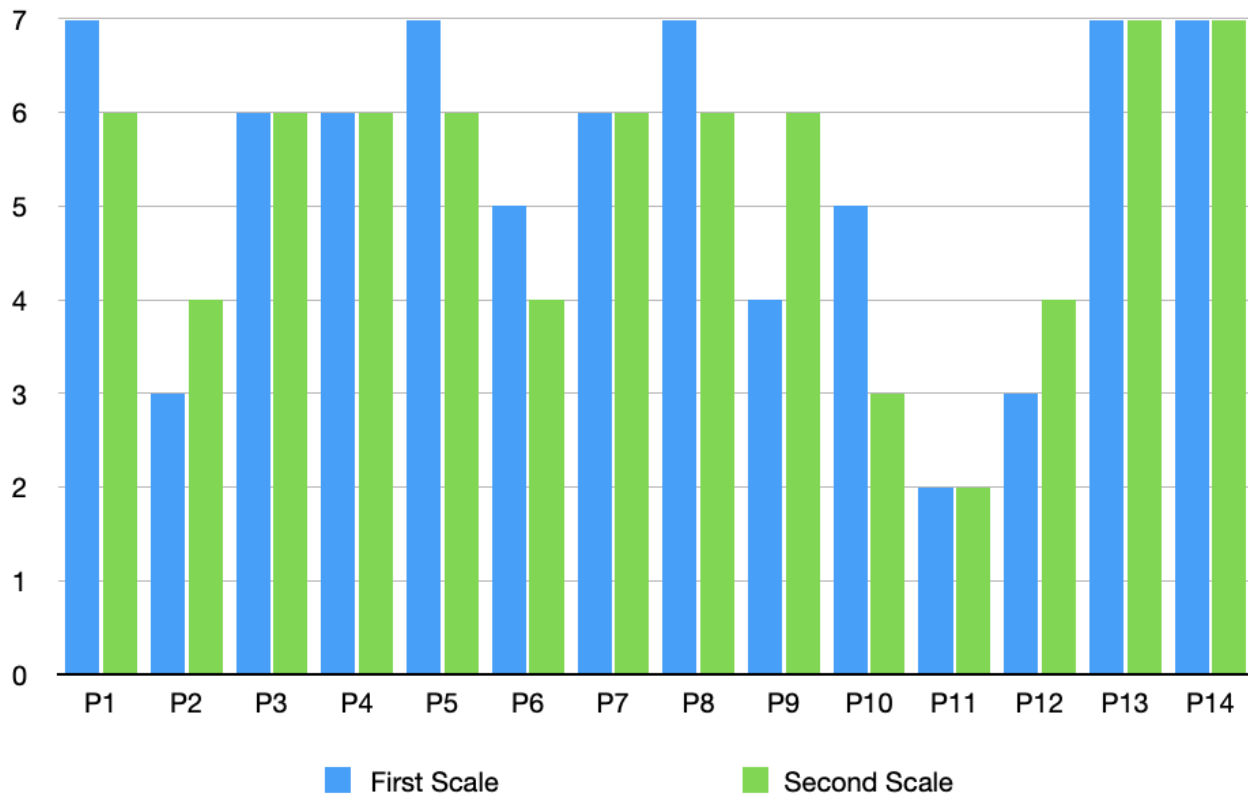
Figure 20 *I prefer to only upload photos of myself to social media where I look fit and healthy.*



First Scale Average	5.2	First Scale Range	6
Second Scale Average	4.8	Second Scale Range	5

Four participants had no change in their score, four participant's scores increased, and six participant's scores decreased. The average score and range of participants decreased.

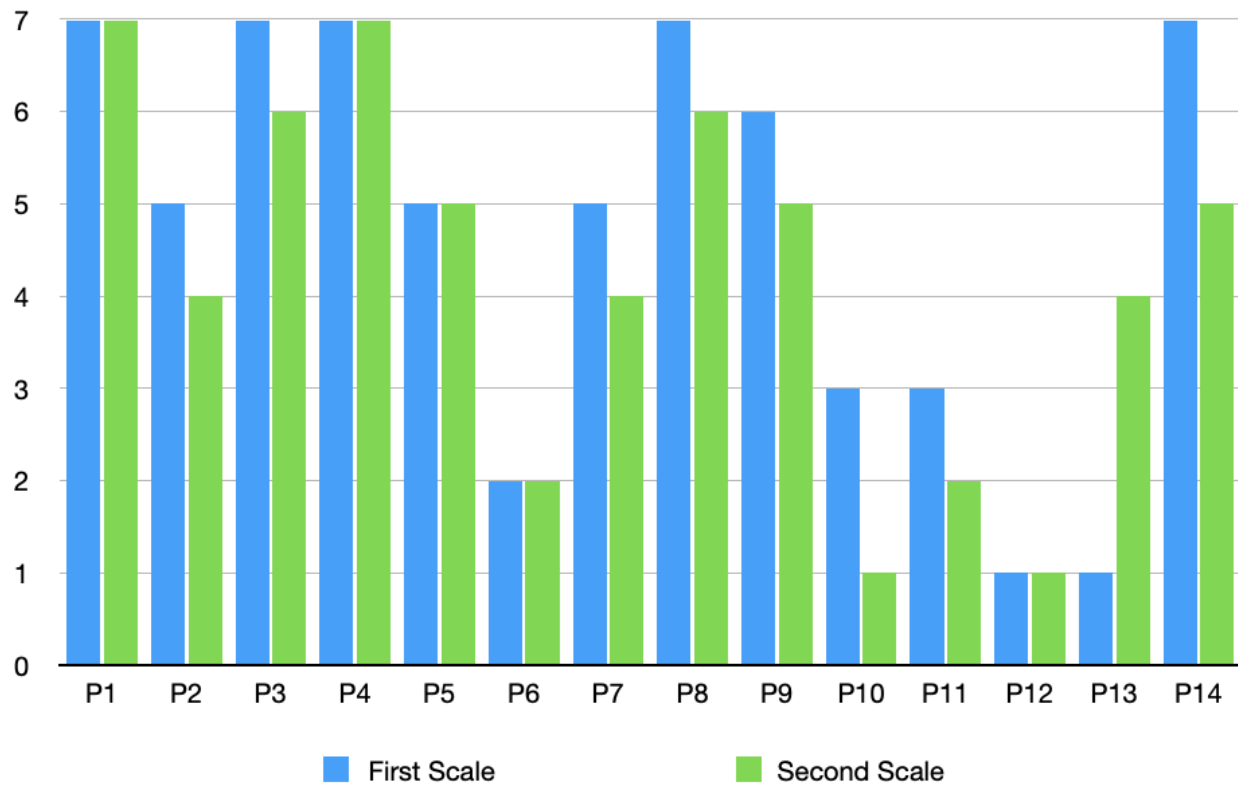
Figure 21 When others upload photos of me to social media, I focus on whether I looked good.



First Scale Average	5.4	First Scale Range	5
Second Scale Average	5.2	Second Scale Range	5

Six participants had no change in their score, three participant's scores increased, and five participant's scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range remained the same.

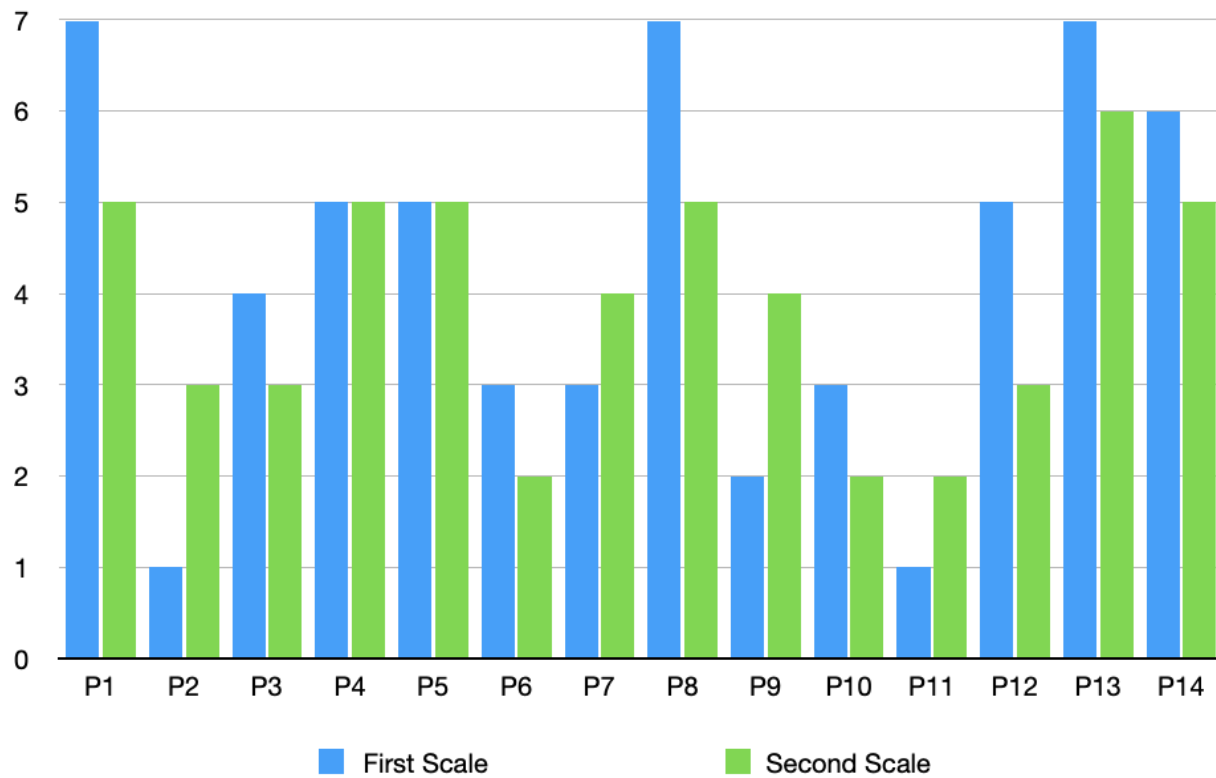
Figure 22 *I check to see who is commenting on, liking, or viewing photos of me or my body on social media.*



First Scale Average	4.6	First Scale Range	6
Second Scale Average	4.2	Second Scale Range	6

Five participants had no change in their score, one participant's scores increased, and eight participant's scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range remained the same.

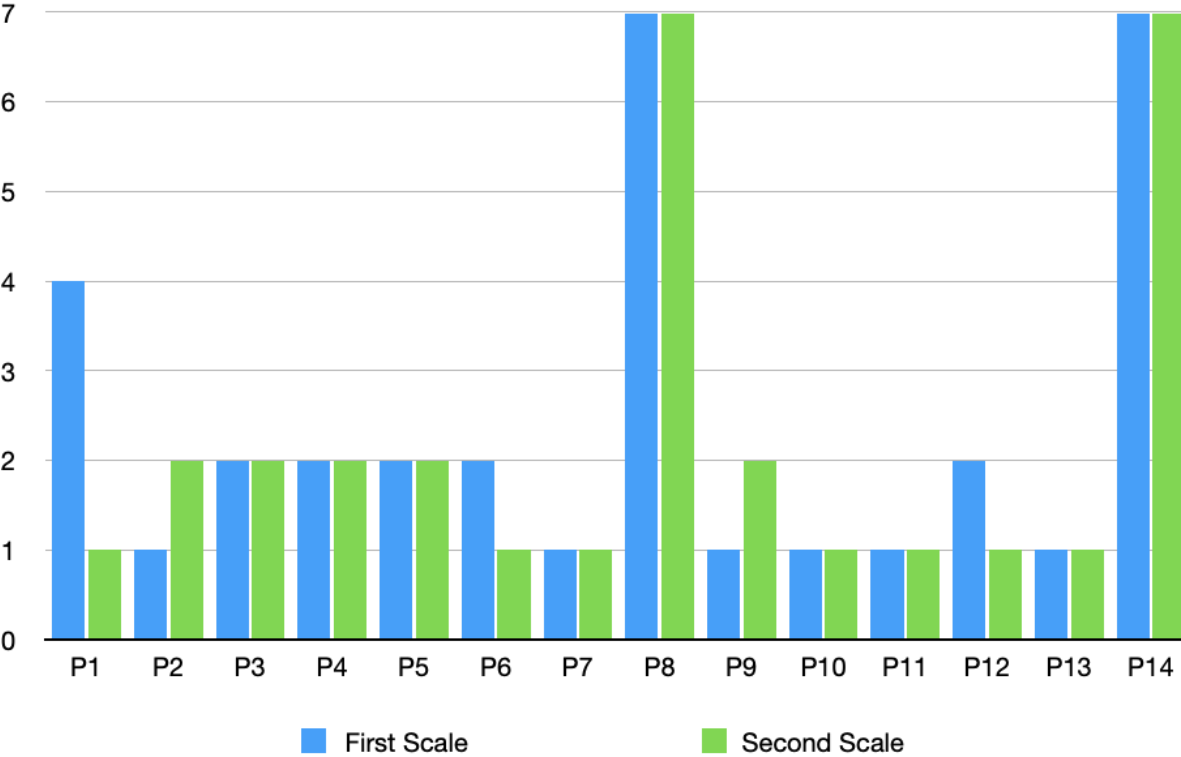
Figure 23 When others upload photos of me to social media, I get upset when I don't look my best.



First Scale Average	4.1	First Scale Range	6
Second Scale Average	3.9	Second Scale Range	4

Two participants had no change in their score, four participant's scores increased, and eight participant's scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range remained the same.

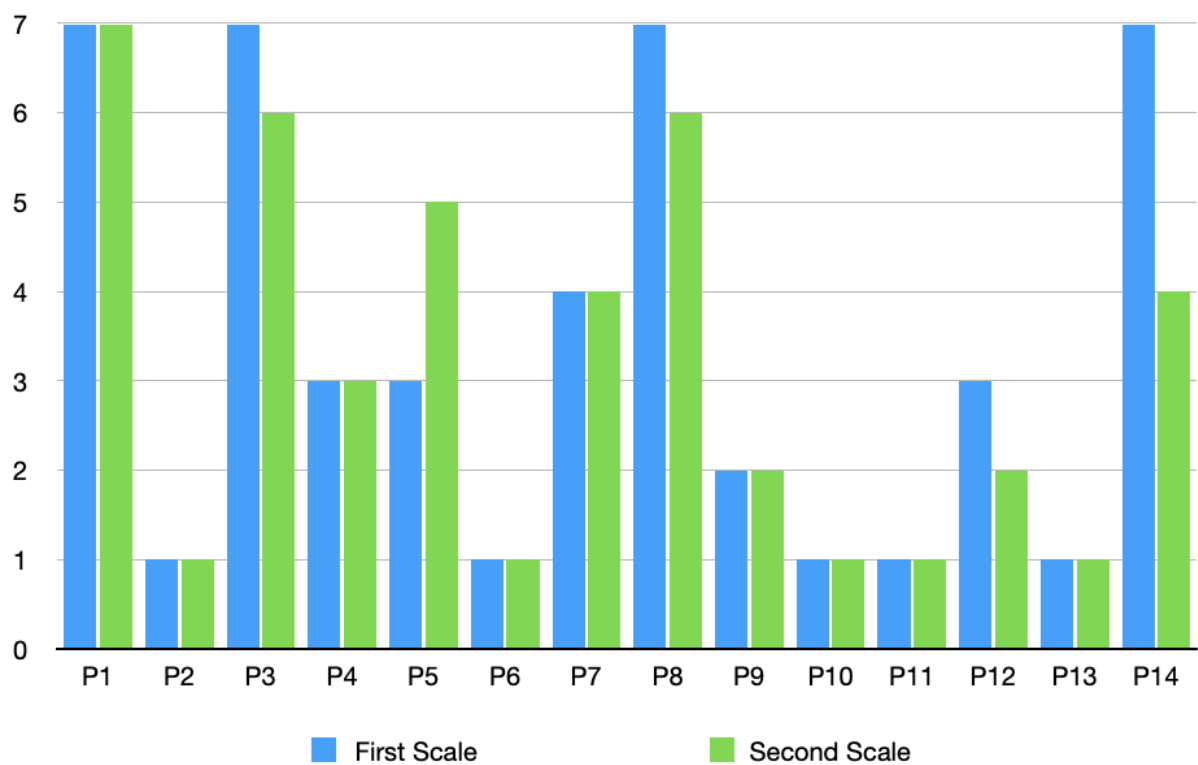
Figure 24 I approve photos of myself before anyone can tag them.



