

The Commodification of the Female Body on Instagram: A Systemic Review and Meta-Analysis

Shannon LaForme-Csordas

Abstract

Instagram is an application that is used by both the public and numerous corporations to strategically impact the mental wellbeing of many young females for capitalist gain. In Canada's modern capitalist culture, large corporations like Instagram use market interests to guide what users see and impact the products of which their audience can access. This small meta-analysis aims to determine how Instagram usage can fundamentally impact female youth on a global scale. These articles were gathered from a global review of the literature and included influential articles from Canada, Spain, and Australia. This research has shown that the commodification, or process of turning young females' bodies into commodities, significantly negatively impacts their wellbeing. Furthermore, it was discovered that social media algorithms, Instagram's Terms of Use, and the application's accessibility of its users all impact how females build a sense of identity today.

The Commodification of the Female Body on Instagram: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

Instagram is a growing platform that is often used by the public in conjunction with advertisement companies to commodify health and wellness. With a growing population of young females using Instagram as a regular social media platform, implications for users' postings and intentions are pivotal to investigate. A key research question that will be answered throughout this paper is how the commodification of stereotypes on the application "Instagram" impacts young females' mental health. Throughout this paper, I will explore the background of the commodification of health and the female body. The term 'commodification' being used here to describe when "something is treated or considered as a commodity (a product that can be bought and sold)" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). I will begin by investigating the role of a capitalist culture on guiding this process of commodification. Next, I will examine social media algorithms, Instagram's Terms of Use, and the role of postfeminism in further guiding this movement of commodification. Finally, I will be performing a small meta-analysis, examining five studies that look at the commodification or the general use of Instagram photographs as impacting young female's mental health levels.

Capitalist Advertising on Instagram

Capitalism is "an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of capital goods" and driven by the "free market" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The concept of market value is morphed in relation to what a company can receive for products that are deemed important by their consumers (Jahan & Mahmud, 2015). For example, an advertisement company will provide a large amount of money to an Instagram user who has a large following as the sheer market value of their endorsement is deemed worthier than other, smaller users. As a large

selling point of the application and something that drives its longevity, individual companies can sell their products through endorsements on Instagram. Applications such as Facebook, the company that owns Instagram, are considered to have a strong influence in the advertising industry. As such, advertisement companies can find ways to advertise their products to the masses using techniques driven by their consumers.

On average, it costs advertisers around \$0.70 per click on Instagram, double the cost of advertising on Facebook, to pay Instagram users to pose with or merely promote various products (Influencer Marketing, 2019). However, for a user who has a substantially higher following like Kylie Jenner with 112 million followers, an “estimated cost per sponsored post in 2018” was around 1 million dollars (Mejia, 2018). This application, although not holding a monopoly in the advertising industry, still widely provide users and advertiser’s opportunities to spread morphed concepts of what the female body should look like. Specifically, suggesting idealizations of what women should look like, act like, dress like, and what products they should purchase in order to promote these idealisms.

