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## Focusing on College Students' Instagram Use and Body Image

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FOCUSING ON COLLEGE STUDENTS' INSTAGRAM USE AND BODY IMAGE

BY

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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IN

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MASTER OF ART THESIS

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## ABSTRACT

Years of research has demonstrated that mainstream media negatively impacts women's body image; however, less is known about the role social media plays. Social media is a newer type of media and is becoming increasingly popular among younger women. The purpose of the study is to gain an increased understanding of how female college students use Instagram and how using Instagram in different ways may influence their body image. This descriptive exploratory qualitative study used focus groups to explore 27 female college students' experiences with Instagram. The data were analyzed using content analysis to identify frequencies, patterns, and themes. The findings highlight that female college students mainly use Instagram for following others or viewing others, and posting their own photos. Three major themes related to Instagram use emerged: (1) effortful posting, (2) promotion of self and (3) seeking engagement. That is, female students seemed to put a lot of effort into what they were going to post, they were careful to select the best images of themselves to display, and they placed a lot of importance on engagement by others as they hoped to receive likes and comments on their images.

The findings also offer insight into Instagram's role in female's body image, Three themes surfaced pertaining to participants body image: (1) Internalization of beauty standards, (2) social comparison behavior, and (3) self-objectification. Participants were aware of a variety of beauty standards on social media to include different standards for different races and ethnicities, and they seemed to internalize the different standards by putting effort into adhering to them; some participants discussed experiencing body dissatisfaction as a result of trying to measure up to these

“unrealistic” standards. Moreover, participants frequently made comparisons with others on social media such as comparing their looks to others or to the number of likes/comments on someone else’s photo. Lastly, participants took on an audience perspective: they were concerned with how others would perceive their content and if they would get desired responses from their audience.

Findings also highlight that individuals who were able to recognize that beauty standards seemed unreal and practiced self-acceptance seemed less affected. Thus, further research should examine the effects of prevention programs like social media literacy programs or mindfulness practices (e.g., self-compassion). Clinicians and educators should provide psychoeducation to those who are heavily involved with social media, or those about to open an Instagram account. Helping to increase individuals’ awareness that photos on Instagram are often doctored and display unrealistic ideals may help prevent them from striving to meet these standards and developing body image related issues.

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I would like to thank Ginette Ferszt, without whom this research would not have been possible. You have been a wonderful mentor, and I appreciate all the time and thought you have put into helping me. It has been a pleasure learning and working beside you. Your training has taught me a great deal about qualitative research, and I am so thrilled to have had this experience. Thank you for your kind supervision, advice, passion and endless support.

I would also like to express my deep appreciation for the help received on the project by my research assistants, Nicole Cloutier, Kayla DelBonis, Indigo Forbes, Blessing Gbemisola, Amanda Gonzalez, Jessica Lemieux, and Danielle Meyers. Thank you for your motivation, hard work and dedication to this project.

Finally, I am thankful to my family and friends for their support, love and care. I would especially like to thank my husband, Gregory, who has supported and encouraged me throughout my studies, even when times got rough. I am grateful to have a loving spouse who supports my passion and dreams, as well as expresses understanding while I complete my work. Thank you for always standing by me and helping me to move forward in the right direction.

*This thesis is dedicated to my grandmother, Jean Fry Stroupe.  
Who passed before this thesis was completed, but has been with me throughout...  
Thank you for helping raise me to believe that I am a strong and intelligent woman.  
For helping me to believe in myself and pushing me to follow my dreams.*

*Without you I wouldn't be here.*



## PREFACE

This thesis is original work done by Nicole Baker. The thesis has been written and prepared using the manuscript format. No part of this has been published, although we hope to publish in the future. The manuscript will be submitted to the Journal of Body Image. Moreover, the research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Rhode Island's Research Ethics Board December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

The purpose of the thesis is to provide insight into female college students' experiences on Instagram and how these experiences influence body image. Due to the constant and complex interactive nature of social media, it is likely these sites will produce more harmful effects on body image than other types of media. Thus, I genuinely feel every effort should be made towards increasing our understanding of sites like Instagram. I hope by conducting this research, it will improve our current understanding.

The basis for this research originally stemmed from my passion for women's well-being. A big part of women's well-being is self-esteem and the ability to love oneself. My hope for women is to feel confident and empowered, and not feel poorly about themselves. The world is hard enough as is. As the world moves further into the digital age, so does the plethora of unrealistic images that may cause individuals to experience self-doubt and self-loathing, if we let it. I want to understand how interacting with images on these sites can be harmful to young women's feelings towards themselves, and if so, how can we prevent this? The digital age is upon us,

and rather than fight it, let's figure out the unhealthy and healthy ways to engage with the online world.

The first step in exploring this question was to dive into the world of qualitative research. A skilled qualitative nurse, Ginette Ferszt, helped train and provide me guidance throughout the process. I was trained on running focus groups in Summer 2017 and piloted groups in the Fall 2017. I enjoyed taking on the role as the moderator, leading discussion and interacting with participants who were willing to share their many experiences. I also enjoyed working with my faculty mentors, and research assistants, who I relied on to continually discuss and debrief the results and progress of the study. I also want to note the iterative nature of the research; I frequently went back and forth re-referencing interview questions, transcripts and codes. Ultimately, I feel I have learned so much throughout the experience and am so grateful for it. I believe it is not only my project but everyone's who has helped, from my faculty advisor, mentors, research assistants and participants--without them this would not have been possible.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

American culture is obsessed with youth and beauty. Women in today's society are bombarded by images in the media that promote a thin and unrealistic body ideal (Klein, 2013). With society's emphasis on beauty, it is not surprising over 50% of young women feel unsatisfied with their looks and have body image concerns (Grabe et al., 2008).

Body image refers to the attitude, emotions, and reactions an individual has towards their body (McCabe, Butler & Watt, 2007). Negative body image is often referred to as body dissatisfaction. Body dissatisfaction is defined by discontent and negative evaluations about one's body size and shape (Holstorm, 2004). Body dissatisfaction is one of the biggest risk factors for developing an eating disorder and has shown to predict low self-esteem, depression and obesity (Johnson & Wardle, 2005; Neumark-Sztainer, Paxton, Hannan, Haines, & Story, 2006; Tiggemann, 2005). Years of research demonstrate that exposure to mainstream media (e.g., magazines, television, music videos) negatively impacts body image, lowering body satisfaction and triggering eating disorder symptoms in young women and girls (Dittmar, Halliwell, & Stirling, 2009; Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006; Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008). Less is known, however, about the effects of social media, which has become increasingly prevalent and may play similar roles.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social media like Facebook and Instagram are web-based services, which allow users to construct profiles that provide descriptions of themselves. The sites permit users to make connections with others and keep in contact with them (Boyd, 2007), but are commonly used for posting photographs of the self, and for perusing and evaluating photos posted by others (Ellison, 2007). Social media platforms that are photo-based, such as Instagram, may be especially likely to promote unrealistic body ideals.

#### **Instagram**

Instagram offers unique ways to post photos and videos. For example, Instagram provides 16 different filters to transform and manipulate photos before posting (Manikonda et al., 2014). Additionally, the site provides ways to instantly share photos or videos with other services (e.g., Facebook, and Twitter; Manikonda et al., 2014). Instagram also permits users to follow friends, strangers, celebrities and models, which allows them to see what their friends are doing, and the luxurious lifestyles and doctored photos of celebrities and models. Individuals who use Instagram are exposed to a steady influx of images daily, images which promote similar unrealistic beauty ideals seen in mainstream media. Exposure to these images may encourage young women to post images that adhere to beauty standards seen online.

Furthermore, Instagram allows its users to gain and provide feedback through “liking” and “commenting.” The importance of receiving feedback may put immense

pressure on young women to conform to beauty ideals and self-objectify (e.g., evaluate oneself as an object based on appearance; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Frequent exposure to images on Instagram is also likely to lead to social comparison behaviors, defined as a person's tendency to measure himself or herself against someone else (Festinger, 1954). This is concerning as research indicates internalization of thin-ideal, self-objectification, and social comparison behaviors predict lower body satisfaction (Tiggemann & Lynch, 2001; Tiggemann & Slater, 2004).

According to reports conducted by the Pew Research Center, 87% of 18-29 year olds use Facebook and 55% use Instagram (Greenwood, Perrin & Duggan, 2016; York, 2017). This means 55% of young adults are exposed to the 40 billion photos uploaded daily to Instagram (Aslam, 2017). While Facebook remains the most popular social media site, Instagram is increasing in popularity compared to prior years reports (Greenwood, Perrin & Duggan, 2016). Instagram in particular is more popular among females than males (Greenwood et al., 2016). The relative novelty of Instagram, released in 2010, may explain why little research has been published on it. Given the site's reach, and the fact that young adults have grown up with social media at their fingertips, it is important to understand the effects of engaging with Instagram.

### **Body Image**

Social media is a new source for providing beauty ideals through the millions of images uploaded daily. Continuous exposure to perfected and idealized images may lead viewers to accept unrealistic portrayals as representations of reality (Brown, 2002; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002). Once these unrealistic



beauty ideals have been internalized, women are likely to strive to reach these standards. In fact, women describe feeling pressure to create desirable impressions, and post attractive images on their Myspace profiles (Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008). By constantly posting and monitoring their image while using these sites, women self-objectify—that is, they take on the perspective of an external observer and attending to the aesthetic versus functionality of their bodies (Moradi, 2010). Objectification theory predicts such processes promote increases in young women’s bodily shame and dissatisfaction (Moradi, 2010).