First Scale Average	2.4	First Scale Range	6
Second Scale Average	2.2	Second Scale Range	6

Nine participants had no change in their score, two participant’s scores increased, and three participant’s scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range remained the same.

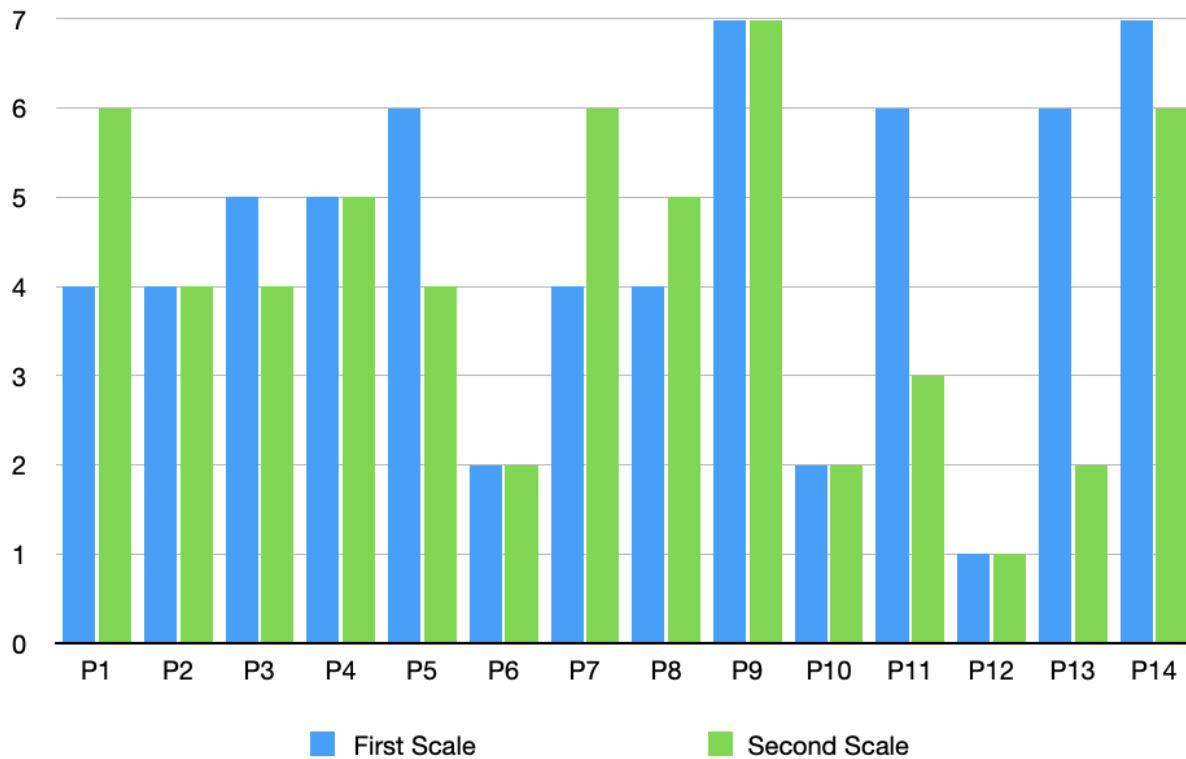
Figure 25 When I upload photos of myself, I usually use filters or alter/change them to make myself look better.



First Scale Average	3.2	First Scale Range	6
Second Scale Average	3.1	Second Scale Range	6

Nine participants had no change in their score, one participant’s scores increased, and four participant’s scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range remained the same.

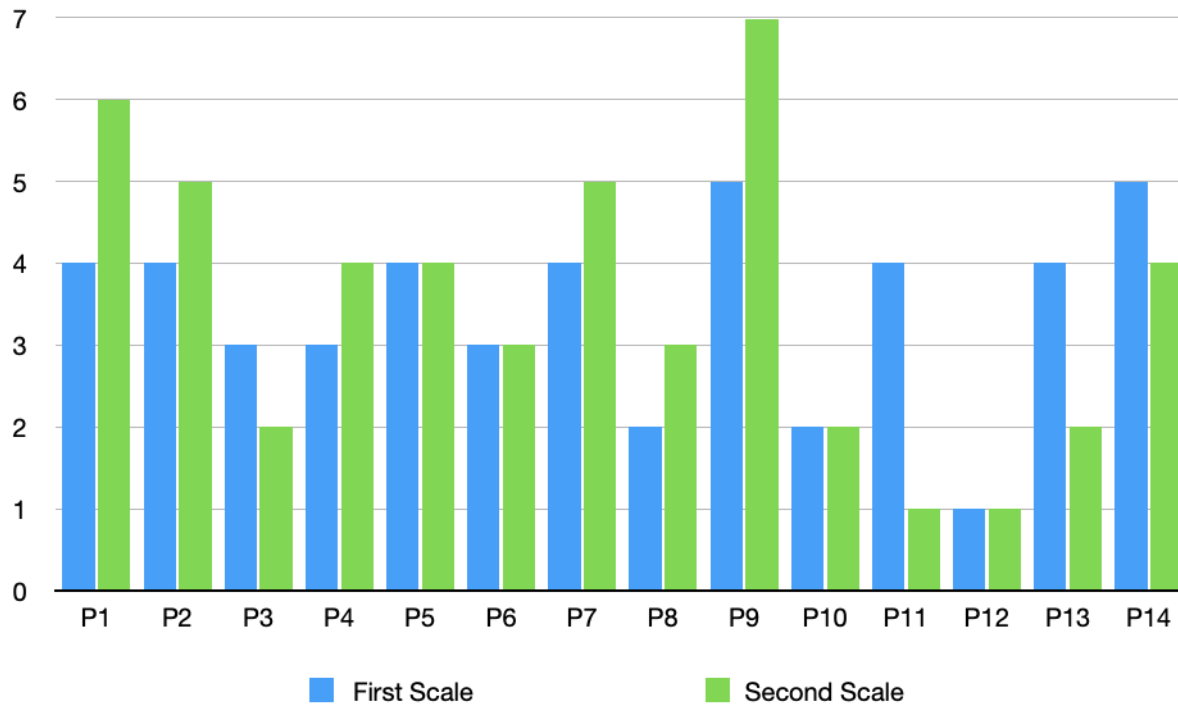
Figure 26 When on social media my friend's post, comment on, share, or like content about getting or staying fit and/or muscular.



First Scale Average	4.4	First Scale Range	6
Second Scale Average	4.1	Second Scale Range	6

Six participants had no change in their score, three participant's scores increased, and five participant's scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range remained the same.

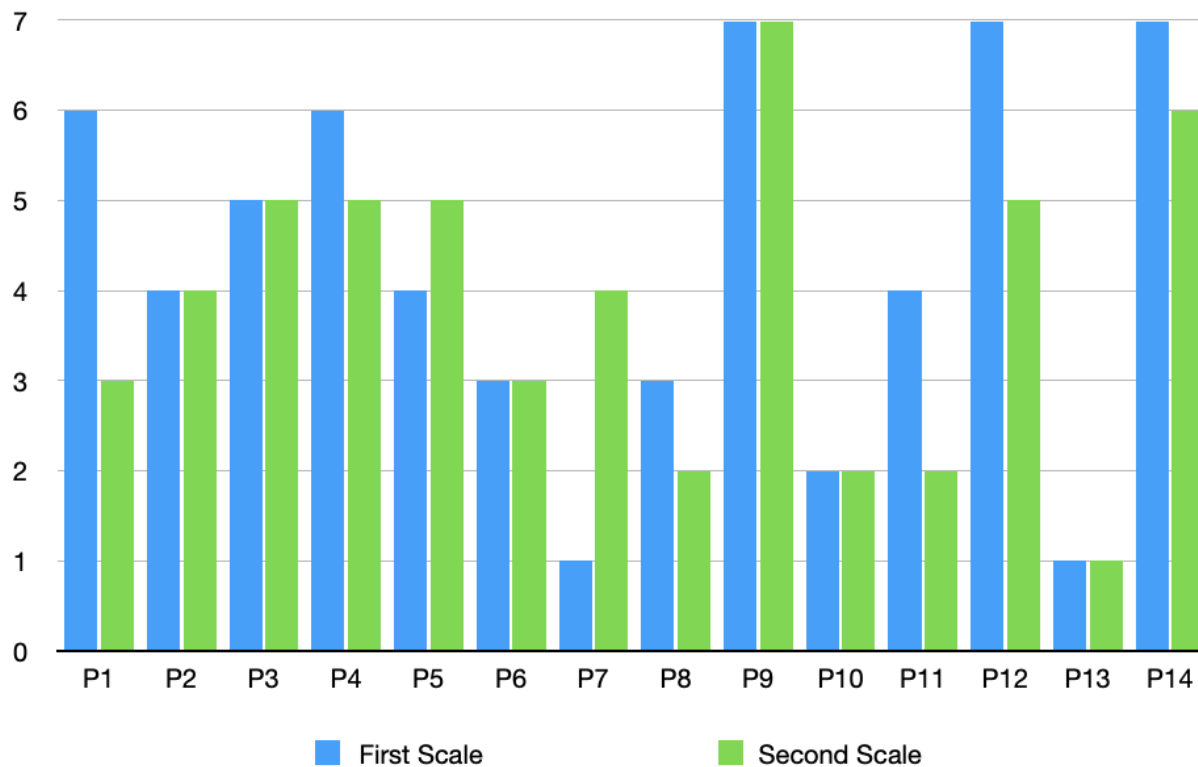
Figure 27 When on social media my friend's post, comment on, share, or like content about what and when to eat.



First Scale Average	3.4	First Scale Range	4
Second Scale Average	3.5	Second Scale Range	6

Four participants had no change in their score, six participant's scores increased, and four participant's scores decreased. The average score and range of participants increased.

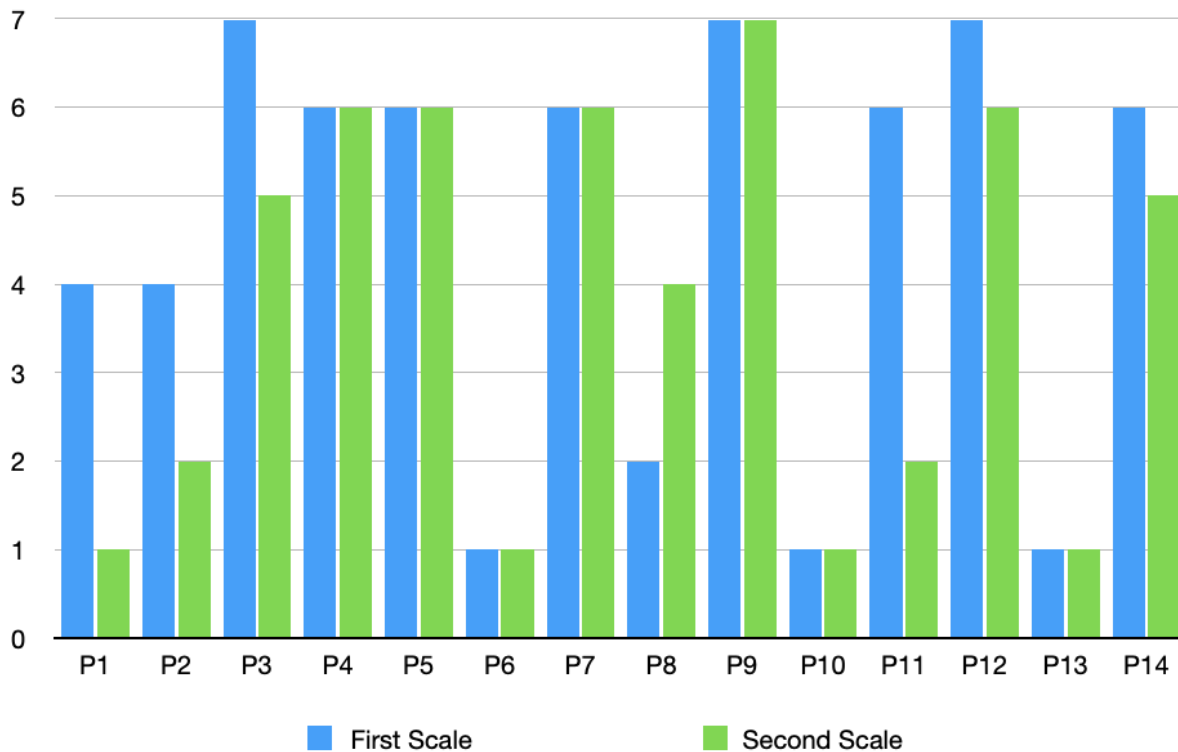
Figure 28 When on social media I post, comment on, share, or like content about what and when to eat.



First Scale Average	4.2	First Scale Range	6
Second Scale Average	3.9	Second Scale Range	6

Six participants had no change in their score, two participant's scores increased, and six participant's scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range remained the same.

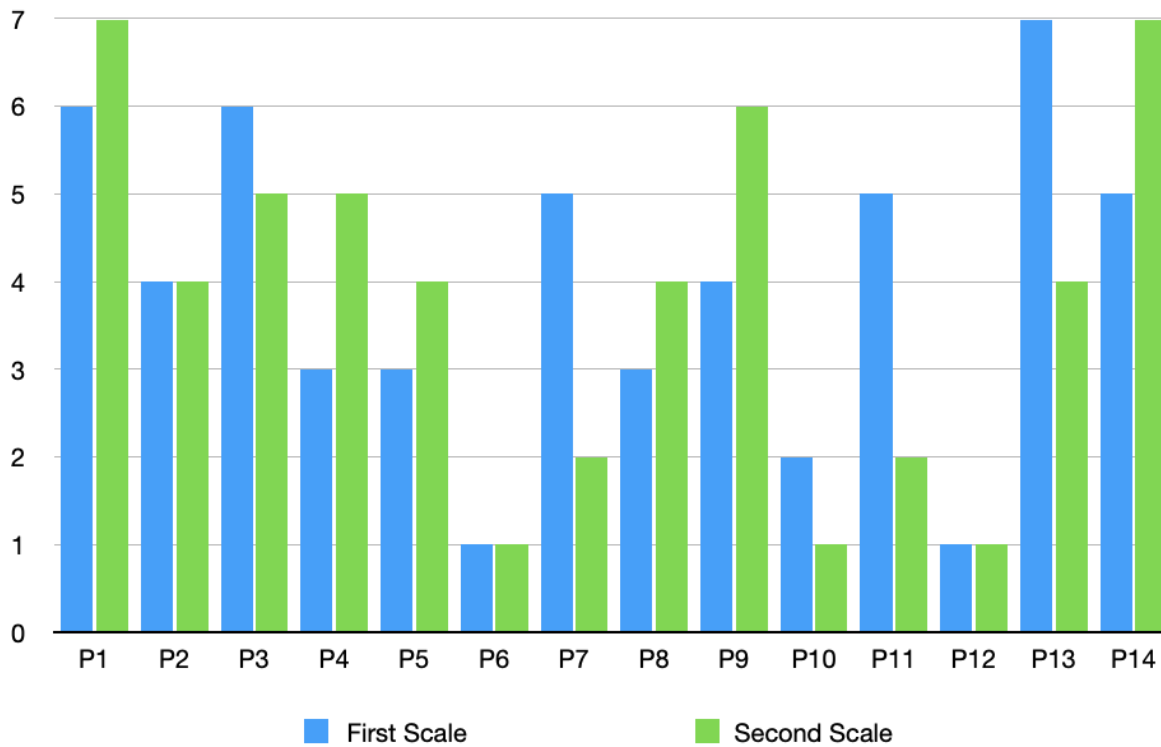
Figure 29 When on social media I post, comment on, share, or like content about getting or staying fit and/or muscular.



First Scale Average	4.5	First Scale Range	6
Second Scale Average	3.8	Second Scale Range	6

Seven participants had no change in their score, one participant's scores increased, and six participant's scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range remained the same.