Commodification of Health and The Female Body

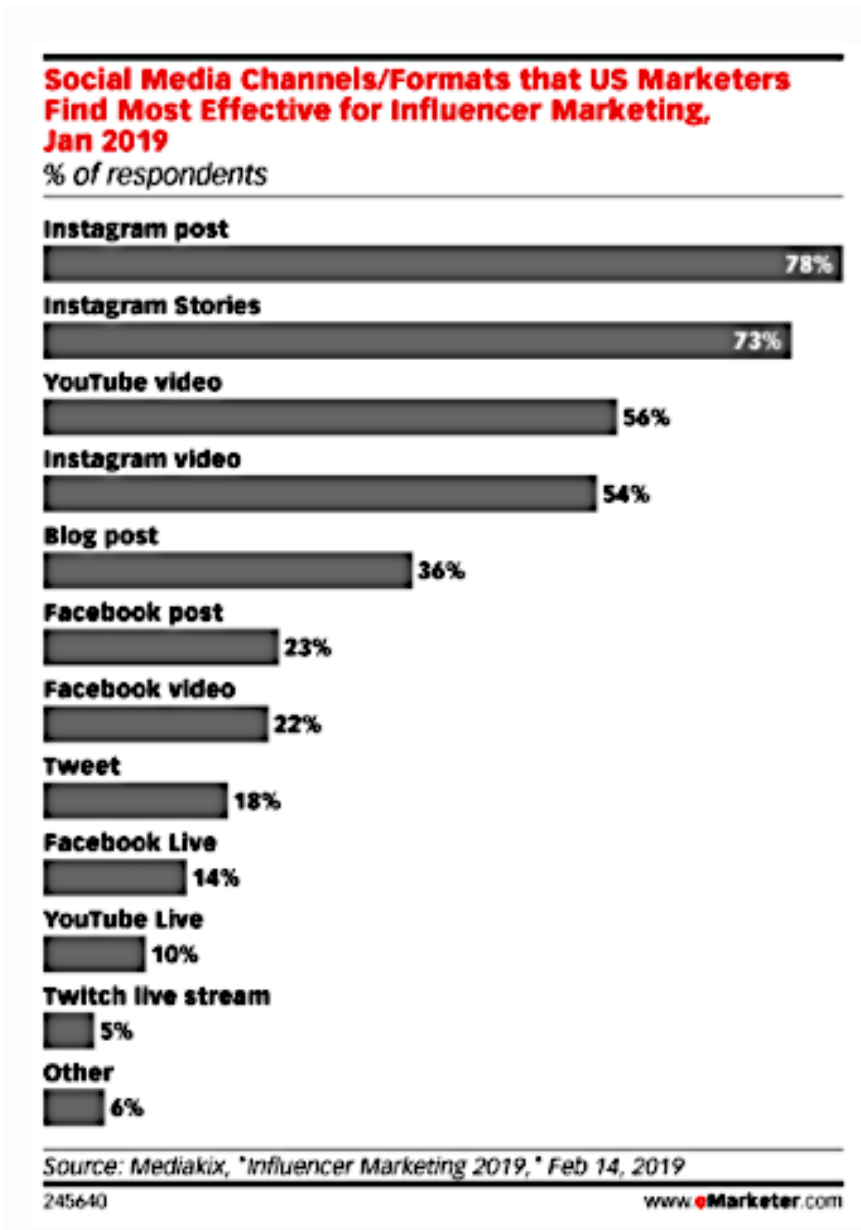
Companies can ultimately make large amounts of money off of idealizing often unrealistic, specific female bodies and promoting products through advertisements that are in line with these glorified images. In 2003, as cited in Coccodrilli (n.d.), a study by the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders shows that “the typical body type portrayed in advertising is only naturally possessed by 5% of American females.” The stereotypes that women often face to look a certain way, to buy certain products, and to buy into a specific lifestyle are perpetuated well into the twenty-first century. Although body positive

movements online may work to idealize all body types, the media industry still holds an exclusive criterion of thinness. Namely, “twenty years ago, models weighed, on average, 8% less than average American women. By now, they weigh 23% less. Most models now have a weight that is considered clinically anorexic. Even the definition of “plus size” has begun to shrink” (Rehabs, n.d.). This is an extremely important statistic as it impacts how and why advertisers decide to advertise to certain consumers.

In a study (Figure 1) by Influencer Marketing (2019), significant data representation demonstrated that marketing on Instagram can be up to 15 times more effective than other leading social media networks. More specifically, “as of 2019, Instagram has over 1 billion monthly users on its platform, and approximately 71% of U.S. businesses are using this medium for advertising and partnerships” (Roots, 2019). This process is streamlined through advancements in the application, such as a direct transfer to the company’s website. Checkout features are built directly into the application itself to enhance consumer interaction. It is evident through statistical tracking that advertising on Instagram is powerful and has dramatically altered how, when, and where consumers take in advertisements. A large industry within this framework is the subsection of advertisements towards health and wellness. Ultimately, studies have demonstrated that there is significant commercial gain in the commodification of health and wellness, by ways of getting Instagram users to promote health and wellness type products (Influencer Marketing, 2019). As well as generalizing and normalizing the process of women feeling dissatisfied and discontented with their existing bodies. Researchers at CNN investigated how unhealthy idealizations of fad diets and unattainable beauty ideals are becoming increasingly accessible (National Eating Disorders Association, 2019). The author notes that it is

Figure 1

69% of a brand's influencer budget goes to Instagram creators, on average



Note: This figure was produced by Cooper in 2020.

not the mere viewing of the images that impact mental health levels negatively but rather this in conjunction with the pressures to also participate in producing these ideals by encouraging consumers to also post photos and purchase products along the way (National Eating Disorders Association, 2019).