Not only are women likely to self-objectify, but they are likely to engage in comparisons as to whether they meet the beauty standards they are exposed to. Social comparison theory posits people have an innate propensity to assess themselves in comparison to other people, often of a higher social status, which leads to negative conclusions about the self (Bessenoff, 2006; Sabiston & Chandler, 2009). Facebook users report comparing themselves to individuals they interact with and observe online (Haferkamp & Krämer, 2011). Even more concerning is who they are making comparisons with. Users are not only comparing themselves to ideals seen in mainstream media, but also to peers, who represent ideals perceived as more competitive and tangible (Fardouly, Diedrichs, Vartanian, & Halliwell, 2015). Moreover, following peers, celebrities and models on sites like Instagram allows for more comparisons, which may result in feeling more dissatisfaction.

Another consideration is the nature of comparisons, as perceptions are shaped not only by what users disclose about themselves, but also by interactions they have with others (Hong, Tandoc, Kim, Kim, & Wise, 2012). For example, users not only

compare themselves to images of others but also to what others like or comment on (Hong et al., 2012). When sites like Instagram encourage clicking “like” on photos or comments, each photo becomes associated with how much it is liked. These numbers represent popularity and attractiveness; if a person’s likes and comments are lower than others, this may prove psychologically harmful (Hong et al., 2012). Therefore, social media might provide an outlet where unhealthy comparisons take place, which result in body image issues.

So far, much of the research conducted on social media and body image has been correlational. Facebook users report more drive for thinness, internalization of the thin ideal, body surveillance, self-objectification, and body dissatisfaction than non-users (Meier & Gray, 2014; Tiggemann & Slater, 2013). Similarly, a positive relationship has been found between Instagram use and body dissatisfaction (Ahadzadeh et al., 2017). Instagram use has been found to be associated with self-objectification, mediated by internalizations and upward appearance comparisons (Fardouly, Willburger, & Vartanian, 2017). Research indicates more time spent on sites like Facebook or MySpace is related to heightened levels of body image concerns, involving internalization of the thin ideal, body surveillance, appearance comparison, drive for thinness, and body dissatisfaction compared to other types of Internet use among undergraduate females (Cohen & Blaszczynski, 2015; Strubel, Petrie, & Pookulangara, 2016; Tiggemann & Miller, 2010; Tiggemann & Slater, 2013). Interestingly, studies have found having a large social network on Facebook may relate to body image issues. Tiggeman and Slater (2013) found having more friends was significantly related to greater internalization of thin ideals, body

surveillance and eating restrictions. Perhaps having more friends increases exposure to the number of idealized images, and having a larger audience may increase pressure to conform to beauty standards.

Other studies have examined body image related to types of activities on social media. For example, findings suggest that the extent to which users engaged in photo activities (i.e., viewing, commenting, posting and sharing photos) on Facebook, rather than total time spent on the site, was significantly correlated with body image disturbance (Kim & Chock, 2015; Meier & Gray, 2014). Additionally, Instagram photo-based activities (i.e., browsing, viewing, commenting, liking and tagging others' photos) positively predicted drive for thinness and body dissatisfaction through the mediating variable of appearance-related comparisons (Hendrickse, Arpan, Clayton & Ridgway, 2017). Another study found that Instagram users report more body image concerns than Facebook users, and when Instagram users follow appearance-based accounts (e.g., celebrities, models, and fitness) as opposed to non-appearance accounts (e.g., travel), they report even more body image concerns (Cohen, Newton-John, & Slater, 2017).

Although less research has been conducted experimentally, what has been done suggests social media may be detrimental to body image. Fardouly et al. (2015) randomly assigned 112 female undergraduate participants to browse Facebook account, magazine website, or an appearance-neutral website to examine the effects of Facebook on their mood and body image. Females who spent the most time on Facebook reported more negative moods and body dissatisfaction than those who spent time on other websites. Furthermore, women high in appearance comparisons

reported more facial, hair, and skin-related concerns after Facebook exposure than exposure to the control website.

The results of an online experimental study examined how self-objectification differs based on whether users have an audience (De Vries & Peter, 2013). They found participants in the audience condition self-objectified more than participants in the no audience condition. Another study exposed 91 female and male undergraduate participants to either unattractive or attractive virtual profiles (Haferkamp & Krämer, 2011). Participants who viewed physically attractive profile photographs reported less positive emotional states and less body satisfaction than those who viewed unattractive profiles. Similarly, Tiggemann and Zaccardo (2015) conducted a study exposing 130 female undergraduates to “fitspiration” images on Instagram, whereas the control group was exposed to neutral images. Participants who viewed fit images reported more negative mood and body dissatisfaction.

Although research has examined the impact of mainstream media on women’s body satisfaction, less is known about the impact social media plays. While research on social media and body image has gained increasing attention over the past several years, the majority of studies have been largely correlational and primarily focus on Myspace and Facebook, whereas more photo-based sites like Instagram have received less attention. Instagram warrants further investigation as it is increasing in popularity among younger populations.

The current study aimed to gain an increased understanding of how female college students use Instagram and why, and how using Instagram in different ways may influence their body image. Because the study is exploratory in nature, the

following research questions were used to guide the study: 1) How do female college students use Instagram and what features and/or functions (e.g., posting, liking, commenting and filtering) are most important to them when using Instagram? 2) Does using Instagram impact female college student's body image (body dissatisfaction, self-objectification, social comparison and internalizations of beauty ideals).

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Research Design**

A qualitative inductive research design was chosen as it is particularly important when researching an unknown phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Mayring, 2000). Qualitative techniques (e.g., interviews or observations) help to gain insight into participants' "voices" and perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). It is important to allow participants to express their experiences rather than limiting their responses to scales that don't always capture the whole picture, especially when few studies have focused on Instagram and body image.

The data was collected through focus groups. Focus groups were chosen because it is an effective method to gain insight and explore a new topic, especially when there is limited information available (Acocella, 2011; Byers & Wilcox, 1988). The flexible format of focus groups provides benefits, as it encourages discussion amongst women and allows the researcher to explore areas initiated by the group (Acocella, 2011). Focus groups are an efficient way to collect data, as researchers gain information from several people simultaneously (Beyea & Nicoll, 2000; Morrison, 1998).

## **Participants**

Once URI's Institutional Review Board granted approval, female undergraduate college students at the University of Rhode Island were recruited to take part in this study during their Spring Semester in February 2018. The only exclusionary criteria were age, gender, and social media use – that is, only females ages 18-24 who actively use Instagram were asked to participate. Convenience sampling was used to recruit participants. Participants were recruited on campus through a variety of methods (e.g., emailing potential participants, in-class announcements, online announcements and posting flyers at local hot spots) on campus. Participants were given consent forms before participation and made aware of discussion topics before consenting to participate.

## **Procedure**

When participants signed up for participation they were emailed the consent form. This was to allow adequate time to review the form before coming to participate. Before conducting the focus group each participant was given informed consent. Participants were made aware of being recorded during this time.

All focus groups were conducted by the first author, who was trained in running focus groups. Six focus groups were conducted on campus, ranging between two to six participants per group (See Table 1 for composition of each focus group). Focus groups were conducted in the researcher's psychology lab which allowed for a private setting. Seating was set in a circular fashion. The researcher aimed to create a comfortable environment, to encourage participants to talk freely amongst each other.

A moderator guided the discussion, while an assistant took notes on body language or anything unusual and/or noteworthy during the discussion, and helped co-facilitate. A second assistant helped pass out papers (e.g., consent form, and demographic sheet) and ensure the audio equipment was recording. Prior to data collection, all co-facilitators, note-takers, and transcribers were oriented to the interview procedures and discussed the questions.

Table 1. *Focus Groups*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Starting Time</b>	<b>Duration of Group (Minutes)</b>	<b># of Participants</b>	<b>Place</b>
2/21/18	10:00 AM	49	4	Researcher's Lab
2/22/18	11:00 AM	64	6	Researcher's Lab
2/22/18	3:00 PM	46	2	Researcher's Lab
2/26/18	11:00 AM	53	6	Researcher's Lab
2/28/18	11:00 AM	58	6	Researcher's Lab
3/1/18	11:00 AM	45	3	Researcher's Lab

A moderator used semi-structured interviews to help guide the focus groups (See Appendix A). Some of the questions included, “Do you ever look at the amount of likes/comments on your friend’s posts?” and “Do you think there are beauty standards for Instagram?” Each focus group lasted approximately 45-64 minutes. After all discussions had ended participants were asked to fill out a short demographic sheet before leaving. At the conclusion of the study participants were emailed a \$10 amazon gift card as a show of gratitude.