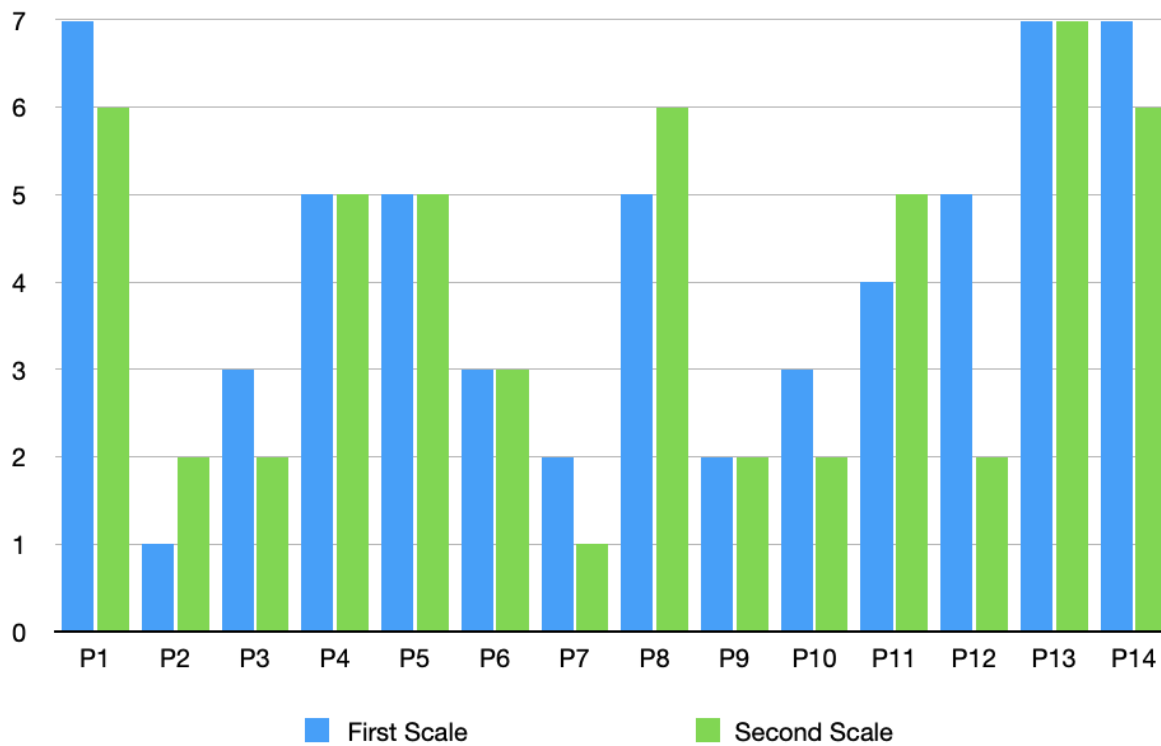
Figure 30 When on social media my friend's post, comment on, share, or like content about what they would like their bodies to look like.



First Scale Average	4.1	First Scale Range	6
Second Scale Average	3.8	Second Scale Range	6

Three participants had no change in their score, six participant's scores increased, and five participant's scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range remained the same.

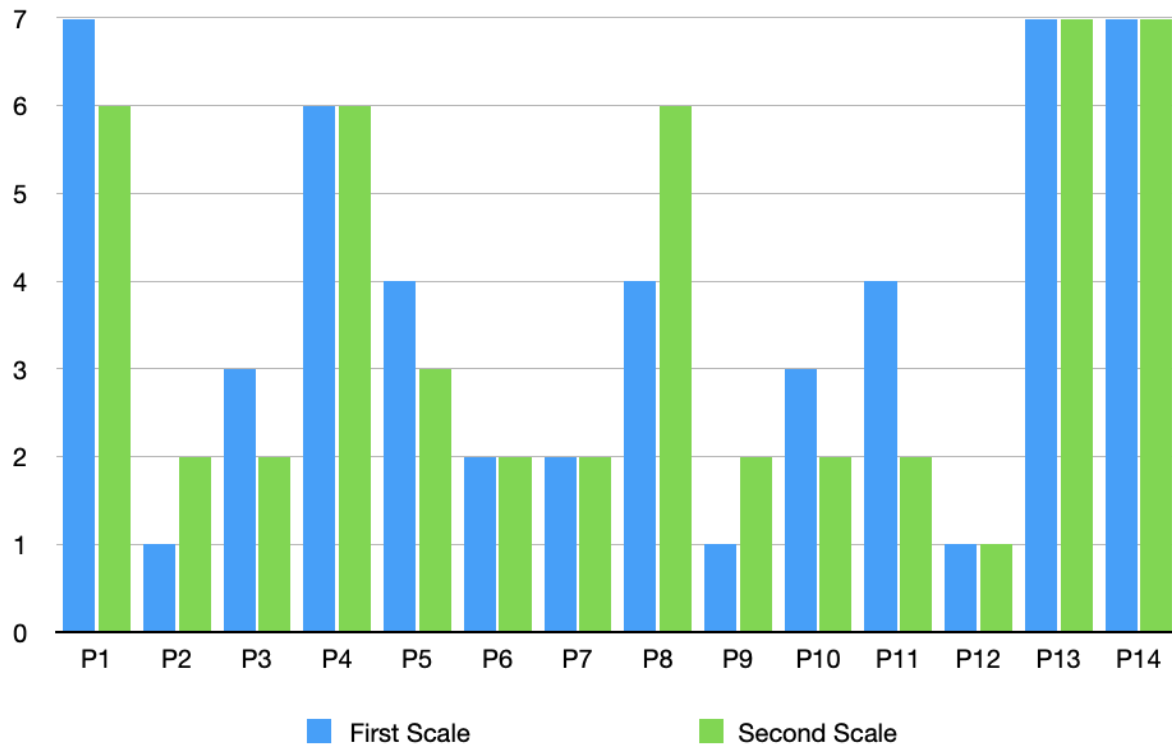
Figure 31 *I am often dissatisfied with my weight or looks in my social media pictures.*



First Scale Average	4.1	First Scale Range	6
Second Scale Average	3.9	Second Scale Range	6

Four participants had no change in their score, four participant's scores increased, and six participant's scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range remained the same.

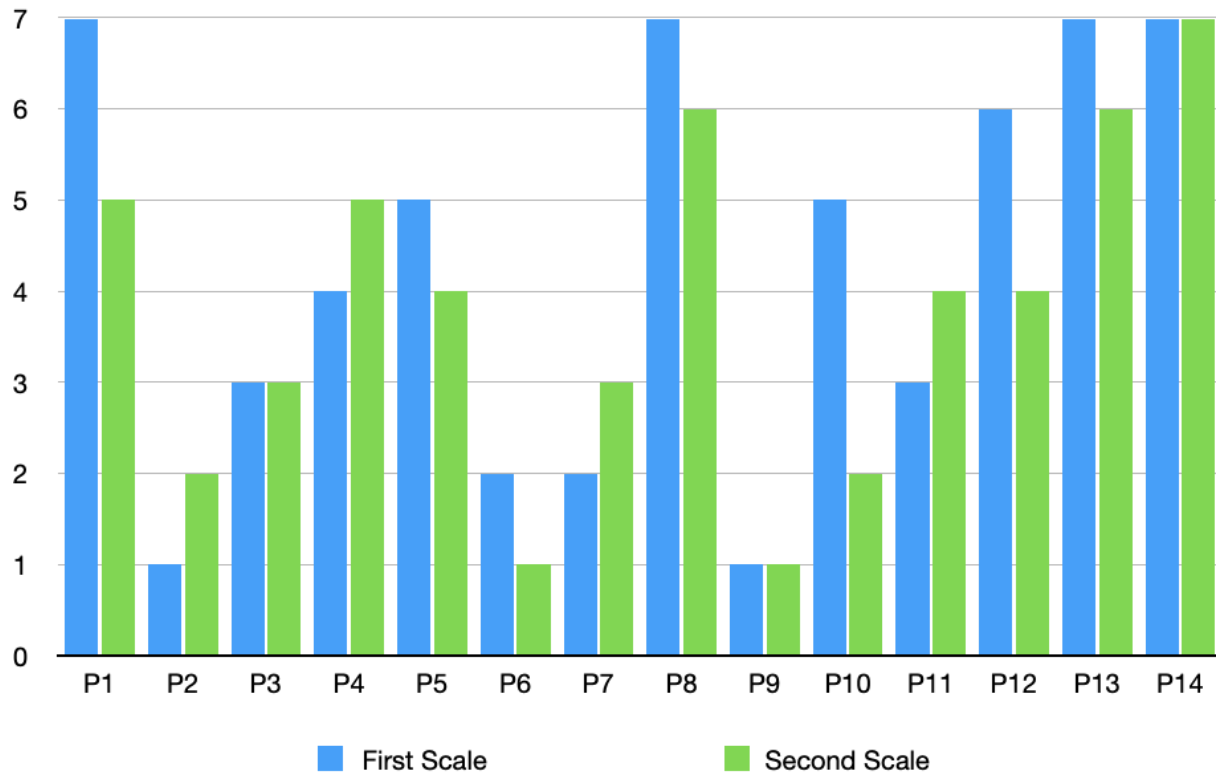
Figure 32 *I feel inadequate in appearance compared to my friends on social media.*



First Scale Average	3.7	First Scale Range	6
Second Scale Average	3.6	Second Scale Range	6

Six participants had no change in their score, three participant's scores increased, and five participant's scores decreased. The average score of participants increased and the range remained the same.

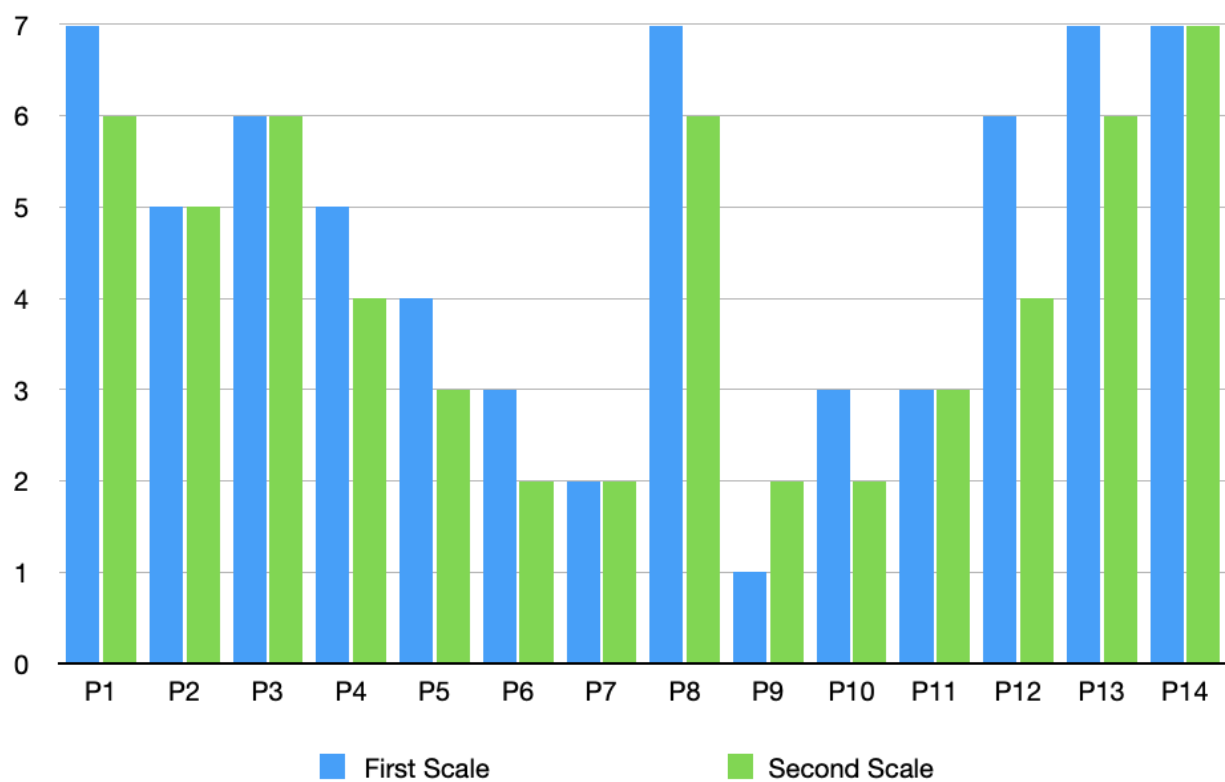
Figure 33 *I feel like I want to change my diet after viewing other people's pictures online.*



First Scale Average	4.3	First Scale Range	6
Second Scale Average	3.8	Second Scale Range	6

Three participants had no change in their score, four participant's scores increased, and seven participant's scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range remained the same.

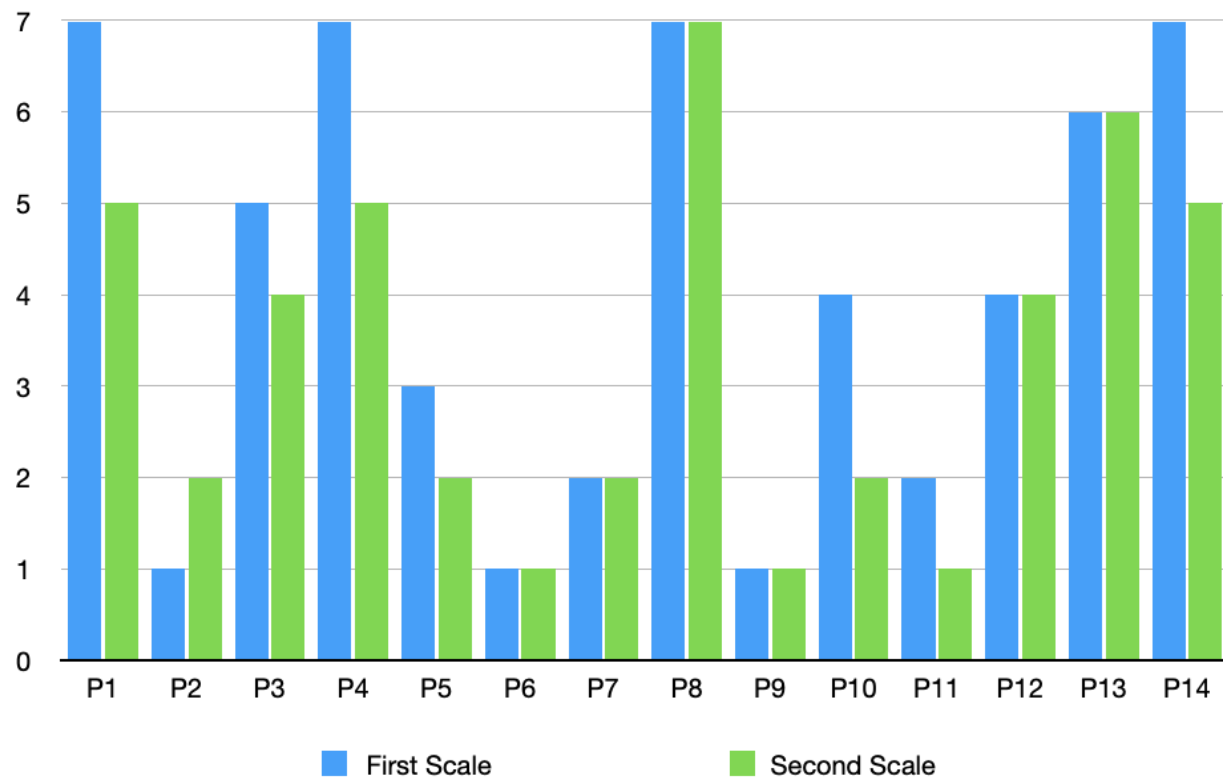
Figure 34 *How I feel about my body and appearance is influenced by other people's social media pictures.*



First Scale Average	4.7	First Scale Range	6
Second Scale Average	4.1	Second Scale Range	5

Five participants had no change in their score, one participant’s score increased, and eight participant’s scores decreased. The average score and range of participants decreased.