The term “self-care” has seemingly taken on a new life in recent years. Some attribute this new raise in self-care to the 2016 U.S. presidential elections, various controversial movements, as well as simply daily stress (Megargee, 2018). Regardless of its origins, this self-care movement brings along with it many products and commodities; such as the purchases of face masks, teas, workout programs, subscription accounts, food, etc. Along with this self-care movement comes various other movements that surround the general concept of body positivity or body inspiration; such as #BoPo, a short form for body positivity, and #fitspiration, a combination of the words fit and inspiration. These types of self-care products, that are largely in part advertised towards younger consumers, perpetuate stereotypes of what young females should be doing in their free time (Chisholm, 2013). Advertising techniques are not unique to the online social media world and stereotypes in advertisements have been recognizable since the beginning of advertising itself. However, with so many users interacting daily with Instagram advertisements, these messages are more readily available and harder to ignore. Later in this paper, I will analyze five studies to determine how much of an impact these consistent messages actually have on young female’s mental wellbeing.

Social Media Algorithms

Social Media Algorithms are systematic processes and calculations based on specific content interaction on an application that decides what a user is going to be exposed to on the application (Digital Marketing Institute, 2019). These algorithms are used widely throughout

various social media platforms and are just a recent addition to the Instagram application as of July 2016 (hopper, n.d.). Prior to the integration of this feature, the application simply showed its users accounts they followed chronologically. However, now the algorithm bases its available content on, but is not limited to, complex calculations of users' perceived interest, the recency of posts, and the user's relationship to their followers (hopper, n.d.). Therefore, even for users with a very high following, it is not guaranteed that all of their followers will see their content. For users or companies that want a large audience to continue seeing their content, and ultimately their advertisements, a very strategic "Instagram Strategy in order to maximise potential engagement on content" is used (hopper, n.d.).

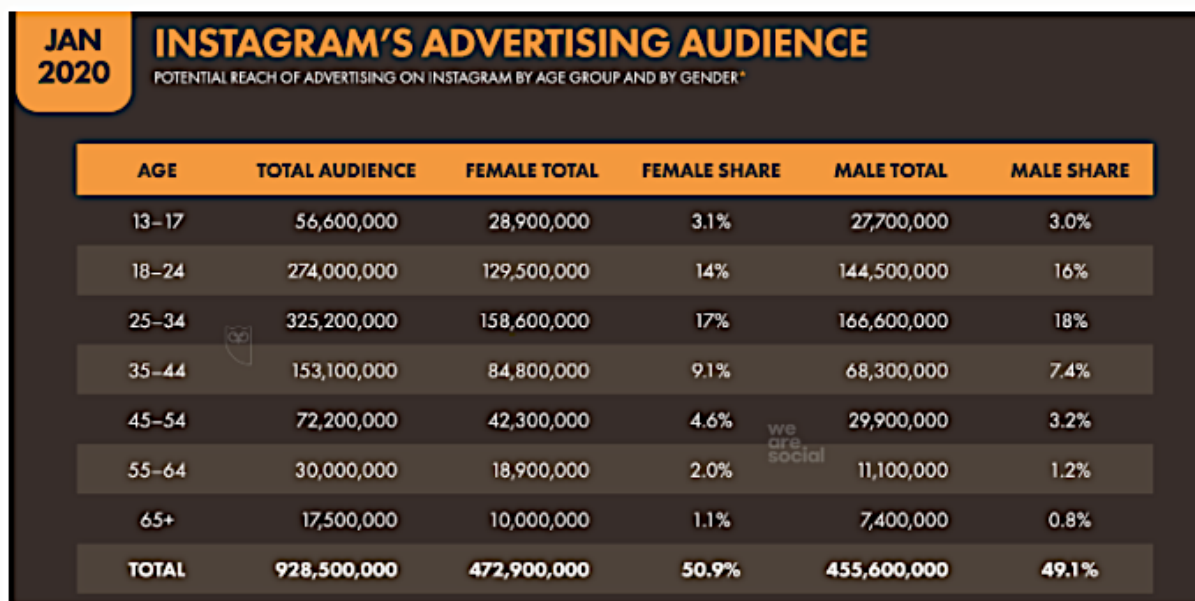
Although there is not a specific set of steps to follow when interacting with the Instagram algorithm for users and advertisers, when certain movements become popularized in the media they are able to thrive on these opportunities. As body positivity and fit inspiration movements have exponentially grown in recent years, advertisers are forced to cater to this algorithm to sell their products to make a profit. This not only guides what everyday users are viewing, but it is also used as a social value building tool for young females on which to build their identities and understand the world around them. However, not all advertisers' intentions are in the direct favour of their consumers and are often in line with capitalistic values that drive market success. Although the demographics of Instagram's users are almost a 1 to 1 ratio of female to male users, these algorithms still favour advertising to traditionally female roles (Figure 2).