**Participant Characteristics**

The final sample consisted of 27 students age 18 – 22 ( $M = 20.00$ ,  $SD = 1.2$ ). The majority of the sample were Sophomores enrolled at the University of Rhode Island: 14.8% freshmen ( $n = 4$ ), 44% sophomores ( $n = 21$ ), 25.9% juniors ( $n = 7$ ), and 14.8% seniors ( $n = 4$ ). Regarding race and ethnicity, 63% ( $n = 17$ ) of participants were White, while 37% of the sample was ethnically diverse ( $n = 4$  Black or African American,  $n = 3$  Asian,  $n = 3$  Hispanic or Latino). Most participants (85.2%,  $n = 23$ ) were financially dependent on their parents, and despite this almost half (48.1%,  $n = 13$ ) worked between 2-30 hours a week outside of their home. On average participants came from a middle to upper class background, with family incomes ranging between \$76,900- 90,999 and \$91,000 – \$105, 999.

Participants' Instagram use was also assessed. On average, participants have had an Instagram account for six years, spend one to two hours daily on Instagram, and check their Instagram accounts every half hour to every few hours. Additionally, we asked participants to report their weekly use for Instagram and other types of known social media sites. Wide variability was noticed. Hours spent on Instagram ranged from 1-60 hours weekly ( $M = 11.9$ ,  $SD = 12.42$ ), Snapchat 1-84 hours weekly ( $M = 14.87$ ,  $SD = 20.24$ ), Facebook 0-20 hours weekly ( $M = 5.2$ ,  $SD = 9.65$ ), Twitter 0-30 hours weekly ( $M = 5.35$ ,  $SD = 8.58$ ), YouTube 0-20 hours weekly ( $M = 4.06$ ,  $SD = 5.20$ ), Pinterest 0-7 hours weekly ( $M = 1$ ,  $SD = 1.68$ ), Tumbler 0-5 hours weekly ( $M = 1$ ,  $SD = 1.93$ ) and none of the participants reported Myspace use.



## **Ethical Consideration**

Since college students are young adults, the researcher was aware they may be vulnerable to issues of coercion and violations of confidentiality. In addition, body image related issues are sensitive topics that require the researcher to be aware to not causing harm or distress during focus groups, including invasion of privacy and embarrassment. The researcher made sure to leave questions open ended to allow participants to answer freely and willingly. The researcher made sure not to push participants to answer questions. Additionally, in case participants experienced distress, each was given contact information to counseling services on campus. Counseling services hours were open during all hour's participation took place. No recognizable distress was noted during the focus groups.

To ensure confidentiality of participants was protected, all participants gave themselves a pseudonym before taking part in the discussion, and the groups took place in a private setting. Additionally, all transcribed tapes, notes, consent forms, and demographic sheets are secured in a locked cabinet in the researchers' office. The signed consent form is kept separately. The study records, including the audiotapes and written notes, will only be shared with a small number of colleagues who were approved by the Institutional Review Board for this role.

## **Trustworthiness**

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), establishing trustworthiness is an important responsibility of the researcher. A qualitative study is considered trustworthy when steps are taken to ensure participant's perspectives are authentically gathered and represented accurately (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). To achieve trustworthiness

four concepts must be considered - credibility, transferability, auditability, and confirmability (Lietz & Zayas, 2010).

Credibility refers to how well findings represent the meanings of participants and the intended focus of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To accomplish credibility, the researcher recruited a sample that was able to provide valuable insight regarding the research questions, being that female college students ages 18-24 years old with an active Instagram account were recruited. Additionally, findings were reported in an effort to represent the actual data. This was done by quoting participants. Furthermore, the study relied on data triangulation. Seven researchers were trained in coding and coded all documents, as well as reviewed the findings to ensure agreement existed.

Transferability resembles external validity; it refers to whether findings can be applied or transferred to other settings or groups (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). In an effort to address transferability, thick descriptions (i.e. detailed descriptions of the research and cultural, contextual-based factors, as well as characteristics of participants) were provided when reporting results (Lietz & Zayas, 2010).

Auditability refers to the degree the research procedures are well documented allowing someone outside the project to follow or critique the process. This takes into consideration the unstable and changing nature of qualitative research. To address this, the researcher created audit trails and engaged in peer debriefing (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). Audit trails included maintaining a detailed description of the research process from start to finish, as well as backing up all files, both the transcript and audio files. Peer debriefing involved consulting with colleagues (e.g., research assistants and

faculty mentors involved in the project) regarding research decisions and the process (Shenton, 2004). Additionally, a skilled qualitative researcher reviewed the transcripts and the interpretation of data.

Lastly, confirmability refers to whether findings are the product of participants and not the biases of the researcher (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). This was addressed using audit trails, triangulation, and reflexivity. Triangulation was accomplished through engaging with others to discuss coding and interpretations of meanings. Reflexivity involved the researcher reflecting on personal biases that could influence the research (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). Reflexivity was an active process of acknowledging biases, which at times involved the use of journaling and positioning oneself. Positioning involves examining how one's characteristics may influence the research (Berger, 2015). The researcher positions herself as a feminist researcher, who is highly empathetic. Because of her position, she had to often take herself out of the data to ensure participants experiences and voices were being heard and not her own.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

As the focus groups were completed, all audio was transcribed verbatim and then checked for accuracy. Interrater reliability or agreement between different coders was established using Cohen's kappa. Interrater reliability averaged a score at or above a kappa of .85. Once reliability was established, researchers and assistants coded the same transcripts independently and compared codes to ensure consistency. The primary researcher examined all coded documents. The primary researcher immersed herself in the data, where all data was examined carefully and then read and re-read thoroughly. Thus, all documents were coded twice, once by the primary researcher and once by a research assistant to ensure for consistency. Additionally, after all data was coded, participant's names in the transcribed documents were changed to protect participants' identity.

An inductive manifest content analysis was originally used to code the text, as a clarification process to identify frequencies, patterns, and themes. An inductive content analysis is a procedure used when there are no previous studies dealing with the phenomenon or when it is fragmented (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). Manifest analysis was used to describe the visible and obvious components of the content, as opposed to having to rely heavily on interpreting the underlying meaning (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). The goal of conducting the content analysis was to identify important aspects of the content, such as the features and functions of Instagram (e.g., posting, liking and commenting) most important to female college students and how these experiences influence females' body image.

This process began by coding specific text pertaining to participants' experiences with Instagram, as well as body image (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). A code was thought of as a label—that is, a name that most closely describes a meaning; typically, a meaning unit of analysis which typically consisted of a few words to a couple sentences long (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). Once documents were coded, codes were grouped together and organized into categories under headings to describe different aspects, similarities or differences of the content that belong together (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017; Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016). Therefore, a category is a group of codes related to each other through content or context.

Once categories were developed, the transcripts were then examined for themes to further address the research questions. Therefore, a thematic analysis was used to examine the research questions, as the researcher felt the categories provided some insight into the research focus but the themes that emerged were more pertinent to the study itself. Themes in the research are referred to as common recurring patterns or categories that occur across all the transcripts and cut across categories that are organized around central concepts (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Basically, a theme is a meaningful “essence” that runs through all the data. Additionally, subtheme exists ‘underneath’ a theme and shares the same central concept as the theme, but focuses on a specific element (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Direct quotes are presented below to support the descriptions.

The purpose of the analysis was to address the following research questions: 1) How do female college students use Instagram and what features and/or functions (e.g., posting, liking, commenting and filtering) are most important to them when using Instagram? 2) Does using Instagram impact female college student's body image (body dissatisfaction, self-objectification, social comparison and internalizations of beauty ideals)?

**Research question 1: How do female college students use Instagram and what features and/or functions (e.g., posting, liking, commenting and filtering) are most important to them when using Instagram?**

Twenty-two female participants reported using Instagram for following others. Participants frequently mentioned following fitness accounts (n = 9), as well as famous people/celebrity accounts (n=10). More than half the participants discussed using Instagram for photo related activities such as posting photos and viewing images of others. Other popular uses among participants were for posting images of self (n=9), and posting the best versions of them self (n=9). Additionally, when asked what types of photos they post, nine participants said they post photos with friends, nine when going out or doing something, five with family members, and five who said they post photos of nature/landscapes. (See Table 2 for more regarding participants Instagram use).

Table 2.

*Types of Instagram Use*

Responses	Frequency
• Following others	22
• Posting photos	18
• Viewing others	15
• Post photos of self	9
• To show off best self/attributes	9
• Stalking	4
• Viewing videos	4
• Viewing memes	4
• Creating fake life/false reality	4
• Sharing stories/moments	3
• Viewing make-up/hair tutorials	3
• Distraction/when bored	2
• Scrolling	2
• Seeing what's going on	1
• Daily life	1
• Different accounts for different people	1
• Posting something funny	1
• Messenger	1
• Viewing reality TV	1
• Writing/sharing captions	1
• Using explore page	1

Further analysis of the transcripts revealed three major themes: (1) effortful posting, (2) promotion of self, and (3) seeking engagement.

Effortful posting refers to the amount of effort individuals put when considering posting photos on Instagram. Most participants reported putting a lot of effort and thought when selecting photos of themselves to post on Instagram.

Additionally, nine participants mentioned it takes a long time and a lot of effort when

choosing what photos to post, and 11 said they felt the need to edit/filter their photos before posting. In fact, editing and filtering photos were discussed 71 times.

Moderator: So, if I asked you to post a photo right now, what would be the first steps to post an Instagram worthy photo.

Kayleigh: Go to visco and edit them.

Another commonly discussed topic among participants was seeking their friends' advice on their own photos before posting. Twelve of the participants said they often send multiple photos to friends to get help selecting the best photo to post.

