"I want to look like her": A cross-cultural analysis of White and Eastern Asian-Canadian

women's perceptions of beauty through Instagram

By:

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Abstract

Researchers and the broader public alike have long been intrigued about the connection between body image concerns among young women and the increasing proliferation of certain social media platforms. Instagram, in particular, has become a common target of attention for those expecting to see a connection between participation on the platform and negative self-esteem (Fardouly et al., 2017). There is often a racial component to these assumptions, given that Eastern Asian women often face negative body self-esteem issues when confronted with mainstream beauty standards (Cheng, 2014; Smart et al., 2011). In an effort to ascertain the validity of these assumptions, this research has committed to a thorough investigation of self-perceptions among young women as it relates to their Instagram usage by exploring the research question: Is there a relationship between White and Eastern Asian-Canadian women's self-esteem, ethnic and racial identity, and their Instagram use?

This study made use of quantitative data collected from participants from 16 universities across Canada; 82 participants were surveyed to gauge their browsing habits on Instagram, as well as their self-image and internalization of Western beauty standards. An analysis of this data yielded a result which contradicted the popular assumption—among the White and Eastern Asian-Canadian women (ages 19-30) surveyed, there is no evidence of a relationship between Instagram usage and global self-esteem, body self-esteem, or racial identity. While this does not preclude the possibility that social media may be harmful to young women in other ways, there is little evidence from the present study to suggest that Instagram is responsible for deteriorating its users' self-esteem.

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Finally, I would like to dedicate my thesis to my late grandmother, Betty. Throughout my life, you had shown me what it means to always have someone in your corner. For that, I'll be eternally grateful.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

When scrolling through social media, there is a strong likelihood that many young

Canadians see an overwhelming number of images of flawless women. Recent studies suggest

that the rapid proliferation of social media among millennials has led to the widespread adoption

of filters and photo editing tools for use on their personal photographs. This manipulation has led

young women to feel a "social media-induced dissatisfaction with [their] appearance" (Wang,

Reider, Schoenberg, Zachary, & Saedi, 2019, p. 1129). Further, the media's influence on a

woman's internalization of mainstream beauty ideals can predict one's self-objectification

(Calogero, Boroughs, & Thompson, 2007). While North America is becoming an increasingly

diverse society, the media still holds substantial power over an individual's opinion on their self-

worth and how they regard themselves and interact with social media.

Instagram is a popular social networking platform—and one that is unique compared to

other social networks, as its focus is on users sharing images with their immediate circle of

friends and family and/or the public. Through Instagram, users can compare themselves to others

who post on the app, such as female celebrities, friends, and family. Such comparisons can

influence a person's self-perception and create either positive or negative feelings impacting

their self-esteem (Festinger, 1954).

Canada is a culturally diverse country, and as such, all individuals of varying

backgrounds are subjected to the influence of the media. While young White and Eastern Asian-

Canadian women are two distinct racial/ethnic groups, both can be vulnerable to Western

media's depiction of female beauty. However, Eastern Asian-Canadian women may also be

pressured to juggle bicultural standards of what constitutes attractiveness (Guan, Lee, & Cole,

2012) and may have dissimilar reactions to social media, with varying effects on their self-esteem. This thesis examines the relationships between White and Eastern Asian-Canadian women's Instagram usage, self-esteem, and racial identity.

Research Question

This study explores the following research question: Is there a relationship between White and Eastern Asian-Canadian women's self-esteem, ethnic and racial identity, and their Instagram use? Based on existing literature, I hypothesize that there is a stronger relationship between Eastern Asian-Canadian women's self-esteem and Instagram usage (than that of White women) based on the strength of their ethnic and racial identity. As posited by social comparison theory, one's relationship with their self-esteem is dependent on whether a woman engages in an upward or downward comparison with the women in the Instagram images (Festinger, 1954).

In this study, both global self-esteem and physical self-esteem are measured. Global self-esteem refers to an individual's global judgement on the self (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Physical self-esteem refers to an individual's evaluation of various aspects of their physical appearance, such as perceptions of physical conditioning and fitness, perceptions of body attractiveness, perceptions of physical strength, and perceptions of sports competence (Hayes, Crocker, & Kowalski, 1999). Although Hayes et al.'s (1999) conceptualization of physical self-esteem includes more than just physical attractiveness in their definition, this study only focuses on physical attractiveness. Additionally, global self-esteem is used to help predict physical self-esteem.

This study surveys White and Eastern Asian-Canadian women between 19 and 30 years old to examine how their Instagram use may be related to their self-esteem and internalization of mainstream beauty ideals. This relationship is determined according to the regularity of the

participants' Instagram use and the extent to which they may compare themselves to the content they view.

Purpose of Research

The media's sociocultural messages on what defines female physical attractiveness plays a role in women internalizing these beauty ideals in their own belief system (Calogero, Davis, & Thompson, 2005). The rise of social media has unveiled a modern platform for individuals to compare themselves to others who showcase their best photos online. Even though viewers know images may be edited, viewing content on social media can still influence how young women feel about themselves.

A study conducted by Carter, Forrest and Kaida (2017) found that 19.52% of Canadian females between the ages of 12 to 29 spend several hours (>20) online each week. This group and the group of females who spent between 11 to 20 hours online (18.49%) are significantly more likely to feel dissatisfied with their bodies (Carter et al., 2017). The lack of body confidence may also be caused by the fact that, during young adulthood, women are more likely to engage in social comparison (Carter et al., 2017). This likelihood coincides with the findings that there is an association between young women who are exposed to images that represent the thin-ideal on Instagram and body dissatisfaction (Tiggemann, Hayden, Brown, & Veldhuis, 2018). Similarly, Cohen, Newton-John, and Slater (2017) state that certain types of social media use, such as viewing photos and following appearance-focused accounts, is related to the internalization of the thin ideal and body surveillance among young women (Cohen et al. 2017).

Research Gaps

White women and female racial minorities tend to respond to mainstream beauty ideals differently (Evans & McConnell, 2003). Previous literature has examined the self-perceived attractiveness of White and Eastern Asian women based on media exposure, ethnicity, and socio-cultural attitudes toward their self-identified beauty ideals (Bissell & Chung, 2009); the influence Instagram usage, social comparison, and self-esteem have on an individual's mental health (Jiang & Ngien, 2020); and the specific influence of Instagram on female millennials (Fardouly, Willburger, & Vartanian, 2017). These studies demonstrated that when these groups of variables are associated with one another, young women may experience negative feelings of self-worth.