Transparency in Social Media: Instagram's Terms of Use

Although Instagram has transformed itself as a social media platform since its rise in 2010, its Terms of Use page has not been updated since January 19, 2013. Of their 28 Terms of Use conditions, only 1 relates to advertising rights.

Figure 2

928.5 million people can be reached by ads on Instagram



Note: This figure was produced by Cooper in 2020.

Some of the Instagram Services are supported by advertising revenue and may display advertisements and promotions, and you hereby agree that Instagram may place such advertising and promotions on the Instagram Services or on, about, or in conjunction with your Content. The manner, mode and extent of such advertising and promotions are subject to change without specific notice to you (Instagram, 2013).

Ultimately, there are no terms on their website that assert that the advertisement must be safe or contain truthful and honest information. With advertising agencies now using this application to further their capitalist interests, these out of date Terms of Use leave room for companies to spread disinformation. Although, even with specific rules being blatantly written into Instagram's Terms of Use, it is evident that the website is not being policed in terms of these apparent rules. For example, the second Terms of Use are that one "may not post nude, partially

nude, or sexually suggestive photos” (Instagram, 2013). Users such as @trishapaytas, @raquelsavage, @evyan.whitney, and many others consistently break this Terms of Use agreement with no repercussions from the application’s authorities (Dawsey, 2019). On the contrary, these accounts thrive off of these types of postings. Ultimately, if Instagram is not policing their basic Terms of Use, there is very little holding them accountable for advertisers that take advantage of the Instagram algorithm to sell their products to young, impressionable females.

Although Instagram does not have the capability to always strictly police their advertisements, there are existing regulatory bodies that do work to enact standards in the advertising industry in social media. For example, in the United Kingdom, the Advertising Standards Authority regulates online postings to make sure that users stick to advertising rules (Advertising Standards Authority, 2020). The main advertising rule that they advocate for is transparency that an advertisement is taking place when a promoter is being paid and has editorial control over the final product (Advertising Standards Authority, 2020). Users must use identifiers, such as #ad, short for advertisement, or #spon, short for sponsored, to disclose their connections with a company. Examples of this can be seen in Figure 3, Figure 4, Figure 5 and Figure 6. Although this disclosure process is socially and legally monitored, there is no guarantee that the Instagram user is an authentic user of the promoted product. Users may just be encouraging their followers to buy into the idea of a product because of advertising companies thriving off of their large following. This can be detrimental for many young females, as they may attempt to purchase products to fit into a certain standard of beauty while being fed possible disinformation from deceptive companies.

Hashtags (#) are a commonly used linking mechanism used on social media. When a social media user wants to search out photographs or posts related to food, for example, they could type in #food and are brought to a page where all of these items are categorized. This is a



Figure 3: Actress Shay Mitchell
(Pretty Little Liars)
advertising perfume.



Figure 4: Actress Angelina
Pivarnick (Jersey Shore) advertising
Boom Bod product.

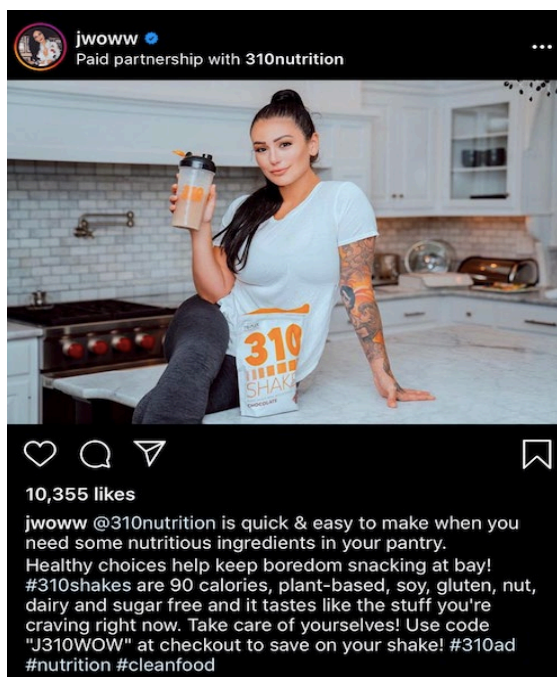


Figure 5: Actress Jennifer Farley (Jersey Shore) advertising 310 Shakes.