Moderator: Do you guys send photos to your friends?

Sara: Yeah

June: Oh, all the time.

Ali: I always consult with someone before I post something.

Marie: The thing I do is probably so annoying with my friends. I'll text my friends separately and be like "which one do you like out of these five?"

Others mentioned selecting photos that belonged with the aesthetic color scheme of their Instagram page.

Kayleigh: it's all about aesthetics. I like all my pictures to match. I have the same filter on all of them and pleasing backgrounds.

Sara: Or even my friends post pictures where they're like I don't necessarily want to post this but it's going to add to the aesthetic of my Instagram. To which I usually don't follow that part of it but people will go with color schemes or...

Jessie: I do

Sara: Yeah, it's this thing where you post something to go with a color scheme, it just makes it as a whole when you go on the page, it's like wow this is pretty cool

Moderator: So, Jessie you mentioned you do that, can you tell me about that?

Jessie: yeah, so actually I've mimicked, it's so bad for me to say, but there's this girl I graduated from High school with that has a beautiful Instagram, gorgeous... Just everything. She lives in NY. And I'm just like oh I think I will follow that level of aesthetic with color. I think now Kim K does it as well, with her like... I don't know if you follow the Kardashian but it's like pink, rose gold right now something like that



Promotion of self refers to how participants felt they needed to present their best self. Fourteen participants mentioned selecting the most flattering photos to post, the ones where they looked their best or prettiest in.

Moderator: What types of images do you post of yourself?

Claire: Flattering ones.

Amber: Yeah only the good ones.

Erika: For me I try to post pictures I look nice in or that are funny in a positive way... not oh my god look at that chic, what a mess! Just funny, you want to put your best self or your perceived perception of yourself on Instagram.

Ali: I think everyone judges people. So, I think Instagram worthy is a stigma I guess because you want to look your best because everyone's talking about your pictures or people will screenshot it and say oh did you see so and so... So, stuff like that, I think that's why we're so heavily involved with filters and editing.

As well as, eight explained when posting group photos, they select the photo that they look the best in despite how other members in the photo look.

Marie: If it's me and another person I usually ignore what the other person looks like. I look good and they look bad, I'm posting it anyway because it's my Instagram... and there like why'd you post it of me, my eyes are closed and I'm like well...

Some participants discussed how promoting their best self-seemed to create a false presentation of reality.

June: They want everyone to look at them and be like oh look at me I'm so great, I'm doing so many things and they want to keep up with that image but it's not the same as when you actually meet them.

Ali: They've said things about Facebook and how I think Instagram's such a facade, such a fake life that we create.

Research Assistant: You've got to put your best foot forward?

Kara: Yeah, so if we're all thinking that, they probably do the same thing, so it's kind of like Instagram is a false reality almost...

Moderator: Like an ideal presentation?

Kara: Yeah, your identity you put, it might not be who you are but it's who you are online.

Lexy: It's like a false, false reality sort of...

One participant compared herself to her online version of herself, considering she may be perceived differently online than in real life.

Christina: It makes me more concerned about if the content I'm posting is cohesive with my self-image? Do people see me in real life how they see me when I have a filter on and I face tuned my pimple out... and I would never post a picture that I felt not confident on my "rinsta" because I'm like worried about someone saying something

Seeking engagement refers to participants wanting others on Instagram to interact with their content which often seemed to guide their Instagram use. Eleven of the participants mentioned posting at certain times to gain a desirable number of likes. Fourteen said they felt good when they received a lot of likes, and some even said when they do not receive enough likes they delete their photo or repost it later.

Moderator: Do you ever consider how others will respond to your photos?

Amber: Oh yes!

Claire: Absolutely!

Rose: Oh yeah, you want all the likes, so you post the one that you think is going to get the most.

Claire: At the right time too!

Rose: If I don't get like enough likes in like the first minute or two minutes, I delete it.

Ella: Delete it.

Research Assistant: What do you consider enough likes?

Rose: If I get like I would say like five in a minute and if I don't hit five within like one minute then I know like not everyone's on right now, so like deleting it you know and then retrying later.

Nikki: Yeah where you like repost it and try again...

Christina: If I don't get 1000 likes or as many likes as I got before, I feel depressed about myself, like great something's wrong... I did this wrong. I know it's really bad but still...

Ericka: So, if I post a picture and it doesn't typically do as well as my average, then it's upsetting but I'm going to keep it up there anyway because I have friends that are guys that like my photo and I'm not that thirsty and its okay, I know I'll bounce back the next one. So, I think that's a little extra.

Moderator: How do you feel when you don't get your average likes?

Ericka: It's a kind of a sad moment...

Participants also discussed how they've noticed individuals post captions, where captions explicitly ask for others to like and/or comment on their photos. One participant said they select the photo that they believe would get the most likes.

Kayleigh: I'll go on Instagram and there's captions like "get to 200 or I'll delete this later."

Marie: Oh yeah, "posting again because I didn't get enough likes the first time."

Leslie: I think people will have their account on public so then it is all those random bots that are following them so when they are getting all those likes from the bots, other regular people will see those likes and want to like it too.

Moderator: Do you ever consider when you're posting images, do you consider which will get the most likes, or how your audience will receive that image?

Christina: Yeah, one thing that I'm careful to do I don't like posting in the same shirt or dress more than once or in a row especially and I like to mix up the textures of the backs of the photos, if I do a brick wall next I'll do something else like outside, so I'm careful about that. From sort of an artistic perspective but I'm also concerned about what will get the most likes - I even have an app that tells me what time I have to post to get the most interactions.

Six participants mentioned having a preference for receiving comments on their photos compared to likes, whereas five other participants preferred receiving likes.

Participants explained that comments seemed more meaningful and personal, and those who preferred likes discussed having a number associated with their photo. For example:

Erika: It might be because typically people get more likes than comments, so it might be on a fundamental level, an expectation because I would imagine for most people you get more likes than comments, because that's the number that you see first because it's right under the image. You don't necessarily look for comments unless it's from a celebrity granted they have 50,000 comments. And then you say wow that's a lot of comments, but I feel like that's probably the number that I look for on anyone's post not even just mine. That's the number that you see...Oh because it's right there.

However, one individual discussed not caring about likes/comments, although the majority of participants cared enough to discuss "liking" and "commenting" at length; these functions were discussed 112 different times throughout the different groups.

**Research question 2: Does using Instagram impact female college students' body image (body dissatisfaction, self-objectification, social comparison and internalizations of beauty ideals)?**

Three major themes emerged in the analysis of the text to describe how students' Instagram use impacts body image: (1) Internalization of beauty standards (2) social comparison behavior and (3) self-objectification. Additionally, two subthemes emerged: racial/ethnic beauty standards, which was associated with internalization of beauty standards, and the second subtheme, body dissatisfaction related to both internalization of beauty standards and social comparison behaviors.

Internalization of beauty standards represents participants being aware of the beauty standards that exist on Instagram, and wanting to measure up to these standards. All of the participants felt there were beauty standards on Instagram. Participants described an array of beauty ideals they had witnessed online. The most common mentioned standard was having to wear a lot of make-up in photos or displaying good quality make-up (e.g., contours/sculpting, highlight, cheek bones). Another ideal described was having to be stick thin or skinny. Additionally, they described an hour glass shaped body (having a thin waist, big butt and larger thighs). They also described a newer ideal, a fitness ideal: a woman who is curvy (e.g., bigger/rounder butt), toned and has muscular but still somewhat thin legs.

Table 3.

*Beauty Standards*

Responses	Frequency
• A lot of makeup or good make-up	14
• Skinny	11
• Hour glass	15
• Fit	8
• Clear face, flawless skin	5
• Sorority standards (look presentable, letters, make up, etc.)	5
• Posing standards (asses out, legs popped)	4
• Abs/flat stomach	3
• Bigger breast/nice breast (push up bra)	1
• Curvy and thick for all races/ethnicities	3
• Curvy	3
• Beautiful/voluminous hair	3
• Thin legs	2
• White teeth	2
• Tiny waist	1
• Good body	1
• Perfect face	1
• No cellulite	1

The participants seemed to be internalizing these standards. Nine discussed looking at others' images and wishing they could look like the them. Others mentioned using photos of women they wished they could look like as a motivational tool to workout.

Moderator: How do you guys adjust to these standards?

Kayleigh: I try and workout. Lately I've been wanting to use weights and everything so I can build muscle. I feel like I go through phases of working out. The beginning of the semester I was devout every day for two weeks now I go maybe twice a week if I'm lucky.

Barbara: I think fitness pages motivate me. I want to look like this girl so bad that I am like I need to do these workouts like her so I like the fitness pages.

Kayla: Sometimes those fitness things make me feel like really stressed out and overwhelmed so I'll go look for it if I'm in the mood, but seeing it constantly, I'm like oh my gosh I should be going to the gym...

Additionally, participants discussed editing their photographs to measure up to these standards to create the perfect image. Some participants even discussed posing a certain way to adjust to beauty standards (e.g., making themselves look slimmer).

Moreover, individuals seemed to look up to those who get a lot of likes and discussed how they screen shot highly liked photos to mimic that photo.