However, to my knowledge, previous research has not investigated how Instagram is associated with White and Eastern Asian-Canadian women's internalization of Western culture. Several studies focus on body image issues among Asians living in their native countries. These studies found that women living in South Korea have high levels of body dissatisfaction and disordered eating, which can be attributed to their desire to achieve the country's standard of beauty (Jung & Forbes, 2006; Lin & Raval, 2020). This is encouraged by sociocultural factors such as media, societal advantages in career and marriage, and general acceptance of plastic surgery for women to achieve these beauty ideals (Jung & Forbes, 2006). However, few studies address body dissatisfaction among Eastern Asians in North America. The disparity between studies is intriguing since research with native Asian populations has shown that Asian women place greater importance on appearance and are more critical of their bodies than women in the United States (Jung & Lee, 2006).

This research focuses on Instagram's impact on the ethnic identity of White and Eastern Asian-Canadian women and their relationship to Western culture. Specifically, this study

compares their respective perceptions regarding their self-image, even if they live in the same (or similar) environments. This interdisciplinary study aims to build knowledge in the disciplines of communication and psychology regarding the multi-faceted societal challenges facing users of Instagram, one of the most popular social media platforms among those ages 18 to 24 (Perrin & Anderson, 2019).

Research Methods

This research study explores several components related to White and Eastern Asian-Canadian women's relationship with their self-esteem and Instagram usage. For this reason, this study uses a quantitative approach for the data collection by virtue of the survey method.

Thesis Outline

This thesis contains six chapters. This introductory chapter outlines the study's purpose in examining the cross-cultural analysis of White and Eastern Asian-Canadian women's perceptions of beauty through Instagram and the importance of this research. It also provides background information on research gaps, the research question, hypothesis, and objectives.

Chapter Two offers a comprehensive literature review relevant to this research, including the media's influence on an individual's internalization of mainstream beauty ideals and Instagram's appearance-related concerns and beliefs. I follow with a review on how White and Eastern Asian-Canadian women respond to mainstream beauty ideals.

Chapter Three discusses the theoretical framework and methodology used to structure this research study.

Chapter Five offers a discussion of the study's results based on a series of themes identified throughout the research and its interpretation. Limitations of the study will be explored, along with the contributions of the study to the scientific community and recommendations on future research.

Finally, Chapter Six reviews the main conclusions derived from the study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Instagram use and self-esteem

Despite self-esteem being a perception rather than a reality, for most people, it plays a pivotal role in how they value themselves (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003). Whether one's self-esteem is based on their perception of their attractiveness, intelligence, or a mixture of both, global self-esteem can significantly influence an individual's mental health. Prior research has shown that people who have high self-esteem are prone to feelings of happiness (Baumeister et al., 2003). In contrast, individuals with lower self-esteem are more likely to face depression (Baumeister et al., 2003). In addition, individuals with lower self-esteem are also more susceptible to have social anxiety and are likely to require external social approval to feel validation that they often believe themselves to lack (Jiang & Ngien, 2020).

Social comparison theory states that people are naturally inclined to compare themselves to others in order to evaluate themselves on diverse aspects in their lives, such as abilities, traits, and attitudes (Festinger, 1954). Depending on whether individuals compare themselves to people they believe they are better than (upward comparison) or worse than (downward comparison), their observations can significantly impact their self-esteem and how they perceive their own physical attractiveness. Interested to see how they compare to others, people will try to accurately identify both the positive and negative characteristics they possess (Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & Giesler, 1992). If people have negative self-conceptions, they are more likely to seek evaluations that support this view (Swann et al., 1992). In contrast, people with positive self-conceptions are more inclined to seek confirmation on their perspective (Swann et al., 1992). It is important to note that "high self-esteem is not a universal human motive, but a cultural or ideological artifact" (Baumeister et al., 2003, p. 3), which is why this study specifically focuses

on White and Eastern Asian-Canadian women to garner comprehensive results on this demographic.

As self-esteem is a subjective self-evaluation of one's own worth, those lacking confidence can develop a fluctuating assessment of their own attractiveness based on the media's version of idolized beauty. For many women, emerging adulthood can pose as a vulnerable time in their lives, as the development of body image issues can become widespread when they enter post-secondary education (Rowlings, 2006). When female college students compare themselves to their peers, they feel greater body image anxiety and subjective body dissatisfaction, regardless of whether upward or downward comparisons were formed (Heinberg & Thompson, 1992). Women's personal evaluations of their own attractiveness and social self-esteem are diminished when they face exposure to images of a physically attractive, same-sex model in contrast to women who did not see them (Thorton & Moore, 1993). Additionally, women's self-ratings are enhanced when they faced similar exposure to images of a physically unattractive, same-sex model (Thorton & Moore, 1993). Findings by Thorton and Maurice (1997, 1999) show that women who have been exposed to images of models representing mainstream beauty ideals will experience a decrease in self-esteem and an increase in self-consciousness, physique anxiety, and body dissatisfaction.

Thompson and Stice (2001) define internalization as "the extent to which an individual cognitively 'buys into' socially defined ideals of attractiveness and engages in behaviors designed to produce an approximation of these ideals" (p. 181). When a young woman internalizes the public's objectification practices on the female body, they are taking the societal beauty standards as their own. The findings of a study by Fardouly et al. (2017) show that young women's body-image concerns and their self-objectification can be significantly impacted by

their use of social media platforms, such as Instagram (Fardouly et al., 2017). This correlation is mediated both by the participants' own internalization of the self and by comparing their appearance to that of celebrities (Fardouly et al., 2017). As editing tools are often used by individuals to alter their pictures before posting them on Instagram, these doctored images can push onto people the societal beauty ideals that have been cultivated alongside the advancement of the social media app. Wang et al. (2019) notes that, in the past, facial and body editing tools were only used by beauty editors and graphic designers for manipulating the images of celebrities. The ability to edit one's own image then gives social media users the opportunity to compare their natural appearance to one that has been edited to meet the user's own idealized versions of themselves. These comparisons can be a destructive influence on their self-esteem and self-evaluation (Vogel, Rose, Roberts, & Eckles, 2014).

Instagram usage may also negatively influence users' appearance-related concerns and beliefs. This can lead to higher body dissatisfaction and self-objectification, as the platform offers more opportunities to compare their appearance to other Instagram users (Fardouly et al., 2017). According to Vandenbosch and Eggermont (2016), there is a relationship between body dissatisfaction and self-objectification and the time female adolescents spend on social media platforms that emphasize sexualization—that is, the more time spent, the stronger the tendency toward self-objectification and body surveillance.

Moreover, who an individual follows on social media may also influence their self-esteem. The decorated way celebrities are physically presented to the public reinforces the emphasis on the mainstream beauty standard of the thin-ideal for the average woman (Brown & Tiggemann, 2016). Furthermore, engaging in celebrity worship (when an individual becomes all consumed with the personal and professional life of a celebrity) is related to young women's

body image concerns (Utami, 2019). This behaviour can become intensified when the images of an individual's favourite celebrities are frequently shown in the media (Utami, 2019). In fact, findings by Brown and Tiggemann (2016) show that an individual's body satisfaction decreases when they are exposed to Instagram images of their peers or celebrities.