Figure 6: Actress Nicole Polizzi (Jersey Shore) advertising Flat Tummy Co. shakes.

seemingly simple but also very powerful tool. It is extremely relevant when it comes to advertisers posting material online. Interestingly, Instagram banned the use of the hashtag #thinspiration, a combination of the words thin and inspiration, as it was “dedicated to glorifying, promoting, or encouraging self-harm.” The decision follows similar proclamations from other social networking sites, such as Pinterest and Tumblr” (Judkis, 2012). Various other hashtags that encouraged eating disorders were also banned on the website which include “probulimia” and “proanorexia” (Judkis, 2012). These alterations occurred as a result of public scrutiny. Here, the public is used as a tool for accountability, as they can push ‘report’ on a photograph and have it reviewed by Instagram representatives. As of June, 2020, there were

many hashtags that received a great following on Instagram's feeds. Including, but certainly not limited to, #bopo (1,132,545 posts), #fitspiration (18,663,125 posts), #fitstagram (4,298,114 posts), #getstrong (4,312,107 posts), #ad (12,450,924 posts), and many more. These hashtags can be used by companies to build a larger following and makes it easier for users to find content related to what they are interested in, often making this material more accessible for young populations to navigate.

Post-feminism, the 'Girl Code' and the Teenage Advocate

In recent years, the push for more diversity in company's advertisements has significantly increased as "diversity is simply good for business" (Ryan, 2019). Through the buying, selling and representation of advertisements by everyday users, the postfeminist structure is viewed as providing women with the freedom to advocate for their own wants and needs. The movement around postfeminism is brought to light as traditional feminist movements are viewed as suppressing females' freedoms in the marketplace and preventing liberation. Though the push for more inclusivity and diversity for advertisements has significantly increased, the representation of a specific body type is still quite prevalent in the users that partner with larger companies. It is not clear if companies are actually supportive of diversity and inclusivity, or if they are simply ensuring that these things are present within their advertisements to make sure they are reaching a specific audience that appreciate this type of representation.

William Pollack (1998) described a 'Boy Code' theory that is "a set of rules and expectations that come from outdated and highly dysfunctional gender stereotypes" (p. 1). This code has been created through societal standards and the suppression of young boys' social behaviours by adults. This dynamic is an important indication that gender is socially constructed and socially maintained. It is also important in the discussion of Instagram stereotype's impact

on young female's mental health. Similar to how society has formed an identifiable 'Boy Code' for young boys, so too can be said for the formation of a 'Girl Code' for young girls. Unlike the Boy Code celebrating elements of males being "stoic, stable and independent," females could be generalized under these stereotypes as in need of outward attention and public gratification (Pollack, 1998, p. 1). These standards come with societal policing and standardizing especially on applications like Instagram where extremely popular users who earn a high amount of money fit within these socially expected norms.

Both males and females alike wear their gendered roles on a continuum whereby they adhere to varying degrees of conformity on socially attributed traits. A trend on YouTube in recent years is to directly and overtly address these stereotypes and become a social advocate for other females that struggle with gender conformity and the "perfect body." For example, YouTubers such as Sierra Schultzzie and Carrie Dayton have created a following by promoting body positivity in a direct reaction to unrealistic standards of beauty as portrayed on apps like Instagram. Unfortunately, even though many of these social advocates post uplifting, body positive focused content, advertising agencies are still manipulating their messages to fit their agendas. Sierra Schultzzie, for example, posted a video articulating her frustrations. Voicing that "it hurts my heart to think that there could be someone watching this video right now who's in the same toxic head space that I used to be in, but is here watching my videos to try and accept themselves and escape that self-loathing diet culture loop, could be strategically manipulated by one of these companies using my image to do it" (Sierra Schultzzie, 2020, 13:42). This video was sparked when Schultzzie's personal online content was being used in various advertisements without her permission. By seeing stereotypes exemplified by popular advertisements on Instagram, this encourages a type of self-fulfilling prophecy in which an individual is expected to

act a certain way. Young females should be educated on these practices to better prepare themselves to navigate these complex digital spaces.

Current Literature

There is a growing body of literature on the effects of Instagram on young female's mental health and wellbeing. This was not the case just four years ago and the academic community is becoming reflective of the need for Instagram to be evaluated as a powerful, interactive influencing service. Much of the current literature and studies around Instagram's influence is meant to draw a social connection between wellness and the application. There is currently little information on the actual psychological impacts from a medical perspective. Currently, it is largely based on information from a sociological evaluation. There is also very little research or suggestions at the moment on what differences can or should be made to reflect young students' needs. It is evident that the literature has room to expand to suggest resources or strategies to ensure that young females whom are interacting with Instagram's advertisements are not being negatively impacted.