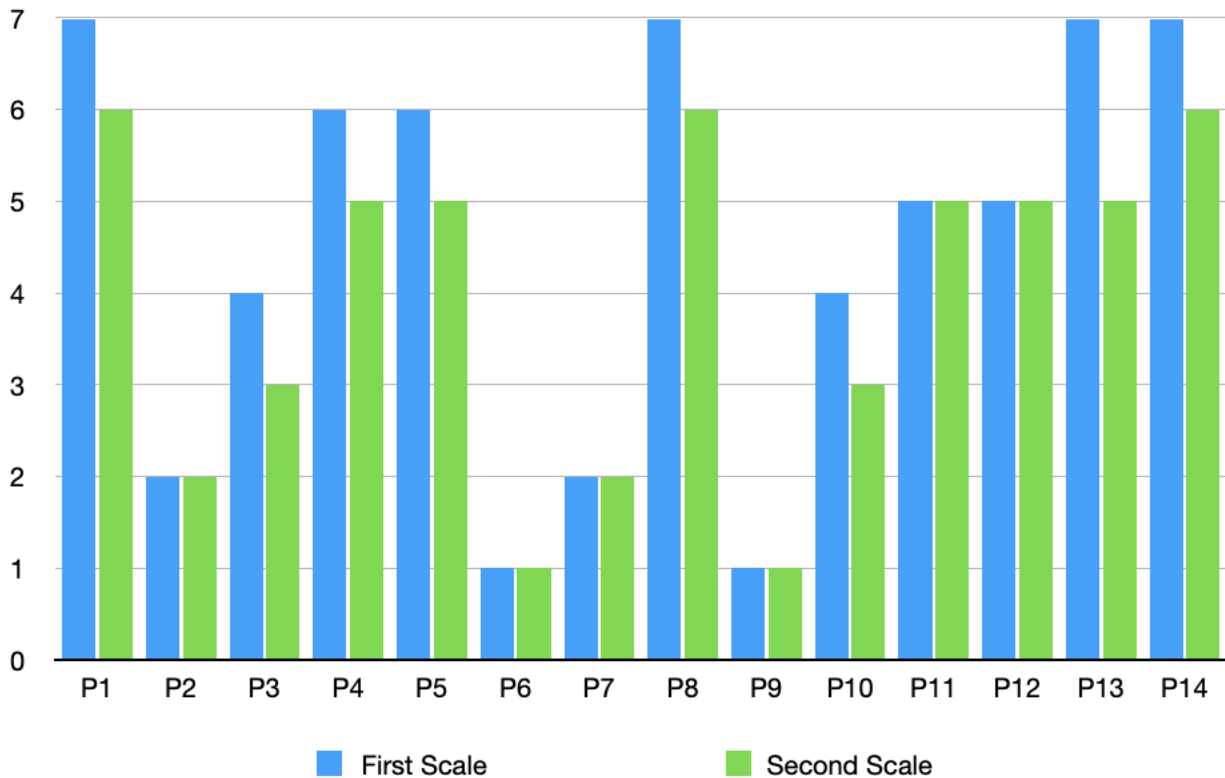
Figure 35 Seeing pictures of others tends to make me feel down on myself.



First Scale Average	3.9	First Scale Range	6
Second Scale Average	3.4	Second Scale Range	6

Six participants had no change in their score, one participant’s scores increased, and seven participant’s scores decreased. The average score of participants decreased and the range remained the same.

Figure 36 *I feel like I want to change my exercise routine or fitness level after viewing other people’s pictures online.*



First Scale Average	4.5	First Scale Range	6
Second Scale Average	3.9	Second Scale Range	5

Six participants had no change in their score, and eight participant’s scores increased.
The average score and range of participants decreased.

Self-Portraits

Participants were directed to create a self-portrait of themselves that represented how they perceive themselves to be in that moment. For both research sessions, they were given the options of working within a time limit or having no time limit. Researcher also gave them the choice of drawing objects or anything else that symbolized their self-perception if they found the idea of self-portraits to be intimidating. Participants were prompted to create a self-portrait twice in this research: as the third part of the first session, and as the second part of the second session.

For the first research session only one participant requested working within a time limit, while the others chose to just let the researcher know when they were finished. Participant two requested ten minutes, and after ten minutes were up she asked for five more. The other participants ranged from taking five minutes up to twelve to complete their self-portraits. Seventy-one percent of participants talked as they drew, while 29% of them were quiet and focused. For the second research session all participants requested no time to be set and to just let the researcher know when they were finished. The participants ranged from taking six minutes up to thirty minutes to complete their self-portraits. Seventy-four percent of participants talked as they drew, while 26% of them were quiet.

Themes, & Changes Found within Self-Portraits

Both self-portraits were compared together to observe if an impact occurred from creating the found poetry with positive affirmations. In order to confirm the presence of the themes identified by the researcher, a group of art therapy students listed themes and changes they observed while looking at the self-portraits. They filled out a google form that presented the participant's first and second self-portraits. The participant's identities and demographics were kept confidential during this process. To collect data among the self-portraits, the researcher

specified certain themes among the self-portraits: positivity, negativity, neutrality, duality, symbols, nature, facial features, human figure, use of color, lack of color, and use of texts. The term facial features referred to shoulders and up, while the term human figure referred to the entire human figure.

Figure 37 First Self-Portrait Themes

First Self-Portrait Themes

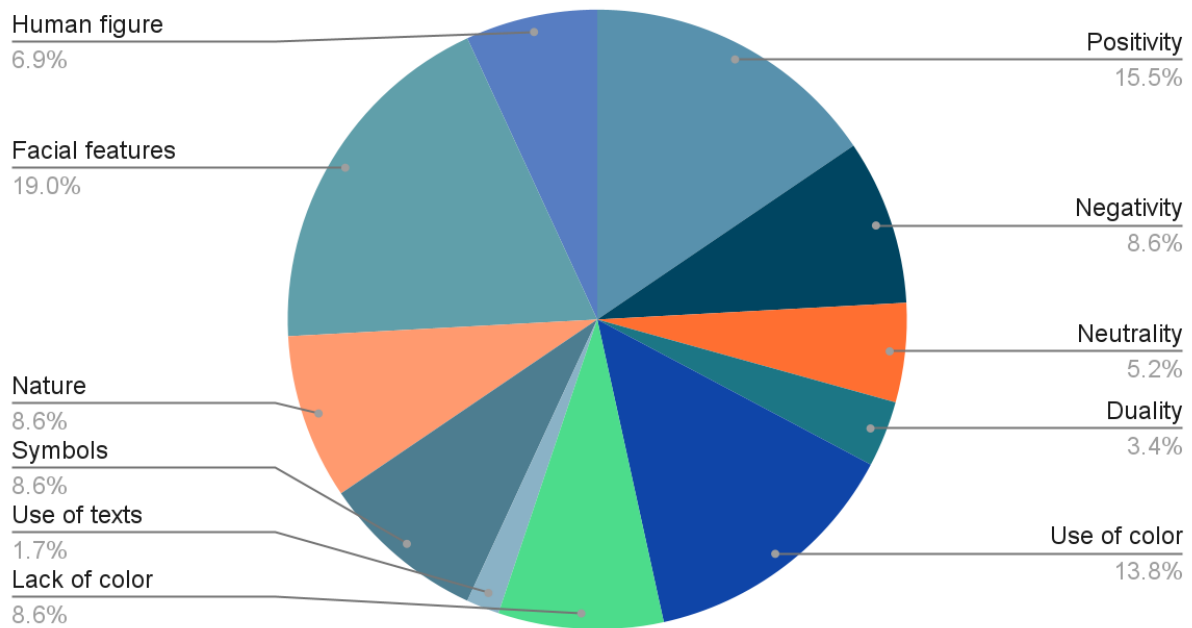
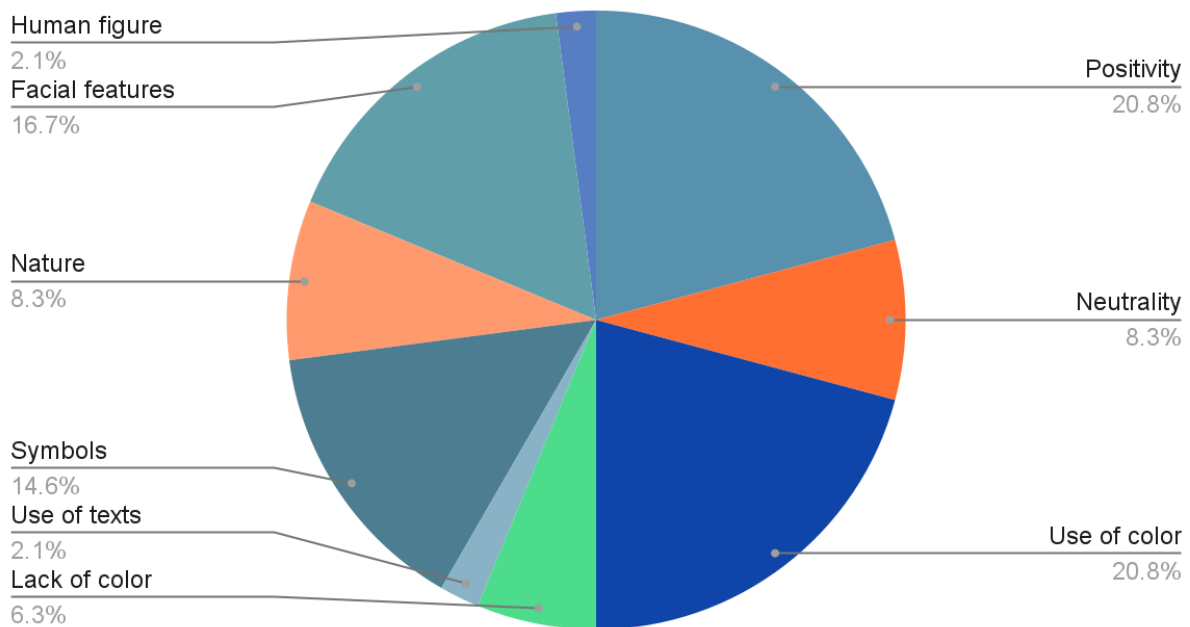


Figure 38 Second Self-Portrait Themes

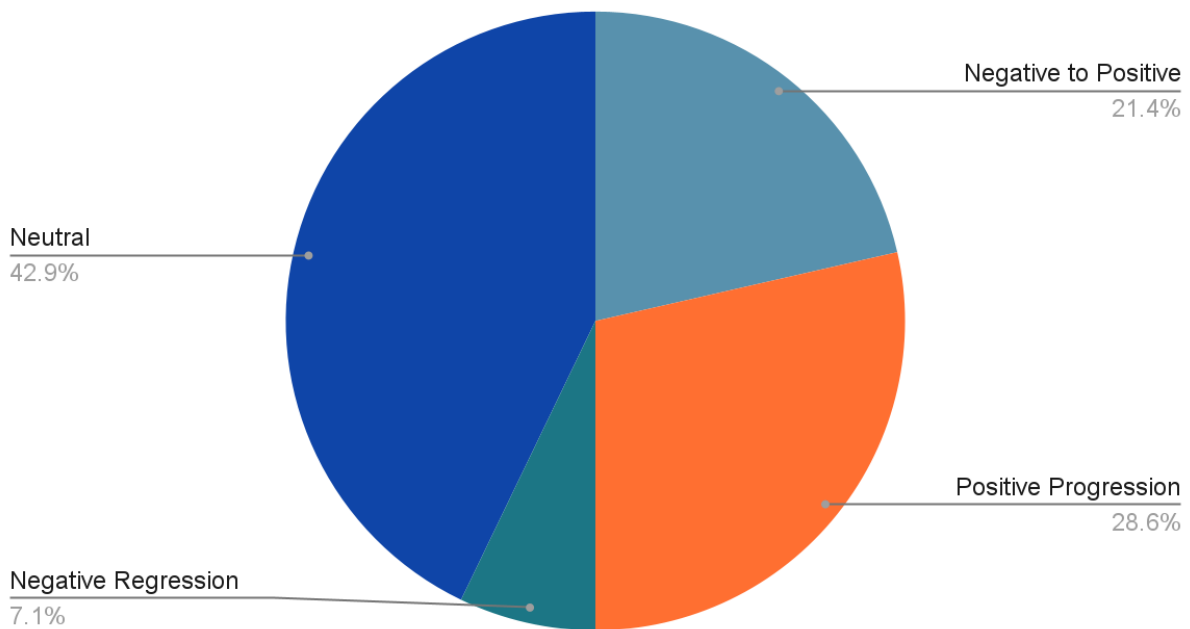
Second Self-Portrait Themes



The top three themes in order recognized in the first self-portraits were facial features, positivity, and use of color. In the second self-portraits those were also found to be the top three themes, but in a different order. Positivity and use of color were tied, both being observed in ten second self-portraits, followed along with facial features as the third most common theme. One major discovery was that there was no theme of negativity found among the second self-portraits but was found among five first self-portraits. Another big change was how there was more use of color in the second self-portraits than the first ones.

Figure 39 *Changes Between Self-Portraits*

Changes Between Self-Portraits



Designating common themes among the self-portraits aided the researcher in speculating if any change occurred between the two self-portraits. It was discovered that 42.9% of participant's self-portraits had no change (neutral), 28.6% presented a positive progression, 21.4% shifted from negative to positive, and 7.1% presented a negative regression. None of the participant's self-portraits showed a positive to negative change. Overall, the majority of participants experienced a positive shift within their self-portraits.

Participant's First & Second Self-Portraits

Figure 40 Participant One. Self Portrait 1 (on the left) and Self Portrait 2 (on the right)



The first self-portrait portrays themes of use of color, facial features, and negativity (Figure 1). Negative emotions observed are sadness, anxiety, feeling overwhelmed, and confusion. The scribbles of the colors blue and black on top of the head indicate these negative thoughts and feelings. Meanwhile the second self-portrait is more symbolic and has more positive content: warm colors, flowers, and the sun. The second portrait presents themes of use of color, symbols, nature, and positivity. Growth and optimism are positive themes observed. The change from self-portrait one to self-portrait two is the transition from negative to positive. This transition between the two may be a representation of clarity realized in the process or a reframing of thinking negative to positive.

When asked about the first self-portrait the participant described it as, “sadness, but also numbness. Social media puts me in a blue numb state. Recently I went on vacation out in nature.

Nature was healing, a nice distraction from life and social media, but it is hard to stay off it.”

During the process of creating her self-portrait the participant talked about her mental health and social media. She said, “I go away from it and then I need it again. I don't like it, it's like I've become dependent on receiving that short term validation.” When asked about the second self-portrait, the participant described it as her having good energy from sun and nature. She said:

Growth is a major thing that I feel like I've learned by doing these things, realizing how much I've grown. For me, growth has made me more beautiful and feel better about myself. Growth takes a lot of work. The sun is me cultivating the flowers, making me into something. If the flowers and plants don't get the sunlight, they need they die. Me realizing you need to work on self-growth, that's where I'm at in my life. I see myself as the bouquet of flowers and giving it what it needs to grow (water and sun).

Figure 41 Participant Two. Self Portrait 1 (on the left) and Self Portrait 2 (on the right)



Both portraits present themes of symbols, nature, facial features, and positivity. The first portrait has the theme of lack of color, while the second portrait has a theme of use of color. Positive themes observed in both are happiness, growth, and optimism. The transition from using no color in the first to using vibrant colors in the second indicates a positive progression. It is speculated that the transition to color could mean a feeling of fulfillment or growth was experienced. It is also possible that nothing was experienced and that the participant just had access to these markers for the second session and not the first. When asked about the first self-portrait the participant said:

I spontaneously drew a butterfly, forestry creature as a transformative metaphor. I'm feeling free, open, and happy. When I think about body image and self-esteem, I'm grateful to be 51 and have been able to work through all that stuff. I'm happy with my body.

When asked about the second self-portrait the participant said, "it's me as a tree being, and self-identifying with the tree. It's me feeling grounded."

Figure 42 Participant Three. Self Portrait 1 (on the left) and Self Portrait 2 (on the right)



Both portraits contain themes of positivity, nature, symbols, and use of color. A focus on warmer tones, color filled in objects, and a bigger flower in the second portrait, are the only changes observed. The bigger flower and filled in objects could possibly indicate growth. Since there is no major transition between the two, no change is noted about the participant. When asked about the first self-portrait the participant said:

I think of myself through happy and colorful objects. My favorite objects are butterflies and flowers. My persona is very fairy-like (sun, rainbow, and flowers). I put every color in a line because it made me think of how I'm always doing something new, why I put every color. I'm a pretty open person.

When asked about the second self-portrait the participant said:

I like colors. I was just thinking hippie, seventies vibes. How I've been feeling lately. If I could be a lava lamp. I always dress really colorfully and in a seventies style. Lava lamps seem to me like freedom, go with the flow, laidback, chill, and that's who I am.