Similarly, research by Lup, Trub, and Rosenthal (2015) has established a correlation between a user's well-being and the number of strangers they follow on Instagram. If users follow only a few strangers, they will have a positive association with their well-being, while users who follow many strangers have a negative association with their well-being (Lup et al., 2015). In addition, the authors report a significant relationship between a user's frequent Instagram use and greater depressive symptoms (Lup et al., 2015). When comparing Instagram users and non-users, those without Instagram accounts have lower rates of anxiety, depression, loneliness, and self-esteem (Mackson, Brouch & Schneider, 2019). There is, however, no effect on the body self-esteem of individuals who have an Instagram account in comparison to those who did not (Mackson, et al., 2019). The researchers suggest this may be due to the varying type of content Instagram users choose to view, such as family and friends, celebrities, influencers, animals, and food accounts (Mackson et al., 2019).

Mainstream beauty ideals in the context of Western culture

According to Isa and Kramer (2003), the media is responsible for subjecting the public to the "collective psyche" (p. 42). The collective psyche refers to how the depiction of ideal beauty in media cultivates viewers' perceptions and beliefs towards what is considered attractive (Isa & Kramer, 2003). This notion is reinforced by Bissell and Chung (2009) who state that the mass media has the power to construct society's beliefs and attitudes toward female beauty. Since these values alter the public's perceptions of what should be considered mainstream beauty, there

are shifts in cultures when people are exposed to images that are generally regarded by others as attractive (Bissell & Chung, 2009). The media images that represent these beauty norms typically display White women (Smart, Tsong, Mejía, Hayashino, & Braaten, 2011).

In the context of this thesis, mainstream beauty ideals are defined through the perspective of Western culture, which emphasizes the thin-ideal (Calogero et al., 2007). While there are several characteristics that influence attractiveness judgements for the face, members of the same culture may vary on their individual preferences. However, Little, Jones, and DeBruine (2011) found that traits such as facial symmetry, averageness ("how closely a face resembles the majority of other faces within a population") (p. 1640), secondary sexual characteristics (facial femininity), and skin health (facial colour and texture) impact perceptions of a woman's attractiveness.

According to Forbes, Collinsworth, Jobe, Braun, and Wise (2007), three consistent factors are associated with the Western standards of female beauty. First, mainstream beauty ideals represent physical standards that do not represent the majority of women and are rarely attainable (Forbes et al., 2007). Second, despite the efforts of many women who have devoted an extensive amount of "time, energy, and emotional resources" to conform to these standards, they will still fail to achieve them (Forbes et al., 2007, p. 265). Third, men and women are both guilty of scrutinizing women's bodies to determine how well they abide by mainstream beauty ideals (Forbes et al., 2007). All these factors support feminist critiques that accepting these beauty standards is oppressive to women (Forbes et al., 2007).

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) assert that when women and girls take on their peers'

scrutiny can greatly affect women and girls' mental health, as focusing excessively on their appearance could lead to them to develop shame and anxiety over their appearance (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

For young women on social media, messaging that assumes a "health and wellness" framing can often be more difficult to deconstruct, especially if health goals are conveyed in a more intimate manner – for example, when viewers develop a parasocial relationship with the content creators. Content that conflates personal health and attractiveness can be problematic, especially if the barriers to achieving these health outcomes are underemphasized or ignored (Monks, Costello, Dare & Boyd, 2021). This common approach taken by celebrities or social media influencers (e.g., those who document their "journey" towards health and beauty) can be damaging for their female followers who, in turn, may express insecurity regarding their own health efforts (Monks et al., 2021).

Influence of mainstream beauty ideals on White and Eastern Asian women

Cultural identity plays a substantial role in how women engage with mainstream beauty ideals. Guan et al. (2012) define cultural identity as "the extent to which one's cultural group (e.g., Asian, Black, Latino) contributes to one's identity or sense of self" (p. 248). When people begin to identify with a specific culture, they are more likely to embrace the norms and values that characterize that distinctive group (Guan et al., 2012). Further, cultural identity extends to following specific beauty standards, as individual cultures each have distinctive definitions of what is considered the ideal body image. While women who identify as American place value on a thin physique (Devos & Banaji, 2005), women who identify as Asian put an even greater emphasis on thinness compared to their American counterparts (Evans & McConnell, 2003).

For those who live in a bicultural environment (i.e., the integration between varying aspects of two cultures), it is common to switch between beliefs, attitudes, and values in varying contexts, which include different body ideals (Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002). However, bicultural individuals experience a "contrasting effect" when in environments with dominant culture cues (Guan et al., 2012). The findings of a study by Guan et al. (2012) show that when Asian-American women are presented with American culture cues, they are more likely to align with more traditional Asian body ideals (i.e., extreme thinness) and vice versa.

Visible minority women can feel more oppressed by society because they have different physical characteristics that are not represented in images distributed by the media (Smart et al., 2011). Despite the frequent projection of mainstream beauty ideals depicted in the mass media, stigmatized group members are more likely to compare themselves to the members of their same in-group and less likely to compare themselves to those in the out-group (e.g., White women) (Evans & McConnell, 2003). However, Evans and McConnell (2003) further point out that "…studies of Asians would suggest that they are not as likely to protect their self-esteem like other stigmatized groups and may suffer from lower self-evaluation as a consequence" (p. 155). In comparison to Black women, Asian women are more like White women in that they are more likely to adopt mainstream beauty ideals and to find those who embody mainstream beauty ideals attractive (Evans & McConnell, 2003).

While both White and Asian women both undergo cosmetic surgery, they generally undergo different procedures. According to Kaw (1994), White women in the United States typically elect to have liposuction, breast augmentation, or wrinkle removal procedures. In contrast, one of the most popular procedures for Asian American women is the double-eyelid surgery. This can be viewed as a mechanism for them to disassociate themselves from negative

Asian stereotypes through their physical appearance (Kaw, 1994). Women in the Asian

American community are motivated to have cosmetic surgery due to their dissatisfaction with the

facial characteristics specific to their race and desire to be more in line with Western standards of

beauty (Mintz & Kashubeck, 1999). This may be linked to Asian women's potential

internalization of mainstream beauty, which contrasts with the physical traits unique to that race

(Evans & McConnell, 2003).

Additional studies show how Asian women are affected by Western media's depiction of

idealized beauty. In a comparison between women's fashion and beauty magazines from the

United States and South Korea, it was found that both countries had primarily White models in

their publications (Jung & Lee, 2009). However, South Korean magazines had more body-

related advertisements than those in the United States (Jung & Lee, 2009). According to Cheng

(2014), Asian women – from both Asia and the United States – who struggle with body image

issues and eating disorders have reported internalizing beauty standards perpetuated by the

media, which may make them feel compelled to conform to these ideals (Cheng, 2014). Since the

media provides regular opportunities for Asian viewers to compare their appearance with women

who embody mainstream beauty, this can create serious implications on their well-being. These

ramifications include poor self-esteem, media internalization, body dissatisfaction, and

disordered eating (Cheng, 2014). Cheng (2014) reported a link between perceived racial

discrimination and self-esteem, media internalization, body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating

habits.