Methodology

A meta-analysis is a comprehensive collection and evaluation of multiple sources or studies on the same general topic (Brown, 1987). Through the collection of studies that focus in on a similar subject, this research may be conducted on different continents or at the very least using different subject groups. A more wide-ranging, well-rounded conclusion can be drawn from the research. My aim is to use this meta-analysis to clarify findings, come to a clearer conclusion, and avoid possible outliers in data representations or false negative or positive results (Brown, 1987). I hope to therefore be able to present a well-founded suggestion for future

research and assert room for a possible curricular shift in Ontario's Health and Physical Education Curriculum.

For this meta-analysis, databases were searched for publications from 2010 to 2020. This is the time frame in which the application Instagram has been used publicly for advertising purposes. The articles were screened by keywords including the following: Instagram, commodification, health and wellness, females, postfeminism, capitalism, gender, social media, etc. The literature was screened for duplicates and appropriateness that were in line with inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion and exclusion criteria include studies that focused specifically on the use of the application Instagram versus broader studies looking at social media as a whole. Studies are included that connect Instagram and capitalist interests. The studies are focused on young, female participants; a demographic that is typically targeted through the commodification of bodies on Instagram. Finally, studies that also evaluate and compare various images found on accounts will also be included in these criteria. In order to generalize data, clarify variance in underlying population effects, and synthesize smaller population studies on this topic, I will examine currently available studies that can help to shed light on this issue. The following meta-analysis was conducted involving studies that were most relevant to these criteria and able to be analyzed within the scope and duration of this study.

Summaries/Context of the Articles

The Commodification of the Body Positive Movement on Instagram

The first study examined in this meta-analysis was developed by Jessica Cwynar-Horta. The article was written in Ontario, Canada in 2016. This is important as this is the year in which Instagram's advertising algorithms came into effect. The author used qualitative, Arts-Based Research methods in this study by collecting photographs from 5 popular body positive

movements celebrating Instagram accounts. Each of these accounts had at least 50,000 followers and posted at least once a week (Cwynar-Horta, 2016, p. 37).

Postfeminist Biopedagogies of Instagram: Young Women Learning about Bodies, Health and Fitness

The second study was written by Maria José Camacho-Miñano, Sarah MacIsaac, and Emma Rich. This article was produced in Spain in the year 2019. The location is relevant to identify as it could suggest to what extent young females are impacted by Instagram's commodified advertisements outside of North America. These authors also used a two-phase qualitative research approach by conducting a two-phase interview process. The first set of interviews involved "four girls (aged 14-16 years)" and were used to develop and guide the research process (Camacho-Miñano et al., 2019, p. 8). During the second phase, qualitative interviews were held with 37 females aged 15-17 on the topic of female fitness content on Instagram (ibid.). The participants were asked to view common body focused Instagram posts and share their thoughts on how it made them feel.

#BoPo on Instagram: An experimental investigation of the effects of viewing body positive content on young women's mood and body image

The third study was written by Rachel Cohen, Jasmine Fardouly, Toby Newton-John, and Amy Slater. This study was conducted in Australia in 2019. This is significant as it extends the research pool outside of North America and Europe to the Oceania. During this qualitative study, 195 young women, between the ages of 18 and 30, were interviewed. Alternatively, this is a quantitative study that evaluated positive moods, negative moods, body satisfaction, body appreciation as well as self-objectification.

Empowerment, Control & The Female Body: Is Instagram a Platform for Change?

The next study is written by Natalie Rassi, a Master's student from the University of Ottawa, Ontario in 2016. The approach for this study is largely qualitative using “a qualitative content analysis of images and text” that are publicly available on Instagram (Rassi. 2016, p. 25). Coding processes were used to identify the data and the general themes as it related to the overall research.

Exploring the Relationship Between Frequency of Instagram Use, Exposure to Idealized Images, and Psychological Well-Being in Women

The final study was conducted by Mary Sherlock and Danielle L. Wagstaff. The study took place at Federation University in Australia in 2019. The participants for the study were 129 women between the ages of 18 and 35 years old (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2019). The study was mainly quantitative in nature, focusing on the measurable effects of image exposure on participants' well-being. The women were asked to look at a set of 10 images either on the topic on “#Beauty (beauty), #Fitspo (fitness), or #Travel (travel)” (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2019, p. 485).

Results and General Themes

The process of thematic coding analysis involves “searching for themes and patterns” in sets of data (Glesne, 2016, p. 184). To uncover general themes throughout this meta-analysis, I have extracted massive data points from each of the studies to look for overlaps in the findings. The following is a breakdown of the general themes that emerged from the cross-analysis.