Figure 43 Participant Four. Self Portrait 1 (on the left) and Self Portrait 2 (on the right)



The first portrait has themes of symbols, use of color, nature, duality, negativity, and positivity. The second portrait shows no clear indication of either positivity or negativity, and instead portrays a theme of neutrality. Other themes noted in the second portrait are facial features and use of color. Exaggerated facial features may also indicate a representation of female beauty ideals, as the participant and researcher were discussing the societal norm of cosmetic procedures while she drew. The only major change between the two is the switch from symbols to a human face. This change could possibly represent a process of the participant becoming more vulnerable with themselves. It is also observed how the second portrait only has

warmer tones of color, while the first one has both warm and cool tones. Since there is no major change observed between emotional states, the transition is seen as neutral. When asked about the first self-portrait the participant said:

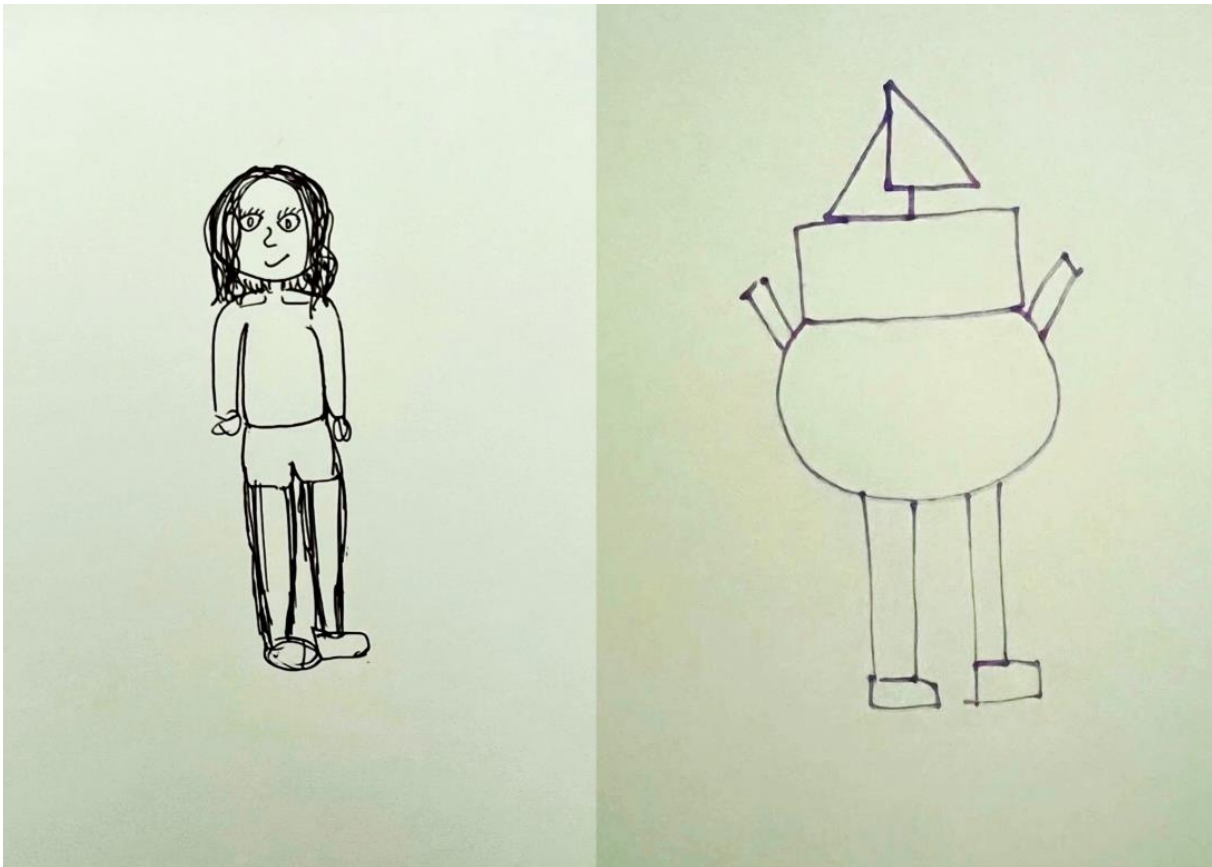
You caught me in a down mood for this drawing. I've been feeling grief, these darker colors represent my mood, I'm not feeling bright. Three leaf clovers because I haven't felt lucky recently. I did a muscle arm because I feel strong mentally and physically, teaching yoga has been helping so much. It's helping with my mood and how I feel about my body. A sun and moon to represent how I try to be sunny and cheerful, but right now I'm feeling masked by darkness. A wave because the ocean is a great reminder that the tide is always changing.

When asked about the second self-portrait laughed and said:

I don't know if this is a good representation. I don't really love my nose and I feel like that's seen this image. I love my eyebrows and I've always been good with my lips.

Overall, I am happy with my face. I do love my face now, and it is getting more defined and contoured with age.

Figure 44 Participant Five. Self Portrait 1 (on the left) and Self Portrait 2 (on the right)



The first portrait shows themes of lack of color, positivity, neutrality, facial features, and human figure. While the smile indicates feelings of positivity, the lack of color indicates feelings of neutrality. The second self-portrait shows themes of lack of color, symbols, and neutrality. Neither positivity or negativity are represented strongly in this piece, but the arms up could be an expression of either or (arms up could be sign of joy or of fear). The only change is the shift between drawing a human to drawing symbolically. Since there is no major change observed, the transition between the two is seen as neutral.

When asked about the first self-portrait, the participant described each feature that she drew. She said, “that’s me, I drew myself with curly, straight hair because I have wavy hair. I tend to have long eyelashes. I drew a person who has an athletic curvy figure.”

When asked about the second self-portrait the participant said:

I used different types of shapes that can be used for different body parts because they are easier to draw. So, I tried to draw shapes that represented different parts of my body. I feel like my body is in three different sections.

Figure 45 Participant Six. Self Portrait 1 (on the left) and Self Portrait 2 (on the right)



Both portraits present the same themes of positivity, human figure, facial features, and use of color. Positive themes speculated are happiness, content, and self-expression. There is no change in emotions found between the two, but both each represent different parts of the participant's life: the first one represents who they are in their free time and the second represents their professional side. Since no change is observed between the two portraits, the transition is observed as neutral. When asked about the first self-portrait the participant said:

It's me walking my dog. I always love listening to music and having my coffee with me. I just like decorating my body in general, with tattoos, jewelry, and different colored hair. That's a big part of my identity, how I express myself.

To describe her second portrait, she said:

I've been having practicum training all week, so this is me in my work attire. I'm very excited, but also nervous. I have no idea what I'm doing or what to expect, but I've had a lot of time to prepare. There are mixed feelings.

Figure 46 Participant Seven. Self Portrait (on the left) and Self Portrait 2 (on the right)



The first portrait shows themes of facial features, use of color, nature, and positivity. Positivity is seen through the happy, content facial expression and the use of warm tones. Nature is also symbolized through the plants and stars. In the second portrait there is a theme of facial features, positivity and use of color. The positive feeling of excitement is seen through the widening of both the eyes and smile. While both portraits express positivity, the second one indicates a positive progression occurred due to an observed change of more enthusiasm and confidence. When asked about the first self-portrait the participant said:

I like my freckles a lot, so I drew my freckles. I feel like I've been more radiant with my life lately, so I added a lot of color to my face and hair. At first going with blonde, but then added pink because that's how I feel inside. So, I put pink there, I'm a pink person. I drew stars because that's my favorite thing and greenery around me to represent connection to the earth. I feel content with life. I put the yellow paper because I love yellow, and it shines.

The participant described the second portrait as, “today I feel content. I put bangs on her because I just cut my bangs and I cut them when I'm stressed. I put colors in my hair and blushed my cheeks to show happiness.”

Figure 47 Participant Eight. Self Portrait 1 (on the left) and Self Portrait 2 (on the right)



The first portrait shows themes of facial features, lack of color, symbols, and negativity. Negativity is observed through the lack of color, a neutral facial expression, and a snake wrapped around the person's neck. The second portrait shows themes of use of color, use of text, facial

features, symbols, and positivity. Positive themes of growth and liberation are observed, especially in the second portrait with the girl free from the chokehold of the snake. Positivity is also seen through the warm color tones and a happy facial expression. Adding color and a happy facial expression in the second portrait indicates a positive change. In the first portrait the person's head is looking straight ahead and in the second the person's head is tilted up. All these changes present that a transition from negative to positive occurred. When asked about the first self-portrait the participant said:

I drew a snake because I was thinking about social media, and I think about how I edit my pictures. Snakes are usually perceived as fake so that was the first thing I thought of.

That's how I perceive myself on social media or myself right now, I guess.

When asked about the second portrait she said, "growth because I'm growing as a person. There's a butterfly tattoo on my finger because I feel like butterflies express growth. I have that tattoo because it's just a very personal message to me."

Figure 48 Participant Nine. Self Portrait 1 (on the left) and Self Portrait 2 (on the right)



In the first portrait there are themes of human figure, facial features, positivity, and use of color. The second portrait shows themes of lack of color, nature, symbols, positivity, and neutrality. While the flower indicates positivity, the lack of color presents a sense of neutrality. The changes observed between the two is the shift from human to symbol, and the shift from color to no color. This change is observed to be neutral because no change of emotional states is observed.

When asked about the first self-portrait the participant said, “it felt good, it made me laugh. I know it's supposed to be simple; it just reminds me that I don't draw people. I think it was fun. I like picking out colors to draw with.” For the second portrait she said, “I drew a flower because I feel like I'm really growing as a person. I think I'm growing in good ways and flowers are pretty, and I have outgrown a lot of people in my life.”

Figure 49 Participant Ten. Self Portrait 1 (on the left) and Self Portrait 2 (on the right)



In both portraits there are themes of facial features, use of color, and neutrality. There is little change observed: no sports are portrayed in the second portrait, but instead there is color shaded in background. Both the faces are neutral, which indicates no positive or negative change. The first portrait seems to be focused on what the person enjoys (sports), while the second seems to be focused on a place the participant enjoys (a structure and a sunset). When asked about the first self-portrait the participant described it as, “I did what I think I look like, and I drew all those sports logos because sports are a big part of my identity. My inspiration was a photo of myself.” When asked about the second self-portrait the participant said:

I did a similar face, but instead of sports I drew a sunset. I really love sunsets and I was looking at one as I was drawing. I think my surroundings were very taken into consideration. I was living in the moment.

Figure 50 Participant Eleven. Self Portrait 1 (on the left) and Self Portrait 2 (on the right)



The first portrait portrays themes of use of color, facial features, duality, positivity, negativity, and nature. Positivity is seen through the warm colors, the sun, and a smiling face. Negativity is observed by the dark cloud. The second portrait portrays themes of use of color, positivity, and facial features. Changes observed in the second portrait are a focus more zoomed in on the face and a lack of negativity. This could indicate possible self-reflection that is focused on positivity. The star eyes, bigger smile, and lack of negative content in the second portrait present that a positive progression was stimulated. When asked about the first self-portrait, the participant described it as:

Me smiling always. I drew a sun because I feel like I'm naturally sunny all the time, and then I drew black clouds because there is that part of me also. Then waves because I feel like I go with the flow a lot.

She described her second portrait as, “my thought here was I’m a goofball and I’m looking forward to a bright future. I’m feeling blissful and happy.”

Figure 51 Participant Twelve. Self Portrait 1 (on the left) and Self Portrait 2 (on the right)



In the first portrait there are themes of facial features, lack of color, neutrality, and positivity. Positivity is observed through the smile in the portrait, but lack of color could also indicate feelings of neutrality. The second portrait shows themes of positivity, use of color, and symbols. In both portraits the participant’s hair is a major feature of focus detail. The change from lack of color and 2-D drawing to the use of color and 3-D materials indicate a positive progression occurred. The transition of the hair between the portraits portrays a sense of liberation and expression. It is also speculated that the second portrait is focused more on inner beauty than physical appearance, seen by the lack of facial features and a symbolic heart. When asked about the first self-portrait the participant laughed and said:

I always draw portraits of people good, but not me. I love doing hair. I look a little old. It doesn't look like me, but it looks enough. Looks a little sassy, I like the hair. It's a little messy, but I'm a little messy.

She described the second portrait as:

I like my hair a lot, it symbolizes authenticity to me. I may seem crazy and unmanageable. My curls are going to look different every day. I look impulsive or unpredictable, but a lot of good stuff can come from that. A heart is there because I think I'm a very caring person, but also quite anxious and not very confident. This piece is a lot about self-nourishment.

Figure 52 Participant Thirteen. Self Portrait 1 (on the left) and Self Portrait 2 (on the right)



The first portrait presents themes of human figure, facial features, lack of color, and neutrality. Neutrality is observed by the blank facial expression and lack of color used. The

second portrait portrays themes of facial features, negativity, and use of color. Negativity is observed primarily from the sad facial expression. The color red could also indicate negative feelings of anxiety, stress, and/or anger. A change observed between the two is the transition from the whole human form to just a face. The transformation from a neutral facial expression to a sad one indicates a negative regression occurred. When asked about the first self-portrait, the participant said:

I drew eye bags because I'm tired. A messy bun because I always have a messy bun, I don't know how to do my hair. A baggy tee and my arms are not proportionate. I tried to draw pants, but drawing legs is hard. I drew in a loose/messy way because I'm messy. I always look like Adam Sandler. It was weird because I don't like drawing myself or thinking about what I look like.

When asked about the second self-portrait the participant said:

I normally don't choose red. I noticed with the first one I wasn't caring how I was doing it and I liked how it turned out. For this one I cared a lot and was erasing a lot. I guess I chose red because I am currently feeling stressed, and now I noticed with the erase marks it looks like my nose is red from crying.

Figure 53 Participant Fourteen. Self Portrait 1



Figure 54 Participant Fourteen. Self-Portrait 2



In the first portrait there are themes of negativity, human figure, facial features, lack of color, symbols, and texts. Sadness, despair, and pain are negative emotions that are observed. Meanwhile the second portrait presents themes of positivity, facial features, and lack of color. Growth, healing, and acceptance are positive themes speculated. Self-reflection is observed in both portraits by the participant drawing themselves looking in a mirror. A change from negative to positive is viewed between the two, the participant is observed to have accepted a new perception of themselves. In order to ethically protect the personal information shared by the participant when describing her first self-portrait, the quote has been summarized. The participant described the first self-portrait as:

I think I don't have a fully normal body. I'm quite different and unique, and I don't like it. My legs are ungodly long for my body type. It makes me feel abnormal. Then I drew myself in a corner because I always felt different from everyone else. I feel like I'm not the western norm. I'm very conflicting with different personalities. I'm very happy, but then also very dark and emo. Since I'm mentally conflicted all the time, it does make me feel alone. No one can really understand the depth of the mental confusion of that. I'm an outcast. Then I drew a person that comes off as very weak and has a lot going on (laying down with daggers stabbing me). I feel like I have these wounds that never heal, they're always there. I drew myself exhausted (in fetal position) because I'm tired of feeling like a victim. I drew multiple of them because I deal with so much stress, I have most of my life. I think I was meant to be a beautiful flower, but I am deteriorating a lot more because of stress and emotional turmoil. Then I drew a picture of me looking pretty in the mirror because people think I'm well put together, but I'm not. Then me in a cape and people praising me for being strong and giving advice. I can help others, but I can't help

myself. I feel guilty because I don't look beautiful or feel the way people tell me. I feel like I'm just very unconventionally unique and not in a beautiful way.

She described the second portrait as:

It is a drawing of me looking into/holding up a mirror with people in the reflection. This self-portrait is supposed to signify how I always feel alone, but there's always people there to an extent. It's because I am different and unique in my own way and always felt a bit out of place/an outcast. As if no one understands me or truly gets me, but I am smiling in the drawing because I've come to realize that being different and unique despite people thinking I'm strange or odd, makes me. And I wouldn't want to blend in anyways.

Found Poetry with Positive Affirmations

For this study the art intervention found poetry with positive affirmations was implemented in order to increase participant's self-esteem levels. Participants were prompted to create found poetry three times in this research: as the fourth part of the first session, independently within the week between the sessions, and as the first part of the second session. Participants were prompted to find cutout texts and/or quotes and form them into a poem, being free to use the pre-assembled materials provided by the researcher and/or their own images they had. After creating the poem, participants were prompted to then incorporate it into an art piece, adding collage cutouts of images and/or their own drawings/doodles. They were to glue or tape the poem and images together to create one overall art piece. Participant's descriptions about their found poetry were only prompted for the first and second ones created, not the ones done independently. Since this art directive was an intervention rather than an assessment no analysis of the art was conducted. It was implemented to create an impact, not to observe an impact.

First Found Poetry with Positive Affirmations (First FPPA)

Figure 55 First FPPA by Participant One



Described it as:

I used a lot of flowers because I like the outdoors. I feel the best about myself outside.