Feminist beliefs and cultural messages

With Western culture's beauty ideals seen exclusive to fulfilling the descriptors of

"White, young, slim, tall, and upper-class" (Patton, 2006, p. 30), putting a restricted definition on

female beauty marginalize other variations of femininity and physical traits (Cheney, 2011). Not only does having a slim physique conforms to Western beauty ideals, but also communicates to women that these standards are what embody images of one's control, achievement, and success (Bordo, 1993).

Perceptions of the perfect female body become exacerbated by contemporary consumer culture, where the emphasis on Western beauty standards perpetuates the belief that thinness is quintessential to achieve what society has conceived as ideal femininity (Bordo, 1993). An ethnographic study on how ethnically diverse women in the United States respond to Western society's fixation on thinness and whether it influences their impressions of the perfect female body presents young women's susceptibility to feeling excluded from these perceptions is dependent on their "sense of self and strength of social identity" (Cheney, 2011, p. 1356). In addition, young women who do not have positive self-perceptions are more likely to feel isolated from their peers and social reality than others who have positive self-perceptions (Cheney, 2011).

Engeln-Maddox (2006) asserts that thinness alone is not enough to attain Western culture's standard of beauty. Other attributes to one's physical appearance such as clear skin, stylish hair, and attractive facial features are popular factors when comparing themselves to the beauty ideals of their society (Engeln-Maddox, 2006). Additionally, the preference for a thin physique is not always tied to ethnic background or socioeconomic status. According to Cheney (2011), a thinner body is desirable because it increases a woman's social status, allowing them the ability to better navigate issues of social power and agency. However, there are some disparities among women of different ethnic backgrounds; women from historically marginalized

communities (in contrast to more privileged/wealthier women) may use their bodies to compensate for systemic inequities or overcome institutional obstacles.

Further, it can be a profound act for younger women to reject beauty norms, due to the ways in which their self-image is integral to their self-identity (Rubin, Nemeroff, & Russo, 2004). Some women are less likely to challenge these norms directly – this is often the case for women who do not identify as feminists, but who may nevertheless hold feminist beliefs (Rubin et al., 2004).

Feminism plays a crucial role in how young women internalize mainstream beauty ideals. According to Feltman and Szymanski (2018), feminism "rejects cultural standards of beauty and criticizes objectification practices and society's hyper-focus on women's bodies" (p. 314). The researchers further state that women who hold feminist beliefs may be more proficient in renouncing society's influence on her physical appearance and instead focus on their non-physical traits and subjective inner experiences (Feltman & Szymanski, 2018).

However, despite feminism's call for rejecting mainstream beauty standards, Rubin et al. (2004) found that some feminists – notably those who identify as White, heterosexual women – may not wish to discard these practices, as they are aware of the benefits of accommodating these beliefs. In fact, Haworth-Hoeppner (1999) found in a study that White, middle-class women associated having a thin and attractive appearance to being seen as heard, competent, likable, and date-able.

The relevant literature on the influence mainstream beauty ideals has on White and Eastern Asian-Canadian women and their relationship with both the media and social media provides an understanding on how these variables can be related to one another. Culture is shown to play a significant role in a young woman's self-esteem through its ability to shape how they

relate to Western society and its mainstream beauty ideals. These insights have informed the methodology of this study.

Chapter 3

Methods

Theoretical Framework

Social comparison theory (psychology) and feminist media studies (communication studies) were the two theoretical lenses that guided the conception and design of this research and the interpretation of its findings.

Social comparison theory explains that individuals compare themselves to others to evaluate themselves on diverse aspects in their lives, including their abilities, traits, and attitudes (Festinger, 1954). Feminist media researchers study "communication theories and practices from a perspective that ultimately is oriented toward the achievement of 'gender justice,' a goal that takes into account the ways that gender always already intersects with race, ethnicity, sexuality and class" (Dow & Condit, 2005, p. 449). Feminist media studies examines the construction of gender in mass media texts and the influence these images have on young women. Digital media plays a sizable role in the aestheticization of feminism (Crepax, 2020). In consumer culture, the words "feminist" and "feminism" are becoming popular buzzwords used by fashion magazines and celebrities who embrace the movement (Crepax, 2020). Instagram is a common tool for feminist activism, where users can use the social networking platform as a hub for the expression and discussion of gender issues and view the diverse representations of the female body (Crepax, 2020).

However, the feminist culture has not been universally embraced. Media producers, such as advertisers, still have the power to depict beauty standards that women may feel pressured to fulfill (Chapman, 2011). The media often perpetuates the narrative that women who are unable or unwilling to achieve a certain set of physical characteristics (those deemed acceptable in the mainstream) will be branded as undesirable by the broader public (Chapman, 2011). With these

ideas as a backdrop, this research explores whether Instagram has a negative influence on young

women based on how the platform's potential to contribute to users developing poor self-esteem.

These negative perceptions can be constructed through social comparisons, and they are

frequently reinforced based on young women's Instagram engagement.

Data Collection

Data collection involved a quantitative approach. I selected a survey as the methodology

for this research for several reasons. Surveys allow large populations to participate with relative

ease for the investigator and having a sizable number of participants can result in more diverse

responses. Unlike interviews, where participants can be identified, surveys strictly record

anonymous responses. I believe by allowing participants to respond anonymously, they may be

more likely to give accurate, honest answers, as opposed to responding to questions in a way

they believe will appease the investigator. Surveys can also collect a broad range of data, which

is necessary as this research project considers several variables.

This research involved human participants, necessitating that I complete the Course on

Research Ethics, Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human

Participants (see Appendix A for the certificate of completion). This research also received

clearance from the University Research Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University (File #

2020-226) as well as clearance or exemption from all universities where recruitment occurred.

Participants

Recruitment notices were first sent out through my personal Instagram, Facebook, and

Reddit accounts (see Appendix B). Participants were also recruited from 16 universities across

Canada: Eight universities in Central Canada, three universities in the Prairies, two universities

in Atlantic Canada, two universities in Western Canada, and one online university (see Appendix C).

The survey was distributed through LimeSurvey. The link for the survey was used 666 times and 507 surveys were completed. For participants to meet the inclusion criteria for the study, they must have identified as either a White or Eastern Asian-Canadian woman between the ages of 19 and 30 and have an Instagram account. After removing responses that did not meet the inclusion criteria, 360 useable surveys remained. Of the usable surveys, 319 women identified as White Canadian and 41 women identified as Eastern Asian-Canadian. As there was an extensive difference between the number of respondents from the two respective groups, random sampling was used to select surveys for the White Canadian participants so as to match the number with the Eastern Asian-Canadian participants. The results of the survey came from the responses of 82 participants – 41 White Canadian women and 41 Eastern Asian-Canadian women. Of these 82 participants, 42 were between 19 to 22 years old, 34 were between 23 to 27 years old, and six were between 28 and 30 years old.