Overall, throughout the studies that I have analyzed in this meta-analysis, the findings were fairly consistent across the board. The general themes that have emerged from the data include that body positive posts have the potential to have a positive impact on young female's mental

health (Cohen et al., 2019). Fitness and weight loss accounts generally have a negative impact on mental health (Rassi, 2016; Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2019; José Camacho-Miñano et al., 2019). The duration in which a young female is exposed to Instagram content directly correlates to depression and anxiety (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2019). Finally, feminist idealizations of the “perfect body” drive mental health issues as it relates to Instagram use (Rassi, 2016; José Camacho-Miñano et al., 2019). There did not seem to be many findings within this sample size that differed dramatically in terms of general themes discovered. However, the only variance in conclusions found across the studies included how the body positive in particular movement impacts mental health.

The Potential of Body Positive Accounts

Overall, the data shows that body positive accounts on Instagram if and only if they are used to celebrate diversity, encourage followers to be supportive of who they are and of those around them, and are not afraid to speak out about social conformity (Cohen, Fardouly, Newton-John, & Slater, 2019). These elements can help to increase young female’s mental health. Some popular examples of these body positive influencers include, but are not limited to, @bodyposipanda, @nerdabouttown, @danaemercer and @tess.daly. The study by Cohen, Fardouly, Newton-John and Slater (2019) found that body positive content on Instagram “may improve positive mood, body satisfaction, and body appreciation” (p. 1559). Body positive accounts may have a negative impact if there is a push towards personal self-objectification. Another popular trend on Instagram is showing transformations with young females developing body-building type physiques (Camacho-Minano & MacIsaac, 2019). These seemingly body positive accounts are often met with backlash for “contradiction[s] between muscularity and femininity” (Camacho-Minano & MacIsaac, 2019, p. 14). Young females may increase their

personal outlook when viewing body positive content. Yet the result may be to develop a more critical self-perception and a more negative perception of females of which they do not instantly approve. Although this positive association came to light throughout the studies, so too did the fact that when many of these body positive influencers begin to build a larger following, they often begin to alter their photographs (Cwynar-Horta, 2016). The process of photo editing and applying filters to their photographs maintains their spot within the Instagram social algorithm and encourages endorsement deals with companies.

The Negative Impact of Fitness and Weight Loss Accounts

Overwhelmingly, the data showed that although body positive posts can increase mental health levels of young females if used to encourage and not discourage, fitness and weight loss accounts have significant negative impacts (Rassi, 2016; Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2019; José Camacho-Miñano, MacIsaac, & Rich, 2019). As opposed to following the feministic movement of body liberation that the body positive influencers attempt to adhere to, it is a general theme in these studies that “they are still adhering to a fad constructed within mass media that equates healthy eating with the virtuous, promoting a new form of dieting that continues to control the female body” (Cwynar-Horta, 2016, p. 48). These types of influencing platforms tend to use shame techniques to build a following online by showing followers that they are “less than” rather than celebrating bodies as they are. Furthermore, through Instagram’s social algorithm, the studies revealed that although it is convenient that Instagram users are showed their preferred content, the users that search for body inspiration are bombarded with these types of images going forward (José Camacho-Miñano, MacIsaac, & Rich, 2019). Noting that consumers have “plenty [of] opportunity to scrutinise and compare their appearance[s] to others” (Camacho-Miñano & MacIsaac, 2019, p. 12). Around this entire concept is the general underlying theme of

“self-comparisons with the ‘perfect body’” (Camacho-Minano & MacIsaac, 2019, p. 15). This “rabbit hole” exposure is exemplified when the algorithm continues to suggest similar influencers to similar users based on not only their personal interests, but also with what purchases they are likely to be making online.

Duration of Exposure

The most significant marker from these chosen studies was by far the duration of the user’s exposure to the application (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2019). The positive correlation with body positivity influencers seems to occur when the Instagram users are interacting with the application for a short period of time. When these same types of body positive photographs are viewed for a longer duration, the self-objectification increases and the benefits of viewing the content decrease significantly (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2019)). Additionally, not all users that interact on Instagram are producers. Very few producers are even celebrated widely and asked to endorse products. Therefore, “whilst girls are part of the online fitness communities, their participation is mainly as consumers, not producers” (Camacho-Minano & MacIsaac, 2019, p. 22). This is extremely significant as this speaks to the role that media consumers see themselves as only being able to take in images and not worthy of producing quality content. A high “frequency of Instagram use is correlated with depressive symptoms, self-esteem, gender and physical appearance anxiety, and body dissatisfaction” (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2019, p. 482). Instagram as a social media platform is viewed as being influential in shaping how young girls learn about their bodies and the duration of interaction can alter how young females find meaning from the application.