When I'm outside I'm thinking more outwardly than inwardly. It makes you more a part of the big picture. You stop thinking about yourself. It is nature based because I heal better in nature. It reminds me if you stay online all day, you'll pick apart everything.

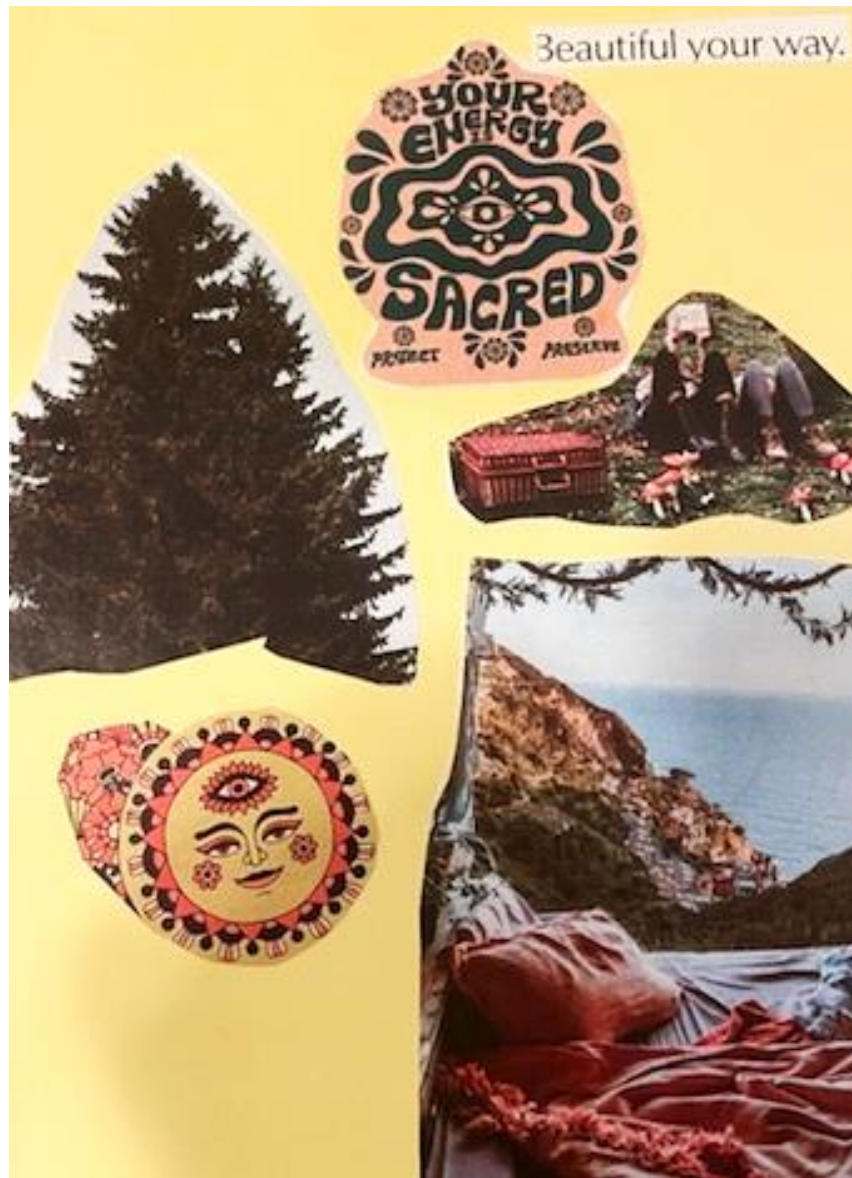
Figure 56 First FPPA by Participant Two



Described it as:

I just picked out words that spoke to me while I was thinking about body image and self-esteem. Especially since I just did those questionnaires (Self-Esteem Scale & Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale). I like the word trust a lot, so I used that repeatedly throughout the piece. As I'm getting older, I've had a big trust in my body and my body's processes.

Figure 57 First FPPA by Participant Three



Described it as:

It's a very relaxed mood. Yellow background because it's my favorite color. Protecting and preserving your energy is so important. I loved all the nature photos, which reminded me of trees you see in Tahoe or Lake Arrowhead. Pine trees remind me of Christmas, the same texture as SF trees. I love picnicking and mushrooms; they have a lot of benefits in a lot of aspects. And then a sun design thought it was pretty.

Figure 58 First FPPA by Participant Four



She first shared, “I loved the cat one because I just lost my cat.” She started reflecting on the quotes she picked and said:

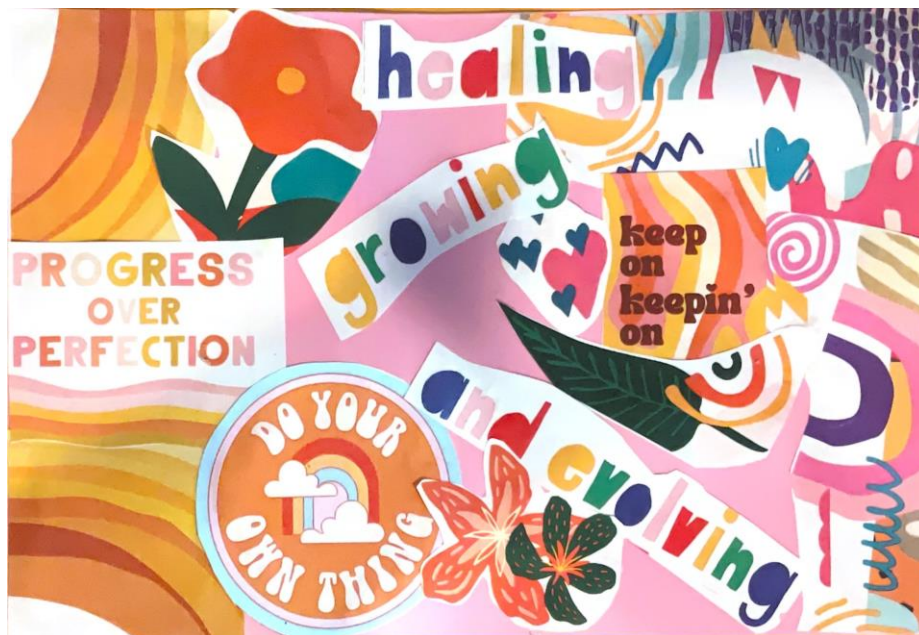
I get overwhelmed with life sometimes, and knowing that we are always “healing, growing, and evolving” is a great reminder. That we’re always growing. I didn’t think I was loveable for a while, and I know now I deserve it. I deserve someone good, not just someone who is available. It helps me reflect that the timing will work out, I’m not supposed to be doing what social media and society tells me.

Figure 59 First FPPA by Participant Five



Described it as, “I went with a tropical color aesthetic. I chose a few quotes and fun, joyful pictures. My favorite one is letting the idea of perfect go.”

Figure 60 First FPPA by Participant Six



Described it as:

I had a lot of fun with it, I tried to choose graphics and colors that make me happy, bright and colorful. Progress over perfection is already an affirmation I use a lot so it's a great reminder that progress over anything is so important.

Figure 61 First FPPA by Participant Seven



Described it as:

I drew the lines so I could see where the poem goes. I picked words that speak in the moment for me right now. Looking at it now it's like a story that can be a life motto. It's words of encouragement to look back on.

Figure 62 First FPPA by Participant Eight



Described it as:

I just focused on intentions, something I need to work on. I just like the overall message of the quote, "the dream was never over, the dream has just begun." I just like the overall message; it hits home for me. It's all about working on myself, not being negative, and looking at negative as a new beginning.

Figure 63 First FPPA by Participant Nine



Described it as:

I like it a lot, I like the different vibrant colors. I thought this was pretty spot on for what is going on in my life right now. With how I'm currently feeling and what I should remember. For me to think that it's okay that things don't look as imagined or planned.

Figure 64 First FPPA by Participant Ten



When asked about her art she shared about how she says the quote, “keep on going” to herself throughout the day. She said, “I love the Beatles so much and that song, it’s a great reminder for brighter days.”

Figure 65 First FPPA by Participant Eleven



First began describing her piece by reflecting on the quote “put in work”. She said:

You can’t expect everything to be rainbows and butterflies, you must put in the work.

You must put in the work into trusting yourself and your body. You must be your own muse and be your own cheerleader. Once you put in the work it’s you.

Figure 66 First FPPA by Participant Twelve



Described it as:

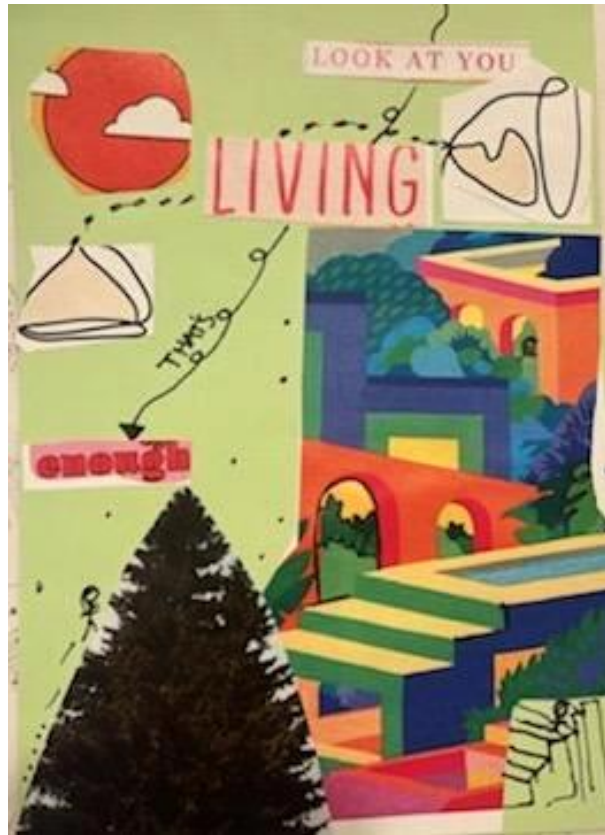
I really liked it, it was nice to process all these things: ambivalence of time, trajectory of life. I think that some of these relate to social media in terms of body image. Or how everyone's going on vacation and I'm not on vacation, or I'm not looking like they are.

It's letting the idea of perfect go and giving that self-compassion. Not trying so hard when you're never going to look like that necessarily, and if you do, you're not going to be happy because it's curated and it's fake. You don't know what's right behind the frame.

This helped give concepts of being more mindful of where my life is right now. I think

it's so easy getting wrapped up in other people's ideals. If we think we need to be a certain way for other people, it is a waste of our time.

Figure 67 First FPPA by Participant Thirteen



Described it as:

I tried to pick cool colors to be set in the evening. I put an hourglass that's open with the word living, so it shows being present in the moment. I put the tree as a mountain to represent climbing though life, but also hiding. The experience was okay. I was too focused on certain words to match but placing everything together to make sense was fun.

Figure 68 First FPPA by Participant Fourteen



Described it as:

I do believe my energy is sacred and that it has to be protected and preserved. I feel like my issues I've had are being hard on myself and comparing myself. I have insane imposter syndrome. I compare myself a lot to peers, I have a perfectionist personality, I think my work isn't good enough. All these things are things that apply to my inner processes and what I need to reflect on more. What I need to assure myself with. Things take time, and I forget I am still young.

Independent Found Poetry with Positive Affirmations (Independent FPPA)

Figure 69 Independent FPPA by Participant One

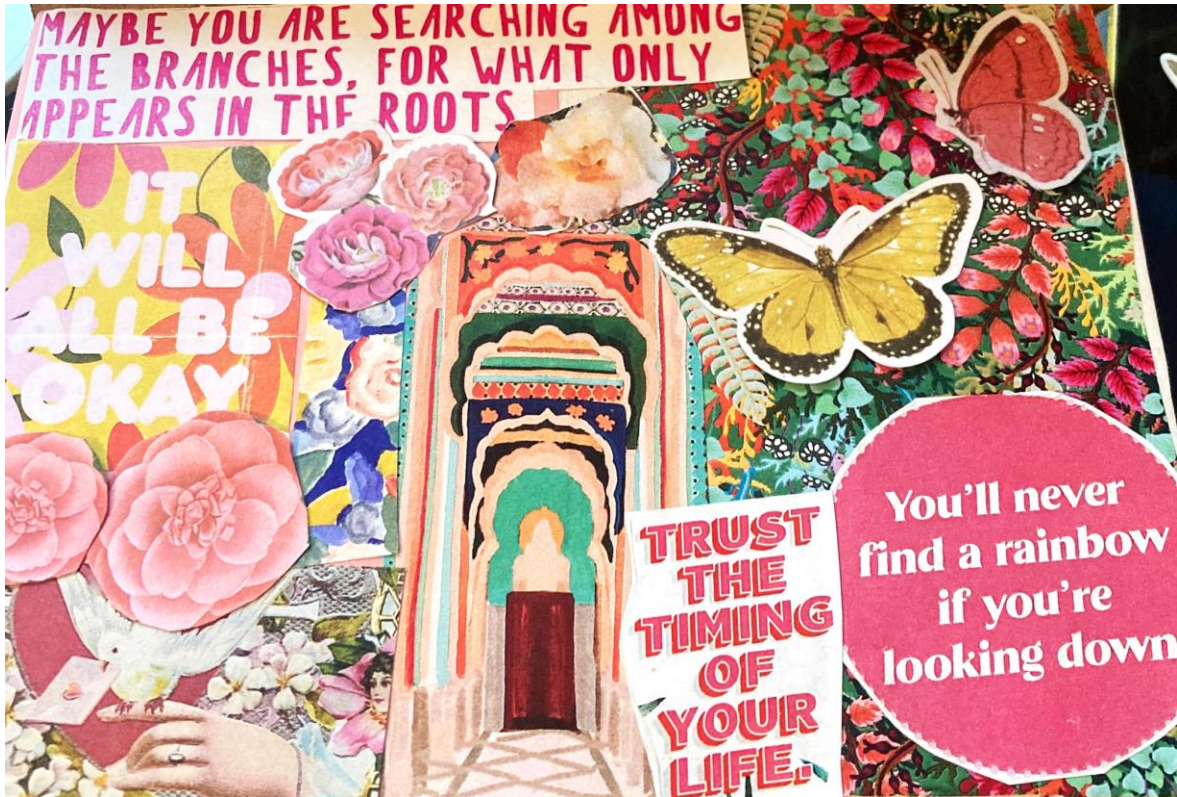


Figure 70 Independent FPPA by Participant Two



Figure 71 Independent FPPA by Participant Three



Figure 72 Independent FPPA by Participant Four



Figure 73 Independent FPPA by Participant Five

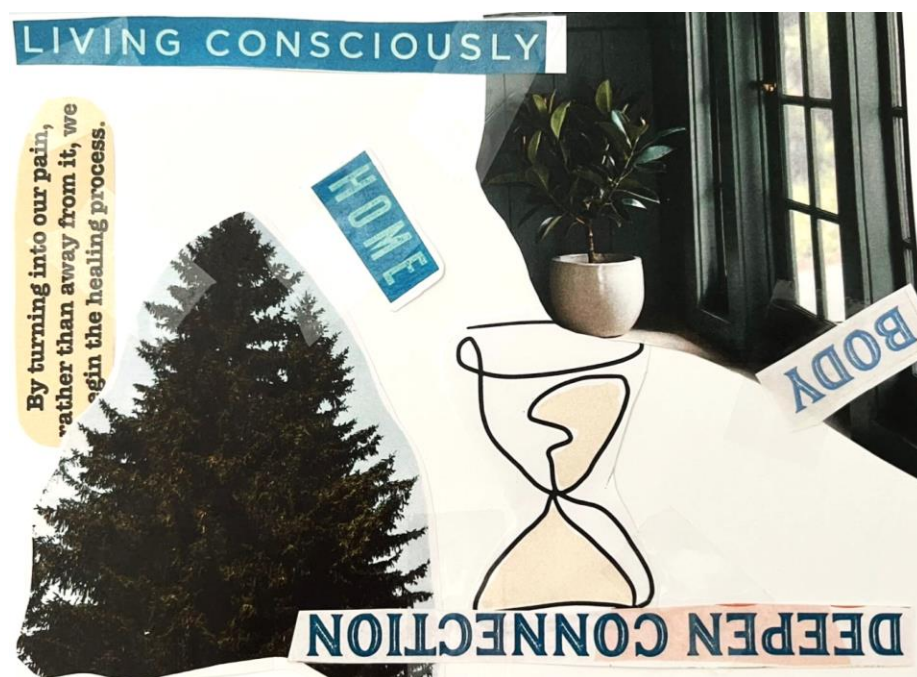


Figure 74 Independent FPPA by Participant Six



A vibrant collage of various cutouts, including flowers, butterflies, and text cards, with a central yellow card reading "Good Things Take Time". The collage is set against a bright yellow background. The cutouts include: a large, colorful flower with a yellow center and red petals; a butterfly with orange and black wings; a card that says "Good Things Take Time"; a card that says "LIVING Thoughtfully"; a card that says "I AM FILLED WITH LOVE, HOPE, AND CONFIDENCE"; a card that says "MY LIFE IS FULL OF MAGIC AND SERENDIPITY"; a card that says "EACH DAY OF MY LIFE IS FILLED WITH JOY AND LOVE"; a card that says "TRUST THE TIMING OF YOUR LIFE"; a card that says "MY THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS ARE NOURISHING"; a card that says "LIFE IS FULL OF LOVE AND I FIND IT EVERYWHERE I GO"; and a card that says "KEEP ON KEEPIN' ON". The collage also features several decorative elements, including a large, colorful flower with a yellow center and red petals, a butterfly with orange and black wings, and a card that says "LIVING Thoughtfully". The collage is set against a bright yellow background.