Materials and Procedure

In the letter of informed consent (see Appendix D), participants were notified that they were not obligated to respond to any question they felt uncomfortable answering and that there was no consequence to exit the survey at any time. Participants were first asked to respond to questions that would determine if they met the study's inclusion criteria. This was then followed by a set of questions specifically developed for this study to gauge the participants' social media interests, such as what type of content they view and how it makes them feel (See Appendix E for the survey).

The scales in the study required the participants to rate their self-perceived attractiveness, internalization of ethnic identity and association with Western culture in accordance with the respective scales. The first tool of measurement was the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) (Rosenberg, 1979) (See Appendix F). This scale gauged the participants' overall feelings related to their self-worth and self-acceptance on a four-point scale. The Body Esteem Scale-Revised (BES-R) (Frost, Franzoi, Oswald, & Shields, 2018) scale is a gender-specific assessment of self-esteem that is amended from its original version published in 1984 (See Appendix G). While it asked participants to indicate how they feel about 28 parts or functions of their own body on a five-point scale, I only used the sexual attractiveness and weight concern constructs on the five-point scale (Frost et al., 2018). Questions on physical condition were excluded as participants' response to them would not add any relevant data to the study. Next, participants were asked to complete the Appropriated Racial Oppression Scale (AROS) (Campón & Carter, 2015) (See Appendix H). This scale measures internalized racism. The final scale completed was Passive and Active Use Measure (PAUM) (Gerson, Plagnol, & Corr, 2017), which was adapted from Facebook to asked questions involving frequency of Instagram usage, frequency of Instagram-specific behaviours and attitudes, and affective reactions Instagram usage (See Appendix I). Although this questionnaire has not been psychometrically validated, to my knowledge, it is the only questionnaire that measures these constructs.

Data Analysis

Using SPSS software, multiple regression analysis was used to assess the strength of the relationship between the dependent variable (body self-esteem) and several predictor variables (Instagram use, global self-esteem, and ethnicity and racial identity). In this study, a multiple

regression analysis was used to determine how White and East Asian-Canadian women's body self-esteem is related to global self-esteem, racial identity, and Instagram use.

Chapter 4

Results

The results of this study come from the data of 82 participants—41 White and 41 Eastern Asian-Canadian women—who have provided insight into the research question: Is there a relationship between white and Eastern Asian-Canadian women's self-esteem, ethnic and racial identity, and their Instagram use? While the participants' interest, relationship, and use of Instagram was generally unsurprising, the key findings from the questionnaire yielded unanticipated results based on the previous literature surrounding these variables. While these results were not predicted, they contribute previously unseen insight to this field of study.

Nature of Instagram Use

The majority of participants had general insight on when an image on Instagram was untouched or had been visually manipulated. About one third (32%) of participants reported that they could tell, while 5% said they could not. Sixty-three percent of participants said they could sometimes decipher if an image had been manipulated or not.

Survey participants were provided a list of different types of Instagram accounts and asked to identify the genre of the accounts they followed. Most participants followed accounts run by family and friends (88%). The next most frequent type of account followed were those by female influencers (48%), which contrasted those of male influencers (11%). Accounts focused on animals (31%), food (34%), and nature (26%) were also popular. Participants were given the option to add information about other accounts they follow. Six percent of participants said they followed meme accounts, 4% said they followed art accounts, and 2% said they followed travel accounts. These results suggest that participants also had an interest in accounts that did not include people.

Participants were asked if they follow more Instagram accounts run by women of their same race than those run by women of other races. More women followed the accounts by women of their same race (45%) as opposed to women of a different race (31%). However, both percentages accounted for less than half of the participants. Only 24% of participants said they followed an even mix of both.

Participants were also asked how they felt after viewing images of attractive women of their same race (participants could select more than one option). Feelings of self-consciousness ranked the highest (71%), followed by happiness (43%), and neutrality (35%). On the lower end of the spectrum, 17% of participants reported feeling anxious, while 11% reported feeling sad. None of the participants reported any feelings of anger and disgust. Additionally, when participants were asked to list any other emotions they felt when looking at the images, 4% participants reported feeling jealous, 2% reported feeling envious, and 1% reported feeling motivated. The contrast in emotions suggests that negative social comparisons may be going on between participants and images of attractive women of their same race.

Participants were then asked how they felt after viewing images of attractive women of a different race than their own (as with the images of attractive women of the same race, participants could select more than one option). Similar results were found, with neutrality (54%), self-consciousness (51%), and happiness (38%) ranking as the highest emotions felt. Sadness (11%) and anxiousness (10%) were also felt to a lesser extent. Further, 1% of participants reported feeling of anger, but none of the participants reported feelings of disgust. Four percent of participants reported feeling jealous and 1% reported feeling envious. In comparison to the question about viewing images of women of their same race, where the largest emotion felt was feelings self-consciousness, participants were more likely to feel neutrality than

any other emotion. This may suggest that participants were slightly less affected by the appearance of women of different races.

Subsequently, participants were asked if looking at images of women on Instagram either positively or negatively influenced how they feel about themselves. Twenty-two percent of the participants responded that the images influenced how they felt about themselves, 67% said the images only influenced how they felt about themselves depending on the race of the woman in the image, and 11% said it did not influence them at all.

Questionnaire Data

Table 1 shows the results of the descriptive statistics for both the White Canadian and Eastern Asian-Canadian participants for the scales they were asked to complete. Both groups had a mean score above the halfway mark on the RSE and slightly over half on the BES-R, indicating that many of the participants have moderately healthy global and body self-esteem. The results from the PAUM found that participants' mean score were also a little more than over the halfway mark, indicating that they use Instagram a decent amount of time. The White and Eastern Asian-Canadian participants had similar means. This suggests that race may not be a factor when measuring the two groups' relationship to their global self-esteem, body self-esteem, and Instagram usage. Only the Eastern Asian-Canadian participants were asked to respond to the AROS and had a mean score below the halfway mark, indicating that they generally do not have a negative attitude towards their racial identity.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Different Measures

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
White Canadian Participants Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	2.10	3.80	2.81	.42
Body Esteem Scale-Revised	2.06	4.29	3.08	.54
Passive and Active Use Measure	1.60	4.10	3.04	.55
Appropriated Racial Oppression Scale				
Eastern Asian-Canadian Participants Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	1.50	3.80	2.69	.53
Body Esteem Scale-Revised	1.71	4.53	2.93	.763
Passive and Active Use Measure	2.10	4.00	3.01	.54
Appropriated Racial Oppression Scale	1.46	5.21	3.13	.78

Correlational analyses showed that both groups' global self-esteem was related to their body self-esteem (see Table 2). For Eastern Asian-Canadian participants, there was a significant relationship between body self-esteem, global self-esteem, and racial identity. However, Instagram usage had no significant relationship to either body self-esteem, global self-esteem, or racial identity.