Feminist Idealizations and Mass Media Representations of the 'Perfect Body'

Another noteworthy general theme is how Instagram influencers do not stray very far from traditional media outlets (Rassi, 2016; Cohen et al., 2019). The term traditional media will be used here to reference media representations offline, including images on television, magazines, billboards, newspapers, and posters. This distinction between modern and traditional media outlets is important as it defines a noteworthy shift in accessibility to information and images to be more readily accessible. Overall, traditional media outlets tend to glorify female bodies and standardize beauty ideals. Traditional and modern advertisements alike are oversaturated with photo editing, photo styling, makeup and lighting. These shifts can often change how the models actually appear and can alter messages sent by the advertising companies. Another significant critique of Instagram's algorithms is that it favours certain influencers that even though society says they celebrate inclusivity, "the movement has now come to encompass any individual that exists outside of beauty norms in any way regardless of size, leaving women above a size 14 out of the conversation" (Cwynar-Horta, 2016, p. 36). Traditional media is bleeding into the small consumer creations and setting an ideal that makes the very users it promises to make feel accepted, distanced.

Given this standard, many begin to question how inclusive Instagram actually is in representing all types of bodies. For example, in an Instagram advertisement evaluated by Cwynar-Horta (2016), the author noted that disabilities, unflattering positions and diversity in nationality are underrepresented and photos are taken in such a way as to misrepresent someone's body. Cwynar-Horta (2016) went as far as to say that "women have been duped into believing they are exercising individual 'choice,' 'freedom,' and 'agency'" when it comes to how they represent their bodies (p. 53). When in actuality, these women are profiting from an

industry that originally benefited from excluding them through swayed capitalistic values. To achieve this representation in the Instagram industry, users often glorify celebrities versus everyday users. These celebrities are often pressured to maintain this lifestyle, regardless of the impression that this may give young girls. However, Camacho-Miñano et al., (2019) found that girls in their study “were aware of unhealthy practices that these models could engage in (such as cosmetic surgery or extreme diets)” (p. 13). Ultimately, the space will continue to be used as a place of suppression and the reproduction of traditional media ideals if a systematic shift is not made to a place of celebration and empowerment.

Discussion and Conclusions

Overall, the findings were fairly consistent throughout the chosen studies. A troubling theme that emerged was that users fundamentally developed their concept of body transformation through interactions with the application. Female’s mental health is ultimately positively impacted if body positive posts are shown and for short periods of time. Moreover, a high duration of Instagram use regardless of its content can increase depression and anxiety. Fitness and weight loss influencers posts create increased depression, anxiety and self-objectification. Ultimately, media glorifies the perfect body and this bleeds into the Instagram feeds to oversaturate everyday people with filters and touch-ups. If algorithms offer a large exposure of self-deprecating content as it relates to body health of young females, they will consequently begin to build a morphed view of what one’s body should look like. It is important to note that young females born in the twenty-first century should not be shamed or discouraged from participating in these social media integrated experiences. Technology should not be demonized for its sheer fact of existing. Rather, we need to learn to guide a clear, healthy path

through this generational shift that does not suppress and demonize technology to form it into something of which we should be afraid.

Future research suggestions

One of the main focuses for media education that is mandated in Ontario Curriculum is in the Language Arts Curriculum under the subsection Media Literacy. This is a document that is readily used by educators in Ontario and includes mandated content that teachers must teach by the end of the school year. This document was updated in 2006. With the beginning of the social media revolution happening with the introduction of Instagram and Snapchat in 2010, there is no direct mandated representation of these modern social media applications being taught in elementary schools (Phrased, 2018). Although educators may choose to integrate awareness of these social media platforms within their lessons, there is not an explicit expectation in the elementary Media curriculum. Rather, this content has now been represented in the updated 2019 curriculum document of Health and Physical Education. Throughout the 318-page document, the term 'social media' is only mentioned a total of 14 times, often only in the "prompts" section and not as specific expectations.

Consequently, unless educators are truly educated on the harmful impacts of applications like Instagram, we will not be able to engage in the meaningful conversations with our students about the dangers of social media; more specifically, about the commodification of health and wellness that are becoming more prevalent on these applications. Using the general themes brought out from these meaningful studies, alterations in professional development opportunities, both in and out of the formal setting, need to be revisited. Additionally, changes in teacher education training programs should be revisited to ensure that educators that are coming into the education system are made aware of these issues. As educators, we have a high degree of

accountability to address this issue. Principals and administration should also be made aware of this issue to spread awareness throughout their school boards.

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