[illegible]

Figure 77 Independent FPPA by Participant Nine



Figure 78 Independent FPPA by Participant Ten



Figure 79 Independent FPPA by Participant Eleven



Figure 80 Independent FPPA by Participant Twelve



Figure 81 Independent FPPA by Participant Thirteen

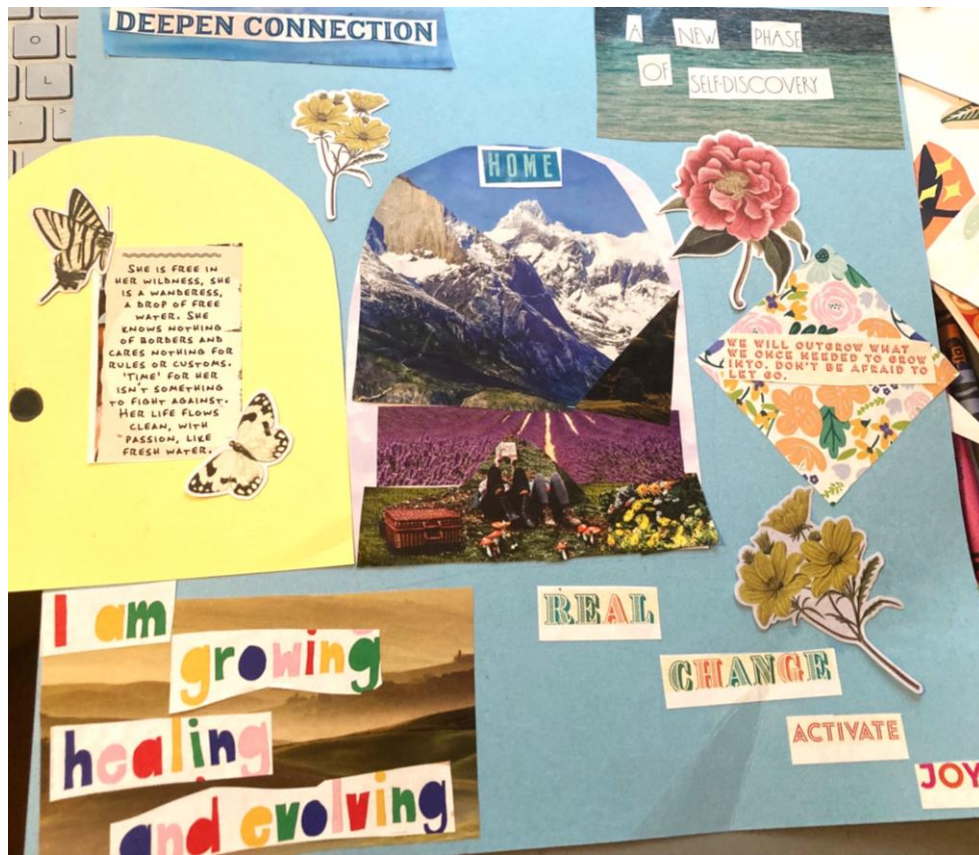


Figure 82 Independent FPPA by Participant Fourteen



Second Found Poetry with Positive Affirmations (Second FPPA)

Figure 83 Participant One's Second FPPA



Described it as:

My favorite quote, “searching among the branches.” It comes down to the way of my perspective and how I love nature. With my outward appearance as I get older, I'm starting to get more acceptive of my looks and features. I've learned to accept and be okay with what I look like. I find things now that I really like about myself.

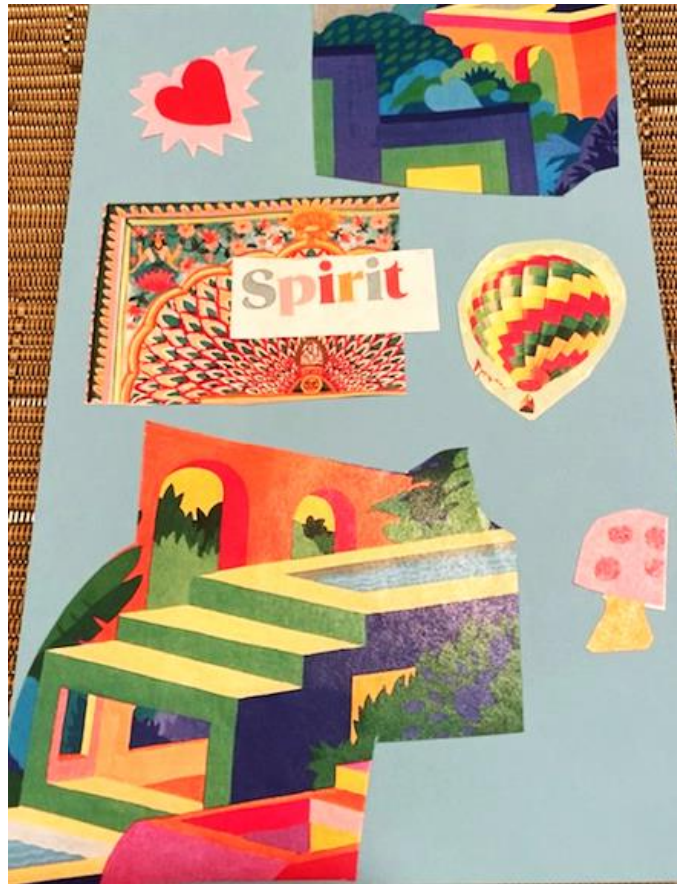
Figure 84 Participant Two's Second FPPA



Described it as:

I was thinking about praxis lately and that process. That word popped out to me, so I started there. I've been thinking about being enough, a lot of what I've been thinking about is what I want to do in my life.

Figure 85 Participant Three's Second FPPA



Described it as, “I dedicated it more to what looked pretty, what pictures look nice and kinda seem the same.”

Figure 86 Participant Four's Second FPPA



Described it as:

This image kept catching my eye every time I saw it. I have a big travel bug right now. I would love to travel more and share that with someone else. I like the different shapes and textures in this image. I like the big clunky abstract imagery. “Put in work” because I am so fucking lazy, and I need to get out of it and focus on things. I fall back on doing the bare minimum and need to get away from that. I love rainbows, they hold a lot of meaning to me. I find that the one thing I can take from our tragedies is that it has made me a lot stronger. I mean I can do without the tragedy, but it makes me a lot stronger.

Figure 87 Participant Five's Second FPPA



Described it as, "This time I went for a more celebration theme, an optimistic theme.

"Celebrate the small victories" is my favorite quote I put on here."

Figure 88 Participant Six's Second FPPA



Described it as:

I chose images that made me feel calm, a lot of plant life and nature. I think overall it is self-validating. I have a lot of anxiety, so I struggle with self-doubt all the time. These visual affirmations are helpful.

Figure 89 Participant Seven's Second FPPA



Described it as:

My mindset was to not think so hard with what I'm doing and just enjoy the art process. I followed what colors spoke to me and followed the same color scheme for my quotes but stuck with the theme of love and life.

Figure 90 Participant Eight's Second FPPA



Described it as, “I picked this quote because I like the message of looking more in a positive perspective than a negative one because I tend to be the opposite and look more at negative ones more.”

Figure 91 Participant Nine's Second FPPA



Described it as:

Reason why I chose the quotes I did is because I feel like I have been very reflective lately. Reflecting on all the hardships I've gone through and how it shaped me into the person I am today. My favorite quote is the top quote because I have trouble listening to my gut feeling and that is something I am working on. Deep down I realize I have a hard time letting things go. I've grown to have confidence in myself and am very confident that things are changing for the better.

Figure 92 Participant Ten's Second FPPA



Described it as:

I think I chose these two quotes because with “trust timing of life”, I feel like you're supposed to be where you are now. Everyone is on different paths and it's important to not compare yourself to other people's lives. To trust the timing of your own life, everyone has different lives. “Self-love matters” because it is a really important thing to recognize because a lot of people I feel like don’t love themselves. It’s easy to forget to love yourself.

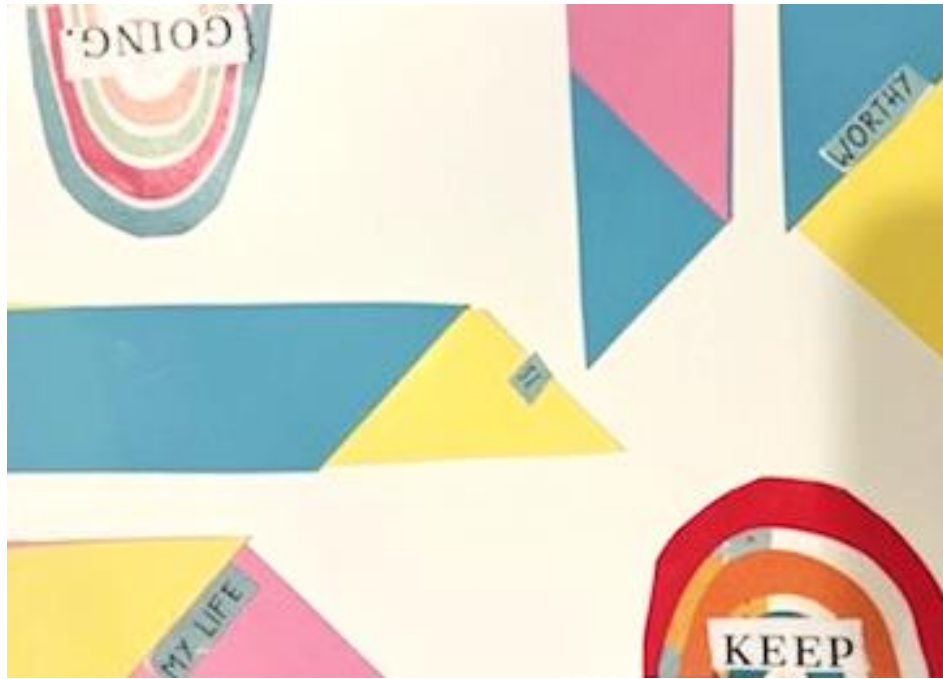
Figure 93 Participant Twelve's Second FPPA



Described it as:

A reminder to not be so hard on yourself. If you work on yourself, good things will come with time. Always good to remember to not be hard on yourself, because I do that a lot, but that'll get you nowhere just dwelling on things.

Figure 94 Participant Thirteen's Second FPPA



Described it as, “I did this one more with shapes, simple. Made it like a puzzle to fit together.”

Figure 95 Participant Fourteen's Second FPPA



Described it as:

My second poetry collage is about my mental thought processes as I am progressing, and healing past my traumas and self-doubt. Sometimes I'm hard on myself about where I am heading in life because my interests and skills seem to go all over the place. This is due to having a lack of self-identity. It frustrates me, but in its own way, I am the way I am and have my own unique talents and strengths that stem from trauma and emotional outlets that I use when I try to cope.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Analysis of Results

Research Session #1 Semi-Structured Interview

The average age of participants creating their first social media account was 10.4 years old. Being exposed to the social media realm at such a young, pivotal development age, has accelerated the concept of comparison within their minds. The early exposure normalizes comparison even more than it naturally occurs and sets unrealistic expectations of beauty amongst young girls. During the preteen years, young girls are beginning to go through the stage of puberty which stimulates feelings of confusion and uncertainty about themselves. Their bodies are going through changes, internally and externally, and during this stage they are beginning to care a lot more about their physical appearance and the judgment of others. These biological changes along with the frequent exposure and pressures of social media create a dangerous combination.

It was discovered that Instagram was the most popularly used social media platform among the participants, with 78.6% participants listing it as their first choice. Sharing and viewing images is the primary concept of Instagram. It is ultimately used by people to curate a visual profile about themselves to share with an audience of people, whom they know and may not know. Instagram is also utilized to follow celebrities and other individuals that are of interest to people. As mentioned earlier, many of the images that women consume daily through social media are often appearance focused, heavily edited with filters, and communicate an achieved idealized physical attractiveness (Garcia et al., 2021). Using these appearance focused platforms on a routine basis is bound to create detrimental effects from the internal comparisons stimulated from them, especially within a young, developing mind.

A previous study focused on women's Instagram usage found that habitual use was related to lower daily feelings of satisfaction with life, a higher negative affect, and a lower well-being (Garcia et. al., 2021) and this was exemplified by the participants in this study. One participant described the habitual practice of scrolling through Instagram as, "damaging when you're in a negative mindset," and "leaves you feeling *ugh* about yourself." While people are aware of these negative effects that come with frequently being on these platforms, the majority do not quit or really attempt to reduce their usage. This could be highly correlated to the fact that people feel "in the loop" when they are on there and it's how they keep up with other's lives, as mentioned by many participants. Another participant described her usage saying, "I cannot quit because I always feel the need to keep up with my image on social media." Maintaining a presence in "the loop" seems to aid a sense of belonging, acceptance, and validation from others.

Research Session #2 Semi-Structured Interview

The majority of the participants reported to enjoy the overall process of this study. Becoming more aware of their individual time spent on social media and the negative effects that follow it was found to be eye-opening to most. Being aware of one's usage on social media and the effects from it was found to aid in defusing the negative cognitions that arise from it. This demonstrates ACT's emphasis on the importance of an individual's mindful awareness in regulating and choosing their actions, and how that awareness aids in achieving psychological acceptance (Masuda et al., 2016). The concept of social media has become so deeply embedded and normalized into people's lives that many are not even aware of the negative habits associated with their actions. This seemed to be the case regarding many participants, shown by their scores positively changing on the second Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale they completed. Two participants mentioned how the questionnaires increased their awareness about

how they practiced negative habits that were included in the scale. The awareness is a prerequisite for achieving a fulfilling life through the development of repertoires for psychological acceptance and the ability to choose meaningful patterns of behavior (Masuda et al., 2016).

Creating found poetry with positive affirmations was discovered to be the favorite part among participants. Many participants expressed their joy of the preassembled collage materials because it reduced their anxieties and feelings of how they are “not typically artists.” The researcher noticed how different participants' reactions were to being prompted to draw a self-portrait compared to them creating the found poetry. The participants were much more at ease with having content to create with, rather than creating from scratch. All participants, but one, mentioned how they loved creating art, and how it was relaxing, fun, and therapeutic. Even if creating art did not necessarily aid in increasing participant's self-esteem it definitely made them feel good in a sense of making them feel creative and expressive. The process provided them a healthy self-soothing tool and a new way to manifest positivity in their minds.

Many participants also expressed their liking of all the positive content, one said how after they completed the found poetry it left them feeling encouraged and optimistic throughout the day or night. Surrounding oneself in positivity can be influential on an individual's overall well-being and self-esteem (Amalia, 2020). It is not being exposed to it just once where it is beneficial, but rather for long durations of time and on a frequent basis. Long term exposure and routines have effects on an individual's mentality, which is exemplified by the negative effects of frequent social media usage that has been mentioned throughout this study. Focusing energy on negativity or positivity has immense effects on an individual's overall wellbeing. Being aware

in regulating and choosing where energy is spent aids in achieving psychological acceptance, one of the core psychological processes in ACT (Masuda et al., 2016).