Table 2: Correlations

	BES-R	PAUM	AROS
White Canadian Participants RSE	.591**	-.090	
BES-R		.092	
Eastern Asian-Canadian Participants RES	.746**	.184	-.499**
BES-R		.157	-.441**
PAUM			-.238

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Data were analyzed to test for possible relationships between White and Eastern Asian-Canadian women's self-esteem, ethnic and racial identity, and their Instagram use, through two multiple regression analyses – one per each group of participants (see Table 3). While the results were similar, there were subtle differences. For White Canadian participants, the model was significant, F (2, 38) = 11.21, p=.001, and accounted for 34% of the variance. The analysis indicated that global self-esteem predicted body self-esteem. If a participant scored high on the global self-esteem, it was likely they would also score high on body self-esteem. However, Instagram usage was not a significant predictor and, therefore, general Instagram usage was unrelated to how participants reported feeling about their bodies.

In the second multiple regression analysis using the data from the Eastern Asian-Canadian participants, the model was again significant, F (3, 37) = 15.88 p=.001, and accounted for 53% of the variance. Global self-esteem is a significant predictor for body self-esteem, but although racial identity was correlated with body self-esteem, it was not a significant predictor

once global self-esteem is considered. Therefore, racial identity was not independently related to global self-esteem. These variables are only related through their mutual relationship to global self-esteem. Again, Instagram usage was not related to either variable. While there was little difference between the scores of the White and Eastern Asian-Canadian participants, the analysis found a stronger effect with the latter. The multiple regression model for Eastern Asian participants demonstrates more of the variance was accounted for compared to the one for White participants.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analyses

	B	SE B	β	t
White Canadian Participants Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	.780	.167	.605	4.681*
Instagram Usage, Behaviours, and Affective Responses Questionnaires	.144	.127	.147	1.135
Eastern Asian-Canadian Participants Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	1.011	.182	.700	5.565*
Passive and Active Use Measure	.010	.157	.007	0.062
Appropriated Racial Oppression Scale	-.088	.125	-.089	-0.702

* $p = .001$

Chapter 5

Discussion

For decades, scholars have analyzed the media's influence on Western culture's depiction of female beauty and its implications on women's self-esteem and body image. The introduction of social media has created more research opportunities, as young women are made susceptible to altering their physical self-perceptions based on comparisons with those depicted in the content they view, including celebrities, family, and friends. Additionally, an individual's racial identity brings forward questions on how race and ethnicity may also contribute to their internalization of mainstream beauty ideals, especially in a country as diverse as Canada. Research is needed to further comprehend the connections between self-esteem, social media, and race and ethnicity – either collectively or independent of one another.

The findings of this study are inconsistent with most previous research that identified correlations between social media and young women's body image and self-esteem (Cohen et al., 2017; Fardouly et al., 2017; Lup et al., 2015). Instead, the results indicate that Instagram had no significant relationship to either body self-esteem, global self-esteem, or racial identity. However, this disconnection could result from key differences between this study and studies previously conducted.

In previous literature, researchers studied Facebook as the social networking site (Vogel et al., 2014). While Instagram and Facebook have similarities, they also have different functions. Both platforms allow users to share pictures and videos, however image sharing is Instagram's primary objective. Facebook is more multifaceted and can be used to create events, join interest groups, and access the news. Since users can engage in diverse activities on each platform, it would make sense that their social media habits differ. In contrast to other studies that did not

examine both body self-esteem and global self-esteem and the relationship with social networking sites (Fardouly et al., 2017; Vogel et al., 2014), this study examined both variables to determine if there is a relationship between them. While these two variables are similar, this study distinguishes that young women's self-esteem may be different based on their interaction with different social networking sites.

Further, Cohen et al. (2017) found that appearance-focused social media use (i.e., a user following appearance-focused accounts), rather than overall social media use (i.e., a user following appearance-neutral accounts), was related to young women's body image concerns. Although participants in my study were asked about the type of content they followed on Instagram and how they felt when looking at images of attractive women of the same or of a different race, these questions were not part of any one scale. The Passive and Active Use Measure (Gerson et al., 2017) used in this study's survey asked participants about their general Instagram use and not if they engaged in any acts of comparison with the content they view. If there were questions related to appearance-focused activities on the platform, greater insight may have been provided on why no relationship between Instagram use and the other variables were found.

The results of this study also indicate that, while there is a significant relationship between body self-esteem, global self-esteem, and racial identity, racial identity is not independent of global self-esteem. This finding means that while young women's race and ethnicity may contribute to how they value themselves overall, these factors may not contribute to how they feel about their physical self-worth or body image. Furthermore, this study found that Asian women generally do not have a negative attitude regarding their racial identity, and many participants have moderately healthy global and body self-esteem. This contradicts

previous research that has found Asian women may face greater body dissatisfaction based on the influence of their racial identity (Cheng, 2014; Smart et al., 2011; Evans & McConnell, 2003).

The results showed that poor body image is independent of how one relates to their racial identity or social media interests. These findings suggest that how young White and Eastern Asian-Canadian women feel about their body image must be contingent on other variables not examined in this study. However, there are nuances to this study that may account for the differences in outcomes. For instance, my research looked at Canadian women, as opposed to women who are of American or Asian nationality, as did previous studies (Jiang & Ngien, 2020; Cheng, 2014; Jung & Forbes, 2007).

The previous studies surrounding self-esteem and Instagram usage are dated between 7 to 18 years earlier than the year that this study was conducted (2021). During the time gap, mass media has shifted away from print and broadcast forms to social media. On social media, there is a large representation of diversity – meaning, it is easy for individuals to search for celebrities and/or influencers who are of the same race and ethnicity as them. Whether individuals look to these public figures to pursue acts of comparison or to feel confident in their own racial identity is contingent on them.

The findings of this research contribute valuable insights in the fields of communications and psychology. Given that the results showed that Instagram use had no significant impact on either body self-esteem, global self-esteem, or racial identity, this research clarifies how young women understand their relationship to social media use and their own body image. Although there may be instances where social media plays a role in how an individual views themselves, the results show no correlation between a young woman's use of Instagram and their feelings

towards their racial identity or self-esteem, in the context of this study. These findings suggest to the scientific community and to the greater public that simply looking at images on Instagram may not influence an individual to adore or despise their own physical appearance. It may be especially encouraging for those who belong to a particular ethnic background to know that intermittently viewing images of women that reflect Western beauty standards—who may not share their physical characteristics—may not influence how they personally view themselves. Overall, this study contradicts the general assumption that Instagram use negatively affects the self-esteem and body image of all young women. While future research will need to identify when Instagram use may be detrimental, this study suggests that it may be just fine to engage in and enjoy Instagram.