Christina: Personally, I once photo shopped someone's belly button over my own because I felt like my bellybutton was so gross. I was like eh, so I have definitely been a slave to - I don't like Photoshop now but Freshman year, hell yeah I did!

Research Assistant: Is that related to beauty standards? So, what beauty standards do you see often?

Christina: Even when you see the girls that are curvaceous not the stick thin girls, I notice their belly buttons usually still look toned or they're like smooth and the cellulite is smooth...

Research Assistant: It's like perfection! If you have to Photoshop your belly button -

Christina: So, I feel like I definitely have seen that and been like my bellybutton is not like that and I don't like it... So, I have one of my friends put someone else's belly button on mine, like a stock photo.

Jessie: Or like I don't know, sometimes I'd say I try to work the angles. Sometimes. But sometimes, I try and look kind of skinnier I'd say because of celebrities trying to work the angles, so that's probably what I do.

Ali: My friend from [state]... we both followed the girl that I mentioned that's just so pretty, she will screenshot her pictures and try and mimic them. She'll send it to me and like, "we're going to the beach to take this picture." It happened a few weeks ago, she sent me this picture, from the seawall of that girl and she goes, "we need to recreate this." She wore the same exact clothes. I literally was like, "are you joking?"

June: My friends discuss it too. I'm going away for spring break and one of the girls was by the [monument], and she was like, "we have to do this exact same pose," and I'm like, "no, no. That's not going to happen. Why do you care so much about..."

Several of the participants highlighted the fact that there are a variety of different beauty standards that exist on social media, which allow them to explore different types of ideals. However, they also noted having so many standards does not necessarily make it easier for them as most of the images still seem unrealistic, even the ones that are supposed to promote body positivity.

Andrea: I feel like for me as a plus size girl I look at two standards. There's either like people are really skinny and fit or there's like this plus size model she's like super curvy, her stomach is flat, her thighs are huge, her butt is huge... it's like this is more me but not really me because I don't have a flat tummy, I don't have all that curves she's big but curvy as hell...like I'm in two different worlds right now, and I'm just like oh my god...

Valerie: I think... even the chubby girls like when you are chubby, you see the little rolls sometimes and you can see the little deposits of fat or whatever, and it's like when you look at girls who are chubby on Instagram... I feel like they smooth out their skin.

Moderator: Yeah, that's what a few people have brought up to me, it's that well they look at these photos but they're still perfect, they're curvy and bigger but they're perfect.

Valerie: Yea if you put on a bikini even if you have a little tummy, if you take out the cellulite you're still gonna look good, you're still gonna look really cute, but I got cellulite, my shits bumpy, so it's weird, it's like I look like her but also, I don't look like her...

Lacey: I feel like on Instagram it's different body goals, you have the natural beauties and the contoured and matte lipstick type people and then the curvy type people, fitness, so it really depends on who you follow because if you go on the explore page you can see the different types of beauty standards.

Moderator: So, it depends on what you're looking at?

Kara: That's where I see it all, I don't follow pages like that because it makes me feel bad about myself, but they're still there and all the guys I follow will like those pictures and I'm just like alright, well I don't want to see this. I should probably stop but I can't bring myself to stop.

Racial ethnic beauty standards surfaced as a subtheme in relation to the above theme of internalization of beauty standards. About half of the participants expressed that they believed different beauty standards for different races and ethnicities exist

online, however the other half did not discuss these standards or did not have an opinion.

Amber: It's like a different few... You'll either see like the strong black woman or like the sexy over promiscuous woman... or natural haired women.

Abby: Yeah because it is different than being blonde and white. I feel like if you are black your hair matters more than your outfit because that is what everyone kind of has their attention to... I don't know why, I just think a black girl's hair is always like "what does it look like" because it changes so often and there are points in between us changing it where it is not that cute. So, when you post I will not post a picture with my afro... it is just not going to happen. It just never looks as cute as in person. I feel like there is just a difference...

Moderator: Standard that focuses on hair, are there specific pages that showcase hairstyles or...?

Abby: Yeah, I follow a couple of my friends who do hair or makeup and it is always significantly different than well a white girl is not going to be like "oh look at my hair today", it is just straight and blonde, not different than yesterday. But a black girl will have an afro one day, braids the next and a weave two days later. If it is not perfect people will be like "eww look at her hair".

A couple of participants felt everyone experienced the same beauty standards despite race.

Tessa: For most women now, the ideal is to be curvy and thick. Even besides African American women, I feel like all races it's ideal to be thick.

Amanda: mmm, I feel like it's all the same beauty standard kind of. You're looked at differently according to your race.

Alternately, in one of the focus groups, three participants discussed how they observed white women mimicking beauty standards seen in other cultures.

Valerie: I mean as a woman of color I think that's the product of not being represented, so you make your own safe space you want to hype up people that look like you, people you don't see enough being hyped up on Instagram. But I also think that, white women on Instagram tend to do a lot of brown face, they sculpt their face to look more middle eastern, that's the look. Kim Kardashian does it, Kylie Jenner is notorious for doing that! There was a picture I think it's so funny, she has her hand up and you can see the difference in skin color to her foundation to her pale hand. On one hand,



we're not getting represented enough and you're low-key telling us we're ugly but on the other hand you kind of want to look like us.

Christina: It's kind of ironic too, and messed up that White women are exploiting the looks of people of color and they're the ones benefitting from it and being like that's the ideal, like you're just pulling traits and looks from people of color. I see it a lot on my twitter feed, people that I follow who are black and Dominican, they are always quote tweeting and being like oh okay that's my look, but alright you're white, whatever it's fine.

Moderator: So, it sounds like in that example whoever was tweeting had their own standard?

Christina: Yeah like they hate us but they want to look like us, okay...

Moderator: You guys have anything to add, or?

Anna: I guess I agree, white people sometimes they do that. Sometimes they take other ethnicities form of beauty and shape it on themselves, then when it's addressed they're like no we're not really doing that.

Social comparison behaviors surfaced as a theme, and refers to participants comparing self to others on Instagram, basing these evaluations on a variety of Instagram related functions/features (images, likes and comments). Through discussing with participants, it was clear several of them had engaged in social comparisons. In fact, 63 times comparisons of some type were mentioned. More than half of the participants mentioned comparing themselves to the ways others looked in their Instagram photos or on their accounts. Nine of the participants compared them self to fitness models, while some mentioned comparing themselves to the girls on barstool. Participants frequently referenced "Barstool," throughout the groups, which is a page that has a large audience with 818,000 follows (Instagram, 2018). The page's content consists of posted pictures of scantily-clad young college aged women who gain praise (e.g., likes and comments) from the individuals who follow the page. According to Barstool's creator, David Portnor, women nominate themselves to have their photos posted on the page (Reimer, 2016).

Kara: I feel like that's a really big thing especially on like, barstool rhody will do it but there are like, the hottest girls on college campuses there are all

of those sorts of pages and I'm just like well, I don't look like that so I'm just gonna move on now.

By contrast, some of the participants said they followed celebrity lifestyles but pointed out how they don't look like the celebrities. Ten of the participants mentioned comparing their amount of likes and comments to others and four mentioned comparing the number of followers they had with others.

Amber: On like on a more us type of scale instead of a celebrity scale like I know when I first came to college not when I first started Instagram and went on Instagram and I was like wow that girl gets 200 likes on her photos like wow I want that many likes and now I get 300—400 likes a photo but now they're girls who get like 700 likes per photo.

Ella: and you're competing.

Claire: Like how did they do that? I want to do that? How do I do that? and now I'm trying to figure out how I can get 700 likes.

Amber: I always notice how many people their following and how many people I'm following.

Claire: Yes, I always check yes.

Niki: Because like it has a lot to do with how many like followers they have like if you only have 200 people following you you're only going to get like 50 likes if you have like 2k people following you you'd easily have 200 people on one photo easily and in like an hour and you'll also see with famous people they'll post a picture and then in like 14 seconds later there's already 1895 likes.

Andrea: it amazes me how many people like Kim Kardashian and Cardi B it's like 4 million people and I'm like wow that's insane that's sooo many people like I know I'm probably not going to get that but it's like wow that's crazy you know that's just that's so many people are just focused on you it's an attention getter that's that made me see like what do I have to do?

Body dissatisfaction also emerged as a subtheme of the larger themes of internalization of beauty standards and social comparisons. Body dissatisfaction represents participants feeling poorly about their appearance and having negative evaluations about their bodies. Included in this subtheme was the need to change their appearance using filters or editing apps or desiring to look a different way, looking like others they've seen on Instagram. Participants expressed different types of body

dissatisfaction when using Instagram. Eleven participants felt the need to edit their face or body before posting their own images on their Instagram. Five participants discussed seeing others on Instagram and wanting to change aspects about their body.

Rose: Like one time I was sitting on the beach, my stomach wasn't looking how I wanted it to look for Instagram but the picture is like really cute, so I literally spent like two and half hours like trying to like smooth it out, and was like why did I do this? I didn't even look real... and deleted it.

Andrea: You feel like shit!

Rose: You do.

Andrea: There's like no other way to explain it... when it's like too much and you're like damn I really didn't need that... it's like why am I fitting those standards that we talked about. It's just reflection...

Lexy: I feel like you start changing aspects of yourself, so one of my insecurities is - it hasn't really been an insecurity but going on Instagram you see people with really plumper lips and I have small lips so I'm like, how am I gonna make them bigger? So it's in, big lips are in, plump lips are in. So, it's like, let's you know there are aspects of yourself you didn't really come to realize were insecurities.