Participant Thirteen was the only participant that was observed to have received a negative effect from this study. When asked if she felt any impact creating art she said, “I didn't view it as creating it for myself. I don't have positivity for myself so I made it personal by thinking about how I would want my students to view me. It is hard to be positive with myself. I guess I was avoiding myself.” This avoidance seems to have disallowed her to feel any personal impact in creating art, but it acted as a building block for her working to do so. To put herself in the shoes of her students enabled her to attempt to look at herself in a positive light. That act can be considered a first step in the journey of being able to self-reflect and practice self-love. Here the participant demonstrated psychological flexibility, defined as the ability to be mindful of experiences in the present moment, in an accepting and nonjudgmental way, while behaving consistently with an individual's values, even when their thoughts and feelings are resistant to taking valued action (Grégoire et al., 2020). The participant acknowledged and accepted that she felt resistant to perceiving herself positively but was able to be open and flexible in viewing herself through the perspective of what she hoped her students viewed her as.

Self-Esteem Scale

The results of the Self-Esteem scale show that 71.4% of participants showed a positive change, 28.6%, showed a negative change in their self-esteem. While this quantitative data supports the hypothesis, it is not fully determined that this change can be attributed to creating the found poetry or becoming more aware of their social media appearance preoccupation. It definitely played a role, but there are also other factors to consider. Other factors to highlight are other events experienced during that week span, their mood going into the questionnaires, and

whether or not they were attempting to please the researcher. Qualitative data obtained supported that creating art did play a role in this change.

Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale

The results of the Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale show that 78.6% of participants exhibited a positive change, and 21.4% exhibited a negative change in their preoccupation with online physical appearance. As mentioned earlier, the quantitative data supported the hypothesis, but there are other factors in participants' lives and selves that could have affected the scores. The large positive change indicated that participants became either newly aware or more aware of their social media appearance preoccupation tendencies in a way that made them reduce them. The negative change highlighted the opposite reaction to that new awareness, in that it amplified those tendencies thus participants thought about them more in an unhealthy way.

Self-Portraits

Both self-portraits were compared together to observe if an impact occurred from creating the found poetry with positive affirmations. Through the comparisons it was discovered that 42.9% of participant's self-portraits had no change (neutral), 28.6% presented a positive progression, 21.4% shifted from negative to positive, and 7.1% presented a negative regression. None of the participant's self-portraits showed a positive to negative change. Overall, the majority of participants experienced a positive shift within their self-portraits. The positive shift indicated that the art therapy intervention found poetry with positive affirmations contributed to some participants feeling more positively about themselves. This demonstrates how influential the context of an environment is to an individual (Twohig et al., 2019), the context in this case being positive affirmation provided to the participants.

Art therapy provides individuals with the opportunity to explore limiting notions of themselves and help create new ways of seeing themselves (Van Lith, 2020). Participant Four said, “it was a way to think about yourself outside of the traditional norm, and it was fun to look at myself through a different lens.” In ACT it is encouraged that an individual step out of their comfort zone and look at themselves from a different perspective (Grégoire et al., 2020). The self-portrait assessment allowed participants to obtain an external insight about themselves. For many participants this was their first experience creating a self-portrait and they all had mixed reactions about it. Some enjoyed it and others found it intimidating because either they do not typically draw or they do not like to focus on themselves, which was said by Participant Thirteen. This process was reported as beneficial for some in that it aided in stimulating a new sense of self awareness and a new way to externalize themselves.

Most participants drew just their face rather than their face and body. An avoidance of body-image could possibly be a reason for the absence of drawing their bodies, or that they feel intimidated by the task of realistic drawings. Also, the term portrait may be recognized as a focus on a person’s face. These are all considerations of possible reasons for why participant’s faces were represented more often than their bodies.

Only three participants had a significant change from negative to positive observed through their self-portraits. These changes were also observed with their increased scores on the Self-Esteem Scale. In their semi-structured interviews, they each spoke at length about the toxicity of comparisons on social media and how that has affected them in their lives.

Found Poetry with Positive Affirmations

Each participant created three found poetry compositions in total with the supplies that the researcher provided. This collage directive was very much enjoyed by the participants, as for some it was reported as an easy, care-free way for them to be creative when they are typically not. The bright colors and positive content left some participants feeling encouraged and optimistic. Looking at positive affirmations also had some participants reflect on the negative events and/or thoughts they have experienced, and the progress they have made. This supports how the affirmation process can be used to transform negative impressions into motivation to highlight more positive aspects of an individual's self (Amalia, 2020).

Many mentioned how they were planning to use the leftovers of materials in their free time to make more collages. This supports the idea of how creating art can be an effective coping mechanism for people as it self-soothes, allows for reflection, enables creativity, and stimulates overall positive emotions. Participants choosing to use their own free time after the study to make art reinforces how they found the process of making art to be beneficial. This demonstrates how individuals have the ability to choose meaningful patterns of behavior to replace problematic behavioral patterns (Masuda et al., 2016). Making art can substitute the habit of endless scrolling on social media and can uplift an individual's mood and mentality instead of making them feel worse about themselves. Engaging in healthy habits provide the opportunity of creating positive behavioral change.

Strengths

Conducting research sessions through Zoom was a strength rather than a weakness because it enabled the study to be accessible to almost anyone, and it was not limited to participants in just one geographic area. Another strength was how the researcher provided

participants with preassembled art materials; thus, the participant's lack of supplies was not a negative variable. This was especially beneficial for the found poetry art directive-because it allowed participants to express creativity to their full potential. Having a designated theme (positivity) for the pre-cut collage pieces enabled the participants to be more reflective and immersed in the prompt, while decreasing the anxiety of having to manually find and cut out their own quotes and images. Additionally, providing the necessary supplies reduced the pressure of time and may have enabled study completion.

Limitations

The sample size of this study is one of its main limitations. This study's validity and reliability were compromised because it was based on a small sample of only fourteen people. With the thoroughness of each interview and the breadth of data acquired (qualitative, arts-based and quantitative) this study tried to make up for this limitation. Additionally, the majority of the participants were in the same age range, enabling comparison between participants but not generalization to other age groups. These factors do not allow for generalizable conclusions to be made for the larger population.

Another limitation is the possibility that some participants may have skewed their answers to some questions asked in the semi-structured interviews in order to give answers they assumed to be favorable to the researcher. This type of response bias is called satisficing, which is a combination of the words 'satisfy' and 'suffice', meaning: 'what is sufficient to obtain a satisfactory outcome' (Kwiksurveys, 2022). The researcher sensed this particularly with the question, "did your feelings about social media change at all?" It was not hypothesized or expected that participant's feelings towards social media would change, but rather hoped they would become more aware about the effects it has on them and the time they spend on it.

Recommendations for Future Research

For future research it is recommended to include a larger sample of participants varying in different age ranges and ethnicities in order to draw generalizable conclusions. The larger sample size would also allow for a better observation of trends among various age ranges and ethnicities. This would also allow for the opportunity to create and observe generational comparisons. Focusing on the adolescent population would be incredibly informative for this study, as social media has been extremely embedded in their lives from the day they were born. The current adolescent population, Generation Z, are digital natives born in the period when social media began to really take off and consume individuals in society. In this study it was discovered that the average age participants were when they created their first social media account was 10.4 years. The average age of participants was 27.3 years old, meaning current adolescents have possibly made their first social media account at a younger age than the participants in this study.

Another recommendation to build off this study is to prompt participants to hang their found poetry somewhere they can see them visibly on a daily basis for that week in between sessions. It would be interesting to observe if reading their chosen positive affirmations daily would increase their self-esteem levels even more. A possibly more efficient way to do this that would ensure that the participant is looking at them daily would be for the researcher to prompt them to make the found poetry their phone's screensavers for the week.

The Significance of this Research

This research is significant because social media has become a major component of people's lives. Research demonstrates that today around seven out of ten Americans frequently use social media (Pew Research Center, 2021). It has become embedded into the daily routine of

most individuals and has the tendency to have negative effects on mental health. Through this study the researcher had hopes of bringing more awareness of the negative effects that social media produces, particularly how it affects self-esteem and body-image for women-identified people.

While the effects of social media deeply affect all genders, women and woman-identified people are more likely to experience negative effects due to primarily engaging in appearance-related activities on the sites (Veldhuis et al., 2020). These appearance focused platforms have a notorious culture that has roots of disseminating unrealistic beauty ideals. As evidenced by literature and the qualitative data from participants, the virtual world of social media is highly focused on comparisons. This research matters because it brings awareness to the cognitive defusions that arise from the habit of comparisons on social media, which is the first step towards initiating a healthy change. Being aware of the negative tendencies one does on social media can aid in reducing the likelihood of it occurring as frequently. A present moment perspective can alleviate a person's self-esteem and help them focus on their authentic selves.

Conclusion

This study was concerned with the impact of social media on a woman's perception of their body image and how it affects their self-esteem. An individual's awareness of their body image has a significant impact on their self-esteem and overall well-being. A rise in social media usage has shown to be associated with indications of negative body-image and a greater body dissatisfaction (Veldhuis et. al, 2020). From all the literature reviewed and the various forms of data collected it was proven that social media does indeed have a negative connection with a woman's self-esteem and their body-image. It was found that creating art, especially an intervention focused on positive affirmations, has promising effects in that it makes people feel

proud about themselves and what they created, which in turn increases their self-esteem. In this study it was not determined that creating art will increase a person's self-esteem, but creative expression was shown to aid in the process of it.

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Appendix A: Consent for Research Participation

Informed Consent for Research Participation

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Courtney Engelhardt

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: Exploring the Connection between Social Media & Body-Image and the Impact of Art Therapy Interventions on a Woman's Self-Esteem

I have been asked to participate in a mixed-methods research study exploring the connection between social media and body-image, and the impact of art therapy interventions on a woman's self-esteem. The results of this qualitative and arts-based research study should further our understanding of the influence that social media has on a woman's body-image perception and self-esteem. It will also provide evidence on the use of art therapy interventions to support a woman's self-esteem.

I understand that:

1. I will be asked to be a part of two research sessions via Zoom that will each take approximately one hour or less. The second research session will follow one week after the completion of the first one.
2. I will be asked to take three questionnaires at the beginning of the first research session and at the end of the second research session. I will be asked to answer questions in a semi-structured interview in both sessions. In both sessions I will be asked to create a self-portrait and found poetry with positive affirmations, and to answer short follow-up questions about them. I will be asked to create found poetry with positive affirmations on my own time during that week time span between the research sessions.
3. The possible psychological risks of participating in this study are considered minimal and may include some emotional discomfort based on reaction to the questions on the questionnaires or the semi-structured interviews. Should any feelings be elicited based on my participation in this study, I will be provided with resources of support that include referrals to therapists, support groups, and meditation apps.
4. There may be benefits to me personally in the area of gaining better insight about myself and my potential, as the results of this study will help expand our self-awareness in personal social media use and the effects that are influenced from it. I may also benefit in strengthening my self-esteem through art making.
5. The results of this study may be published, but any information from this study that can be identified with me will remain confidential and the data will be collected online to maintain confidentiality.
6. Any questions about my participation in this study will be answered by Courtney Engelhardt through email (courtney.engelhardt@students.dominican.edu). Any questions

or concerns about this study should be addressed to the Supervisor, Dr. Erin Patridge, via email (erin.partridge@dominican.edu).

7. My consent is given voluntarily without being coerced. I may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study, and I may withdraw at any time, without prejudice to any future contact with Dominican University of California.
8. I have received a copy of this consent form for my record.

I HAVE MADE A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE. Please check one:

_____ YES, I agree to participate in this research study and I agree to have my art as part of the study data.

_____ NO, I do NOT agree to participate in this research study and have my art as part of the study data.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix B: Consent to Use Artwork

Consent to use Artwork

Research Title: Exploring the Connection between Social Media & Body-Image and the Impact of Art Therapy Interventions on a Woman's Self-Esteem

Approval Date: _____

I allow _____ to use my artwork in an art therapy research project. I understand that no one will know that I participated in this study. My name and all other personal information (including anything I choose to talk about) will be kept secret and confidential.

I understand that some of my drawings might be shown to other art therapists, but my name will not be attached to my artwork. Any identifying information in the art will be covered/redacted.

I understand that my art will be photographed.

SIGNATURE

If you agree to allow your artwork to be discussed in this study, please sign here:

Signature of Participant & Date
Printed Name of Participant & Date

Appendix C: Research Session #1 Semi-Structured Interview

- 1) How old are you?
- 2) How old were you when you created your first social media account and what was it?
- 3) What social media apps are you currently on?
- 4) What do you use the most?
- 5) How do you feel about social media?
- 6) Do you think using social media has affected your body-image perception?

Appendix D: Research Session #2 Semi-Structured Interview

- 1) How did you feel about this whole process?
- 2) What was your favorite part?
- 3) Did your feelings about social media change at all?
- 4) Did you feel any impact from creating the artwork?

Appendix E: Self-Esteem Scale

Self-Esteem Scale

Respondents are asked to score their level of agreement on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7, with 1 equaling not at all and 7 equaling a lot.

- ___ Do you have a positive attitude towards yourself?
- ___ How happy are you with your appearance?
- ___ Do you feel self-sufficient?
- ___ How often do you think that other people are criticizing you?
- ___ How often are you unhappy about yourself?
- ___ Do you have doubts about yourself?
- ___ How frequently do you worry about what other people think of you?
- ___ Do you not like yourself often?
- ___ Are you often self conscious?
- ___ Do you feel anxious or self-conscious when you walk into a room full of people?
- ___ What percentage of the time do you think you're an attractive person?
- ___ Do you get the impression that the majority of your friends are more attractive than you?
- ___ Do you often catch yourself comparing yourself to others?
- ___ When you meet new people, do you feel at ease in your own skin?
- ___ How often do you feel self conscious about your physical appearance and body shape?
- ___ Do you wonder often if people enjoy being in your presence?
- ___ How often do you feel bad about yourself?
- ___ How often do you wish you looked different?

For the purposes of this study this scale is an adaptation from the Multidimensional Self-Esteem Scale (Rentzch & Schutz, 2021).

Appendix F: Social Media Appearance Preoccupation Scale

The instructions direct respondents to rate their level of agreement on a seven-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

- ___ I prefer to only upload photos of myself to social media where I look physically attractive.
- ___ I prefer to only upload photos of myself to social media where I look fit and healthy.
- ___ When others upload photos of me to social media, I focus on whether I look good.
- ___ I check to see who is commenting on, liking, or viewing photos of me or my body on social media.
- ___ When others upload photos of me to social media, I get upset when I don't look my best.
- ___ I approve photos of myself before anyone can tag them.
- ___ When I upload photos of myself, I usually use filters or alter/change them to make myself look better.
- ___ When on social media my friend's post, comment on, share, or like content about getting or staying fit and/or muscular.
- ___ When on social media my friend's post, comment on, share, or like content about what and when to eat.
- ___ When on social media I post, comment on, share, or like content about what and when to eat.
- ___ When on social media I post, comment on, share, or like content about getting or staying fit and/or muscular.
- ___ When on social media my friend's post, comment on, share, or like content about what they would like their bodies to look like.
- ___ I am often dissatisfied with my weight or looks in my social media pictures.
- ___ I feel inadequate in appearance compared to my friends on social media.
- ___ I feel like I want to change my diet after viewing other people's pictures online.
- ___ How I feel about my body and appearance is influenced by other people's social media pictures.
- ___ Seeing pictures of others tends to make me feel down on myself.
- ___ I feel like I want to change my exercise routine or fitness level after viewing other people's pictures online.

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Appendix G: Recruitment Flyer



The flyer has a light pink background with various floral and abstract patterns in shades of pink, purple, and blue. The title 'Participants Needed!' is in a large, bold, black serif font. Below it, a question in bold black font asks if the reader is interested in the relationship between making art and self-esteem. The text then describes the study's focus on social media, body image, and art therapy. A list of requirements and incentives follows, including a bulleted list of criteria and a raffle prize. Contact information for Courtney Engelhardt is provided, along with the study's affiliation with the Art Therapy department at Dominican University California. The flyer is decorated with floral patterns, including a large blue flower in the top left, a pink flower in the top center, and a purple flower in the top right. There are also smaller floral motifs and abstract shapes scattered throughout the design.

Participants Needed!

Interested in the relationship between making art & self-esteem?

Looking for volunteers to participate in a research study that illuminates the connection between social media & body image, and the impact of art therapy interventions on a woman's self-esteem

- Must identify as a woman, be 18 years old or older, & frequently use social media
- No art experience required
- Participants will be entered in a raffle to win a \$50 Visa gift card

For more information about this study contact
Courtney Engelhardt at
courtney.engelhardt@students.dominican.edu

The study is part of the Art Therapy department at Dominican University California