Limitations

Given the specific parameters of the work, several limitations should be noted in this study. This research strictly looked at participants who identified as either White or Eastern Asian-Canadian women. The decision to focus on two racial groups functions to focus the study and analyze the similarities and discrepancies between participants' results.

Only females between the ages of 19 to 30 years old were included in this study in order to narrow the scope of the work and avoid large deviations as a result of age or gender. Research shows that women have contrasting levels of self-esteem and body image when they are of varying ages and in distinct stages of their lives (Bleidorn, Arslan, Denissen, Rentfrow, Gebauer, Potter, & Gosling, 2016; Hockey, Milojev, Sibley, Donovan, Barlow, 2021). Thus, this age range captures the largest group of Instagram users while minimizing variations in the life stages of the participants. A similar disparity applies to gender, as the decision to focus on only women reflects how different genders experience self-esteem (Gentile, Grabe, Dolan-Pascoe, Twenge,

Wells & Maitino, 2009; Bleidorn, et al., 2016). The omission of these factors helps clarify the link between social media usage and body self-image; a broader data set would have been more difficult to parse.

The surveys did not ask the participants to state the amount of time they spent on Instagram every day. This information could have provided further insight into participants' behaviour on the app, such as their tendency to view, like, or comment on specific posts and accounts, as well as how often they did so. Asking for such information may have allowed for further selection and filtering of results in order to discern the intensity of the effect social media has on individuals' self-esteem.

Furthermore, the structure of the survey itself may have limited the research findings. For instance, one of the questions created for the survey asked participants: "Does looking at images of women on Instagram positively or negatively influence how you feel about yourself?" (See Appendix I). Given that the only accepted responses were either "positive" or "negative," the inclusion of a "neutral" option could have more accurately represented the opinions of the participants, albeit not significantly.

Similarly, although the use of scales in this study was thoroughly considered, it was challenging to find a scale which explicitly measured Instagram habits and behaviour and racial identity for Eastern Asians. Previous studies examined older social networking platforms and therefore used scales unique to that platform. For instance, the Passive and Active Use Measure (Gerson et al., 2017) was created to measure Facebook behaviour and was only modified later to ask questions related to Instagram for the purpose of this study. The Appropriated Racial Oppression Scale (Campón, & Carter, 2015) was originally developed to measure internalized racism among "people of color" (p. 471), but not for any particular racial group. My study may

have benefited from using a scale which explicitly asked questions about Eastern Asian identity, however, to my knowledge, no such scale exists. Additionally, it is unlikely that another design would yield a significant variation in results. Other possible scales were either outdated, did not have questions related to beauty standards, or were for Asian immigrants specifically. While the scales used in the survey did not perfectly align with the research question, they were the best fit for this study.

Suggestions for future research

This study provides the groundwork for future research that will further our understanding of the multi-faceted relationship between self-esteem, social media, and ethnic and racial identity. Since only a certain demographic was surveyed, there are still several areas of interest to be explored. For instance, this research solely focused on the participants' relationship with Instagram. If a different form of social media (such as Facebook, TikTok, or Snapchat) is used as a predictor variable, different results could potentially result based on participants' interests and use of these other platforms.

This study focused on the feelings and behaviours of White and Eastern Asian-Canadian women. A future study could explore the feelings and behaviours of women who identify as other races and/or ethnicities that were not chosen for this study, such as participants who identified as either South Asian or Pacific Islander Canadian. Since this study recruited Canadian women who identified as White or Eastern Asian, having a more diverse group of Asian participants could provide a greater understanding of the broader Asian-Canadian woman experience. Additionally, having participants who are biracial (with both European and Eastern Asian ancestry) could add a new perspective on young women's self-esteem and Instagram

activity regarding identity and race. Comparing this group to individuals who share one of part of their racial identity could produce a more thorough grasp on how race relates to self-esteem.

As previously mentioned, this study looked at women between the ages of 19 and 30. A comparison between participants in varying age groups could generate contrasting results. By allowing women of a wider age range to participate in the study, new insight on the relationship between self-esteem, racial identity, and Instagram usage could emerge. For example, how older women interact with Instagram (or any other social media platforms) may differ from women of a younger generation. Similarly, if a study investigated the relationship between self-esteem, ethnic and racial identity, and Instagram usage with male or non-binary individuals as participants, the data may also show differing results, as different genders may relate to the same variables in a different manner.

Finally, further research is needed to determine the variables that influence young women's self-esteem. As reported, this study found no significant relationship between women's Instagram usage and self-esteem, so determining which variables relate to an individual's level of self-esteem will be an important contribution to the academic community—whether these variables are different social networking platforms, the form of media, or another medium altogether.

There are many different deviations of my study that can be explored, and any related future research may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the broad relationship between self-esteem, ethnic and racial identity, and social media.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The central goal of this study was to determine whether there is a relationship between White and Eastern Asian-Canadian women's self-esteem and ethnic and racial identity, and their Instagram use. This study sought to fill research gaps left by previous literature. For example, existing studies have analyzed the media's influence on an individual's internalization of Western culture (Calogero et al., 2007); how female racial minorities respond to mainstream beauty standards in comparison to White women (Evans & McConnell, 2003); the relationship between Instagram use and the user's psychological well-being (Mackson et al., 2019); and the effect of Instagram on young women's body image concerns and self-objectification (Fardouly, et al., 2017). But, previous literature had yet to determine the relationship between all the variables through the lens of young White and Eastern Asian-Canadian women. It was found that White and Eastern Asian-Canadian women's global self-esteem was related to their body self-esteem. Results also showed that there was a significant relationship between body self-esteem, global self-esteem, and racial identity for Eastern Asian-Canadian participants. However, for both groups, their Instagram use had no significant relationship to either body self-esteem, global self-esteem, or racial identity.

The results do not support my hypothesis that, in comparison to White women, there would be a stronger relationship between Eastern Asian-Canadian women's self-esteem and Instagram usage based on the strength of their ethnic and racial identity. Although a significant relationship between body self-esteem, global self-esteem, and racial identity was found, Instagram usage had no significant relationship with

Although no association between White and Eastern Asian-Canadian women's Instagram use and global self-esteem, body self-esteem, and racial identity was found in this study, this research provides a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship young women have with social networking sites. Instagram, and to a much larger extent, social media, has become an increasingly popular component to the average person's everyday life. However, the belief that Instagram negatively influences one's self-perceptions may be inaccurate, at least as determined within the context of this study. This finding directly contradicts a popular preconception which views these trends as directly related. This may be a relief for users who hope to benefit from their time spent on Instagram, which remains a useful platform for sharing photography and maintaining social connections. Thus, while there are nuances involving Instagram use, self-esteem, and racial and ethnic identity that have yet to be explored, at least in terms of this social effect, users of the platform should not be dissuaded from their participation on that basis.