Some participants expressed appearance discontent when considering posting photos. Two participants described viewing others Instagram made them feel insecure about their appearance. Additionally, two participants mentioned when not receiving enough likes it made them feel ugly; one participant expressed they felt satisfied with their body when receiving enough likes.

Anna: I completely agree because there are so many beautiful perfect girls on Instagram and it's just like why don't I look like that? The big thing about me and it's going to sound stupid but being pale, I feel like I always look pale.

Research Assistant: I'm the same way.

Anna: I feel like I'm just so pale, and I look pale in all my pictures, and I hate posting bathing suit pictures....and when I take a picture with my friends, I just won't post that, because I just hate it. My whole family is tan too, and I just got that gene somewhere in my Irish roots.

Valerie: I feel like this has been a problem that's been around forever, before social media took off it was the magazines, you know overly photo shopped celebrities and stuff like that. But I can see how it's more harmful because it's not celebrities doing it anymore, it's people who you perceive as

everyday people and it's like oh shit I thought it was only celebrities that looked like that, but I think it's everybody that looks like that so I'm the ugly one basically. I feel like after seeing so many pictures for a while you just, your audience starts nitpicking at you, it's like you're pretty but I saw a girl with a better belly button than you, so it's kind of like who cares it's a belly button, who examines it that closely, I think after seeing so many pictures people start nitpicking at you for the tiniest stuff.

Moderator: When you get a lot of likes on that photo versus not, do you think that makes you feel good about yourself?"

Andrea: I'm like damn I look good.

Self-objectification also surfaced as an overarching theme while examining transcripts, and seems inherent in many of the discussions. This refers to participants viewing themselves as objects, and considering others' evaluations when posting, ultimately portraying themselves to their audience, for their audience. Half of the participants considered how other users would respond to their photos (e.g., liking and commenting), which goes hand and hand with seeking engagement. Additionally, four participants intentionally posted at certain times to be seen and get the most likes. Three participants mentioned posting photos they believe would get the most likes, and another three explained Instagram was used to show themselves off. Some believed editing photos was important because looking good on Instagram seemed more important than what they looked like in real life. Three specifically said they edit their photos in certain ways to excite viewers because other users would like it more.

Moderator: Why do you post at the right time?

Kayla: You want more people to see it, and like it.

Barbara: Even if you're ugly in real life, if you're cute on Instagram, I feel like it doesn't matter.

June: I don't know I like a little contrast. I like color. I think in the winter especially I'm very pale so a little tan will excite viewers I guess, I don't know.

Some of the participants discussed “Barstool” and how young women wished to be on this site. They felt it was because these individuals wanted attention from a male audience, because men think the women on “Barstool” are hot. Others believed it was because having a big account like “Barstool” or having a lot of followers following you is confirmation that they look good.

Moderator: Why do you think these girls want to be on [Barstool] so bad?

Natalie: Recognition. I think I look pretty and look good in this photo and if a big account follows me and a ton of people from my school like it then I definitely look good.

Barbara: I think on barstool at least, I like it when my friends like my pictures, I don't really care if a lot of boys like my picture but on barstool I think girls do it for the guys likes.

Natalie: Yeah.

Barbara: So, like guys think they are hot.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

Instagram has grown in popularity in recent years, especially among younger women. Therefore, the first aim of this study was to investigate how female college students were using Instagram and what features/functions were most important to them. The findings highlight that they spend large quantities of time on Instagram, spending hours every day checking their accounts. They are often using Instagram to view others, following celebrities and fitness models, but also peers. This allows them continuous exposure to unrealistic images of those they follow. Moreover, the young women in the study also used Instagram to post their own photos, as well as showcase their best selves. By posting photos of themselves they are vulnerable to the feedback provided by their large audiences on Instagram, which may prove harmful depending on the type of feedback and the value individuals place on that feedback. This may be

why, when having a larger online audience, individuals are more careful of their content when posting and tend to consider others' perspectives regarding their content (De Vries & Peter, 2013).

For the most part, females in the study placed a great amount of value on feedback or engagement from their followers. This seemed to be one of their main reasons for posting. If not receiving enough likes, participants mentioned feeling upset or sad. Thus, "liking" and "commenting" was important to the participants in the study for a variety of reasons. Hong et al., (2012) suggests that the number of likes on each photo is associated with popularity and attractiveness; if a person's likes and comments are lower than others, this may prove psychologically harmful. The study lends support to this idea. Participants discussed likes as a source of validation, whereas others attributed the number of likes to popularity or success, for example:

Christina: I feel like I use it, so you can choose what you post and you can control people's perception of you online so I don't know when I'm feeling pretty down sometimes I'll post a selfie, or a lot of selfies, when you get likes it feels good, accomplished...

Moderator: Does it feel good because you gain some type of validation when you're on?

Christina: Yeah, it's sort of like you are being recognized.

Tessa: Some people want more likes and if they are more self-conscious I guess they want, I forget the word, they want to feel better self-consciously?

Moderator: A way of validating maybe?

Kayleigh: Yeah.

Amanda: I feel like a popularity thing too, that was more in high school that it really mattered. But I think it still kind of matters to people because they'll be like my last post says 84 likes and the post before that got 120, so that like doesn't make me look good.

Receiving likes and comments on photos seemed to related to participants feelings of self-worth - they felt good about themselves in variety of ways when receiving a desired number of likes. However, this also suggests that when not receiving enough

individuals may feel poorly about themselves. To my knowledge, research has not yet conducted experiments to explore this, and should further investigate the impact of receiving or not receiving likes.

The second aim of the study was to gain an understanding of how Instagram use impacts young women's body image. The results are consistent with studies showing that engaging with photo-related activities (e.g., browsing, viewing, commenting, liking and sharing photos) on Facebook (Kim & Chock, 2015; Meier & Gray, 2014), as well as on Instagram (Hendrickse et al., 2017) relates to body dissatisfaction. The findings give further insight into how engaging in photo-related activities is related to body dissatisfaction. When participants engage with photo-related activities they seem to internalize beauty standards and body ideals, as well as make comparisons with the photos they view.

The study highlights that social comparisons may be one of the mechanisms that influence young women online when exposed to a variety of thin-ideal images, as well as other beauty ideals that can negatively influence body image. Moreover, the findings suggest that women who engage in these appearance-related comparisons on Instagram might be particularly vulnerable to feeling dissatisfied with their appearance, as well as body size and shape. These findings give insight into why Cohen et al. (2017) found that Instagram users following more appearance-based accounts like celebrities and models tended to report more body image concerns. However, it's important to note that not only do we see these young women feeling badly after making appearance comparisons, it seems as though they express

inadequate feelings when comparing things such as their number of “likes,” “comments,” and “followers,” to their friends online.

When discussing comparisons to others, several of the participants often desired to look like “them,” but knew it wasn’t possible. This creates discrepancies between their ideal self and actual self. It is interesting how participants seemed to realize discrepancies existed between their presented self on their Instagram accounts, and their actual selves in real life. However, this is concerning, as research shows when individuals come to recognize these discrepancies, it tends to lead them to feel poorly about themselves and have body dissatisfaction (Ahadzadeh et al., 2017).

The findings add to the experimental research on Instagram, which found that exposure to fitspiration images leads to greater body dissatisfaction and negative mood among women, and that appearance comparisons to women in those images mediated the effect (Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2015). Thus, Instagram provides a place for unhealthy comparisons, which may result in individuals feeling poorly about themselves and different aspects of their appearance.

The findings further suggest that young women using Instagram often internalize the variety of beauty standards they are exposed to via photos seen on Instagram. This provides further insight into Tiggemann and Slater’s (2013) results, which found that Facebook, compared to other types of Internet use, lead to more internalizations of thin-ideal and body image concerns. Viewing photos on Instagram may enhance the salience of the societal beauty ideals, thereby increasing women’s internalization of these ideals (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012). For instance, all of the participants were able to discuss a variety of physical features and attributes



they've recognized in photos posted on Instagram they believed represent some type of beauty standard. Yet, many of the participants noted that these photos were likely to have been altered (e.g., edited or filtered) in some way and were aware of the harmful influences this could have. Despite participants being aware of viewing unrealistic beauty standards, it seemed as though they still felt pressure to adjust to the standards they are exposed to by altering their own photos or mimicking others, for example:

Jessica: Yeah, I was going to say as much as I think that as much as I use editing apps, I think they're harmful because you think all these people look perfect, that aren't actually perfect. And I never think that when I see a perfect girl, oh that picture must be edited. Because you don't know either, she could be perfect, she could be using those editing apps, you don't know. So, then everyone just looks perfect, so that....

In regards to beauty standards, it was interesting that several participants brought up and seemed frustrated while observing white women co-opting beauty standards from other racial ethnic groups seen on Instagram. Cultural appropriation is when a dominant group adopts or "borrows" styles from marginalized groups (Young, 2008). This can be harmful as appropriation can cause a loss of or distort meaning of elements of the culture and can be seen as disrespectful by members of the culture (Houska, 2015; Kjerstin, 2011). Studies have shown appropriation can take place in regard to fashion, symbols, language, music and more (Carman, 2017; Rogers, 2006). Little research has examined cultural appropriation of body ideals, specifically on social media sites. Considering the online world and social media provide easy access to an array of beauty standards, as well as other images related to cultural elements, it may increase the likelihood of different types of cultural appropriation. Future research is needed to further explore this possibility.

Additionally, participants described body positivity. According to the participants, body positivity represents a movement to promote oneself accepting their own skin. Participants described the women promoting body positivity on Instagram as plus-sized/bigger or more curvaceous. However, participants did not seem to find body positivity to be helpful as several felt many of the photos were unrealistic and edited. Further research should investigate the impact of body positivity has on young women, and if the movement is actually accomplishing what it was originally intended for.

Moreover, Instagram was found to be a source which encourages young women to self-objectify. Instagram is a photo-based site where users often post photos of themselves seeking approval and feedback from others. In an effort to gain validating feedback from others, the young women in this study seemed concerned with monitoring their appearance and posting photos that adhere to Instagram's beauty standards to gain approval/feedback from others. In essence, Instagram is a way to be seen by others and to display their best self through monitoring their self-image on Instagram. The participants did this in a variety of ways, such as editing before posting, posting their best photos, or taking down photos that did not receive enough engagement from others.

### **Limitations**

Conducting qualitative research was important to gain increased understanding of Instagram usage impacting female college students body image. Focus groups proved to be useful for this exploratory study as it allowed for peer interaction, which also seemed to increase the comfortability of the group setting. This encouraged

discussion amongst members to openly discuss the experiences they had with Instagram. However, the use of focus groups may have potential limitations. The group dynamics may influence whether individuals fully expressed their different perspectives. Moreover, the public nature of focus groups mean that opinions were expressed openly in front of strangers which may have been influenced by social desirability, hesitating to share things they thought embarrassing to share with the group.

Another limitation of the study was the majority of participants were White. A more ethnically diverse sample may have yielded different results regarding beauty standards pertaining specifically to different ethnicities and races. Half of the participants discussed awareness of difference in beauty standards based on race and ethnicity but many had trouble describing these differences. If the sample had been more diverse this may not have been an issue.

Although participation criteria was to include only females that had an active Instagram account, it would have been beneficial to recruit a more purposive sample. Participants varied in the amount they used Instagram and some placed more importance on Instagram use than others. Some of the participants mentioned they had taken a step back from Instagram, and did not use it that much. A more purposive study would have included only participants who use Instagram daily and for at least one hour a day, although this could increase selection bias and reduce generalizability.

### **Implications for future work**

The current study provides insights to guide future studies. Future research should consider more diverse populations. Additionally, longitudinal research and

experimental research should be conducted to understand causation and directional effects. It may be that women who are prone to social comparison and body dissatisfaction are more likely to spend time on sites like Instagram. Future studies should also account for and explore potential mediators (e.g., appearance schema, internalization of different types of beauty standards) and moderators (e.g., resilience, and other protective factors) of the relationship between Instagram use and body image. Additionally, more work should focus on specific types of sites or accounts participants mentioned being exposed to. Fitness accounts, and “Barstool,” were discussed frequently throughout the focus groups. More work should focus on body positivity accounts and specific types of images that showcase a variety of beauty ideals (e.g., fitness, hourglass, curvaceous), and examine the effects of exposure to these accounts.

Clinicians and educators should consider how engaging with photo based social media sites like Instagram might influence their clients’ and students’ internalization of beauty standards, appearance comparisons, evaluations of their bodies, and self-objectification. They might consider providing psychoeducation about the impact Instagram has on body image. It may also be useful to implement some form of social media literacy intervention to help educate younger individuals. Media literacy interventions have been used in the past to prevent detrimental effects caused by images in the media and improve body image in young women (Choma et al., 2007; Ridolfi & Vander Wal, 2008)

Additionally, some of the participants who did not seem as negatively impacted by Instagram showed self-acceptance and did not judge themselves as harshly as some of the other participants, for example:

Ericka: I would probably just say, you have to take Instagram with a grain of salt, definitely you want to work on your self-confidence and your self-worth because when you do that Instagram is just fun, then you get to just scroll and appreciate beautiful people! There are so many different beautiful people and you know what you're beautiful and that's okay, because your beauty doesn't impact how I feel about myself, our beauties are different, we can coexist. Definitely establish your own sense of self, and then these things are just fun, I love scrolling and seeing beautiful people.

Thus, helping clients and/or students to cope and engage in a variety of activities that promote self-compassion and self-acceptance may prove to be effective. Thus, more research is needed to determine what types of intervention strategies like media literacy programs or mindfulness techniques (e.g., practicing self-compassion) might reduce the negative effects on body image related to Instagram use.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study explored how young female college students Instagram use related to their body image experiences. Results of the study highlight that Instagram can play a negative role in young women's body image, suggesting that social media may play similar roles as mainstream media. Although research has just begun to focus on Instagram use and how it is linked to body image related issues such as appearance comparisons, internalization of beauty standards, body dissatisfaction as well as self-objectification, more efforts should be made towards prevention and intervention research. It's important that as use increases, so does our understanding of the effects of use, and of how to mitigate the negative effects caused by use, especially because young children are growing up with social media at their fingertips.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Interview Script:

Hello, my name is Nicole Baker I am a graduate student in the behavioral sciences program here at URI. Before I begin I want to thank you all for coming and your willingness to participate. We will be discussing your Instagram use, and how Instagram influences the ways you view and feel about your body.

**[Consent Form]**

I am passing out a hard copy of the consent form, which you've already had a chance to review through email. So, please look the form over, and if you have questions feel free to ask. If you agree to participate then please print your name, sign and date in the designated areas. Once you have done this, I will collect your hard copies and you can keep a copy for yourself.

**[Begin Focus Group]**

We are going to begin our discussion now. Before we begin I just want to inform you this is an informal setting and I want you to feel comfortable while discussing. There is no need to raise your hands; I want you to feel free to talk and to voice different perspectives. Also, please feel free to get up and stretch, or go to the bathroom whenever needed. I also want to let you know my role as the moderator is not to take part in the discussion, I am here to ask questions and facilitate the conversations.

#### **Below are a list of questions and probes**

1. How do you use Instagram?
2. What are your reasons for using Instagram?
3. How often do you post images of yourself?
  - a. What types of images do you post of yourself?
  - b. If I were to ask you to take a photo for Instagram right now, what would be your first step to ensure it is "Instagram worthy?"
    - i. Do you edit your photos using editing apps?
    - ii. What do you edit?
    - iii. Is it important to edit your photos?
  - c. How do you decide what images to post?
    - i. When posting images of yourself do you consider how other users will respond to those images?
    - ii. Does it matter if people like/comment on the images of yourself?
      1. Does it make you feel good about your appearance?
      2. Do you prefer likes vs. comments? (Is there a difference?)

- iii. Have you ever not received enough likes/comments?
      - 1. How did you react to this? Did you delete the image?
- 4. Do you ever look at the amount of likes/comments on your friend's posts?
  - a. What do you do when you see someone with a lot of likes?
- 5. What do you think of someone when they have a lot of followers?
- 6. Do you think there are beauty standards for Instagram?
  - a. If so, what are these standards?
- 7. Do you think there is different beauty standards for different ethnicities or races?
  - a. Where are these standards and how are they displayed?
    - i. Are there specific pages?
- 8. Do you meet these beauty standards?
- 9. Do you believe your friends meet these standards?
  - i. Is it hard to meet these standards? Are they realistic?
  - ii. Do you feel pressure to meet these standards?
- 10. Do you think photos on Instagram impact body image?
  - a. When/how are they harmful?
  - b. When/how are they helpful?
- 11. Do you think editing apps impact body image?
  - a. When/how are they harmful?
  - b. When/how are they helpful?
- 12. If you were in a room with other young women, is there anything else you would want to share about your experience using Instagram with them?

**[End Focus Group]**

Okay, we've reached the end of our discussion. I want to express how much I genuinely appreciate your participation and willingness to speak about the topics. If you have any questions please let me know. Also, if you have experienced any type of discomfort or stress, or become upset later and need to contact somebody, I have provided the number to professional counseling services on the consent form.

Thank you again, and I hope you all have a great rest of your semester.



## Appendix B

### Demographic Sheet

**Instructions:** Please answer each question as accurately as possible by circling the correct answer or writing in the spaces provided.

1. What is your current age? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your class status?
  - a) Freshman
  - b) Sophomore
  - c) Junior
  - d) Senior
  - e) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are you currently: (a) single (b) cohabitating with significant-other (c) married (d) divorced
4. Do you have any children? Yes No
  - a. *If yes*, how many? \_\_\_ and what ages? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you consider yourself (please select all that apply):
  - a) American Indian or Alaska Native
  - b) Asian
  - c) Black or African-American
  - d) Hispanic or Latino
  - e) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
  - f) White
  - g) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
6. How do you describe your gender identity?
  - a) Cisgender
  - b) Transgender
  - c) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Are you currently working outside of your home? Yes No
  - a. *If yes*, approximately how many hours per week do you work? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What is your current living situation? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) Live alone
  - b) Live with roommate(s)
  - c) Live with parents
  - d) Live with significant other
9. Do you support yourself financially or does someone else contribute to your living expenses?
  - (a) Financially Independent (b) Financially Dependent
  - a. *If dependent*: Who is contributing \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is your family's income? \_\_\_\_\_  
(a)\$0-\$15,999      (b)\$16-\$30,999      (c)\$31- \$45,999      (d)\$46-60,999

(e)61-75,999  
149,999 (f)>150,000

(f)\$76-\$90,999

(g)\$91-105,999

(h)106-

11. What is the highest level of education your mother has completed? (see categories below)

\_\_\_\_\_

12. What is the highest level of education your father has completed? (see categories below)

(a)- none (j)-grade-school (6th) (c)-middle-school (8th) (d)-high-school (12th)  
(e)-GED (f)-some college (g)-AA degree (h)-certificate  
program  
(i)-BA/BS degree (j)-MA/MS degree (k)-Doctoral

13. For how many years have you had an active Instagram account? \_\_\_\_\_

14. How long do you spend on Instagram in a typical day?

(a) 5 minutes or less (b) 15 minutes (c) 30 minutes (d) 1 hour  
(e) 2 hours (f) 4 hours (g) 5-7 hours (h) 8-10 hours  
(i) Over 10 hours

15. On a typical day how often do you check your Instagram account (even if you are logged on all day)?

(a) Not at all (b) Rarely – Less than once a day (c) Once a day (d) every  
few hours (e) every hour (f) every 30 minutes (g) every ten minutes  
(h) every two minutes

16. Please indicate how many hours per week spent on each of the sites listed below:

(a) Hours per **week** spent on site Facebook: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Hours per **week** spent on site Myspace: \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Hours per **week** spent on site Instagram: \_\_\_\_\_

(d) Hours per **week** spent on site Twitter: \_\_\_\_\_

(e) Hours per **week** spent on site Snapchat: \_\_\_\_\_

(f) Hours per **week** spent on site Tumblr: \_\_\_\_\_

(g) Hours per **week** spent on site Pinterest: \_\_\_\_\_

(h) Hours per **week** spent on site YouTube: \_\_\_\_\_

(i) Hours per **week** spent on other social media sites (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

**THE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF RHODE ISLAND**

**COLLEGE OF  
HEALTH SCIENCES**

**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**  
Charlee Hall, 142 Flegg Road, Kingston, RI 02881 USA p: 401.874.2193 f: 401.874.2157 web: [uri.edu/psychology](http://uri.edu/psychology)



### Consent Form for Focus Groups on Instagram Use

#### BACKGROUND

You are being invited to take part in a research study. To be eligible to participate you must be a female student enrolled at the University, ages 18-24 and have an Instagram account. Before you decide to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what will be involved. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask us if there is anything unclear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you want to volunteer to take part in this study. If you have more questions later, you can contact Nicole Baker or Juliana Breines from the Psychology Department at the University of Rhode Island (URI), the researchers responsible for this study (contact info below).

The purpose of the research study is to gain an understanding of college students' Instagram use, and how Instagram may influence body image. To help address this, you will be asked a series of questions pertaining to the ways you use Instagram, using the different features/functions of Instagram (e.g., liking, commenting, and posting photos) influence the ways you feel towards your body.

#### STUDY PROCEDURE

The study will take approximately 60 minutes to complete. You will be asked to take part in a focus group discussing your use of Instagram and how Instagram influences the ways you view and feel about your body. Additionally, you will be asked to complete a short demographic survey, which will include basic background information. The focus groups will be audio recorded with your permission; only the investigators will have access to the audio recordings. Audio recordings will be transcribed into a word document to be analyzed. Names will not be included in transcriptions. Your identity will not be disclosed during the focus groups, and you will be given pseudonyms during discussion to further protect your identity.

#### RISKS

The risks of this study are minimal. It is possible you may feel uncomfortable answering some questions when discussing aspects of Instagram and your body image; however, we do not expect most people to find this stressful. If upset or uncomfortable during any part of the focus group, please let the investigator know, and she will tell you about resources available to help.

#### BENEFITS

We cannot promise any direct benefit for taking part in the study. Possible benefits may include gaining awareness of your own perceptions and/or behaviors towards social media, specifically Instagram, as well as enjoyment of participating in the group discussion. Although we cannot guarantee benefits from participating, your taking part may help develop a better understanding of college students' use of Instagram.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

It is important for you to know that we place the utmost priority in maintaining the privacy of your answers during this interview. Your participation in this study will remain strictly anonymous and confidential. The only place your name will be listed is in a separate contact file for the sole purpose of setting up your appointment. Further, your signature on this consent form will be kept separate from your demographic survey. Finally, all information related to this study will

*The University of Rhode Island is an equal opportunity employer committed to community, equity, and diversity and to the principles of affirmative action.*



IRB NUMBER: HU1617-240  
IRB APPROVAL DATE: December 29, 2017  
IRB EXPIRATION DATE: July 31, 2018

be kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked office; only research investigators in this study will have access to the information collected.

**PERSON TO CONTACT**

If you have questions, complaints or concerns about this study, you can contact *Nicole Baker* at (401)-206-6099 or her faculty advisor, *Dr. Juliana Breines* at 617-875-8576. If you feel distressed after participation in this study and need to speak with someone, please call the *URI counseling centers* phone number at 401-874-2288.

**Institutional Review Board:** Contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant. Also, contact the IRB if you have questions, complaints or concerns which you do not feel you can discuss with the investigator. The University of Rhode Island IRB may be reached by phone at (401) 874-4328 or by e-mail at [researchintegrity@etal.uri.edu](mailto:researchintegrity@etal.uri.edu).

**Vice President for Research and Economic Development:** You may also contact the Vice President for Research and Economic Development by phone at (401) 874-4576.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Research studies include only people who choose to take part. Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to leave the focus group at any time. You can tell us that you don't want to be in this study. Deciding not to participate or choosing to leave the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits, and it will not harm your relationship with the investigators in this study.

**COSTS AND COMPENSATION TO PARTICIPANTS**

Each participant will be given a \$10 Amazon gift card after participating in the focus groups.

**CONSENT**

By signing this consent form, I confirm I have read and understood the information in this consent form and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I will be given a signed copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



IRB NUMBER: HU1617-240  
IRB APPROVAL DATE: December 29, 2017  
IRB EXPIRATION DATE: July 31, 2018

**AUDIO/VIDEO ADDENDUM TO THE CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH**

By signing this consent form, I confirm that I give my permission for *audio* recording(s) of me, to be used for the purposes listed above, and to be retained for 3 years, and then discarded. You may still participate in this study if you are not willing to be recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

THE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF RHODE ISLAND  
DIVISION OF RESEARCH  
AND ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT

IRB NUMBER: HU1617-240  
IRB APPROVAL DATE: December 29, 2017  
IRB EXPIRATION DATE: July 31, 2018

## Appendix D

THE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF RHODE ISLAND  
DIVISION OF RESEARCH  
AND ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT

OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY  
70 Lower College Road, Suite 002, Kingston, RI 02881 USA  
p: 401.874.4328 f: 401.874.4814 [web.uri.edu/researchecondev/office-of-research-integrity](http://web.uri.edu/researchecondev/office-of-research-integrity)



FWA: 00003132  
IRB: 00000599  
DATE: December 29, 2017  
  
TO: Juliana Breines, Ph.D.  
FROM: University of Rhode Island IRB  
  
STUDY TITLE: Focus Groups on College Students' Attitudes, Beliefs and Behaviors Towards Social Media Use  
IRB REFERENCE #: 1086642-4  
LOCAL REFERENCE #: HU1617-240  
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification  
  
ACTION: APPROVED  
EFFECTIVE DATE: December 29, 2017  
EXPIRATION DATE: July 31, 2018  
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review  
  
REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 6 and 7

The above referenced human subjects research project has been APPROVED by the University of Rhode Island Institutional Review Board (URI IRB). This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation 45 CFR 46 and 21 CFR 50 & 56. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

#### **INFORMED CONSENT**

The URI IRB requires the use of IRB STAMPED consent/assent documents only. Stamped documents are located on IRBNet under Board Documents. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

#### **MODIFICATIONS AND AMENDMENTS**

Changes to the protocol or its related stamped consent/assent documents must be approved by the URI IRB before implementation.

#### **RECORDKEEPING**

Federal regulations require all research records must be retained for a minimum of five years after the project ends.

#### **PROTOCOL EXPIRATION**

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office by July 31, 2018. Please use the CONTINUING REVIEW FORM for this procedure.

#### REPORTING

Unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or others, adverse events, and other problems must be reported to the IRB using the **Appendix S - Event Reporting** form. Additionally, all FDA and sponsor reporting requirements must be followed.

#### URI IRB RESEARCH POLICIES

All individuals engaged in human subjects research are responsible for the compliance with all applicable URI IRB policies (<http://web.uri.edu/researchcondev/office-of-research-integrity/human-subjects-protections/general-guidance/>). The Principal Investigator of the study is ultimately responsible for assuring all study team members review and adhere to applicable policies for the conduct of human subjects research.

If you have any general questions, please contact us by email at [researchintegrity@etal.uri.edu](mailto:researchintegrity@etal.uri.edu). For study related questions, please contact us via **project mail through IRBNet**. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.



Matthew J. Delmonico, PhD, MPH  
IRB Chair

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