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Appendix A: Core Certificate

Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Maya Gwilliam

*has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement:
Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans
Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)*

7 January, 2020

Appendix B: Recruitment Poster for Social Media Posts

Appendix C: Letter of Information to participating universities and their members

Dear Students,

My name is Maya Gwilliam. I am a graduate student in the Master of Arts (Communication) program at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. A requirement of this program is to conduct original research to complete a master's thesis. The purpose of my research is to explore if there is a relationship between white and Eastern Asian-Canadian women's self-esteem, ethnicity and racial identity, and their Instagram use. By examining the potential link between these two particular racial groups and the three variables, it may provide insight into our ability to recognize the potential contrasting relationships between young women of various racial/ethnic groups and social media.

Participants in this study should be either white or Eastern Asian-Canadian women between the ages of 19 to 30 years old, inclusive. The survey can be accessed via a link at the end of this email. The survey is expected to take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

If you agree to participate in this research, please follow the link to the letter of informed consent. If you check the box indicating that you agree to the conditions as outlined in the letter, you consent to participate in the study and will be redirected to the online survey and your data will be used to answer the research questions.

All participants' responses will remain anonymous. {Insert survey link here}.

Thank you.

Maya Gwilliam
Master of Arts (Communication) student
Department of Communication Studies
Mount Saint Vincent University

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form
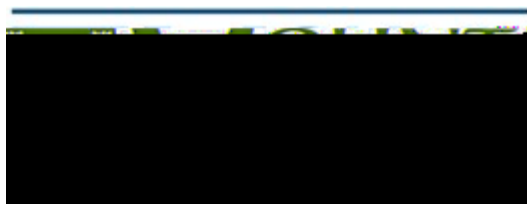
I : Maya Gwilliam, Department of Communication Studies, Mount Saint Vincent University

: Dr. Tracy Moniz, Department of Communication Studies, Mount Saint Vincent University

:

The purpose of this study is to explore if there is a relationship between white and Eastern Asian-Canadian women's self-esteem, ethnicity and racial identity, and Instagram use. This survey hopes to examine how a participant's Instagram use may be related to their self-esteem and internalization of mainstream beauty ideals.

?

If you decide to participate, you will complete a survey that should take approximately 15-20 minutes to finish. Aside from answering your age, questions will in asked in a multiple-choice format. The questions asked will focus on self-esteem, body image, and Instagram use. Only the Eastern Asian-Canadian participants will be asked questions involving racial oppression.

To participate, you must Canadian and be either a White or Eastern Asian woman between 19 to 30 years old, inclusive.

R :

In exchange for your time, you can expect to gain some understanding of academic research and ideas currently being studied in the fields of communication and psychology. In addition, participants will be contributing to our understanding of how minority women's racial/ethnic identity can be related to their relationship with Western standards of beauty.

However, while we do not anticipate any foreseeable risks or discomfort, participants may feel negative emotions, such as sadness or anxiousness, while answering questions related to their race or self-esteem or after survey completion. You have the option to skip questions that you do not wish to answer or to stop participating in the survey altogether if you feel uncomfortable at any point.

If you are affected by the content of the survey, Wellness Together Canada is a texting-based resource that offers crisis support. To use this service, text WELLNESS to 741741. In addition, the Hong Fook Mental Health Association offers an intake process for members of the Asian

community. When clients call, intake workers help individuals identify presenting issues, determine eligibility for services, and make appropriate service referrals. To use this service, please call 416-493-4242.

H   &   :

Your individual results from this study will be completely confidential, and your name will not be associated with any of your responses. Your data will be identified using an arbitrary participant number and stored on a secure server. As a result, we are unable to remove your data from the study once you have submitted your survey responses. De-identified data from this study may be shared with the research community at large to advance science and health (i.e., The student investigator may share the data with interested researchers for academic purposes). By current scientific standards and known methods, no one will be able to identify you from the information shared. The results of this study will be presented at the student investigator's thesis defense presentation. The data may also result in academic presentations and publications. Any resulting publications or presentations will only use group data; you will never be personally identified. Individual responses will not be presented on their own. In addition, this data may be shared for future use. If the data is shared with other researchers, ethics would be submitted for secondary use of data.

I ask that you consider participating in this research study. As a participant, you will be asked to answer a series of multiple-choice questions. Once submitted, your responses will be sent directly to the student investigator. All answers remain anonymous and therefore cannot be attributed to any participant. You will have the option to withdraw from the research up until you submit your responses online. You may also contact us if you wish to review the results when my thesis becomes publicly available.

If you have any additional questions regarding this study, you can contact Maya Gwilliam at maya.gwilliam@msvu.ca or Dr. Tracy Moniz at Tracy.Moniz@msvu.ca. Furthermore, if you have questions about how this study is being conducted or wish to speak to someone who is NOT directly involved in this study, you can contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) at research@msvu.ca or 902-457-6350.

P   **.**

                                        T   **.**

B   ,   :

- Freely and voluntarily agreeing to participate in this study.
- Confirming that you have read and understood the above information about the study.
- Stating that any questions you have asked, have been answered to your satisfaction.
- Acknowledging that you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences or penalty.
- Acknowledging that your responses are being collected anonymously.

Appendix E: Introductory Questions

Please respond to these questions as accurately as you can.

1. What do you identify as?
   - White
   - Eastern Asian
   - Other
2. How old are you?
   - 0-18 years old
   - 19-22 years old
   - 23-27 years old
   - 28-30 years old
   - 31 years old or older

3. Are you Canadian?
   - Yes
   - No
4. What is your gender?
   - Female
   - Male
   - Prefer not to say
   - Other_____

5. To what extent do you think your appearance is aligned with mainstream beauty ideals?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Somewhat
6. Can you recognize when an image of an individual has been edited?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Sometimes
7. How do you feel after viewing images of attractive women of the same race as you? (Circle all that apply)
   - Happy
   - Sadness
   - Anger
   - Anxious
   - Disgust
   - Self-conscious
   - Neutral
   - Other: _____

8. How do you feel after viewing images of attractive women of a different race as you? (Circle all that apply)
   - Happy
   - Sadness
   - Anger
   - Anxious
   - Disgust
   - Self-conscious
   - Neutral
   - Other: _____

9. Do you have an Instagram account?
   - Yes
   - No

10. What genre of Instagram accounts do you follow most?
    - Animals
    - Friends/family
    - Food
    - Female influencers/celebrities
    - Male influencers/celebrities
    - Nature
    - Other: _____

11. Do you follow more Instagram accounts run by women of the same race as you than women who are not?
    - Yes
    - No

12. Does looking at images of women on Instagram positively or negatively influence how you feel about yourself?
    - Yes
    - Yes, depending on the race of the woman in the image
    - No

Appendix F: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Items are rated using a 4-point Likert scale with the following response options to each statement: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
2. At times I think I am no good at all.
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
6. I certainly feel useless at times.
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Appendix G: Body Esteem Scale-Revised (BES-R)

Listed below are a number of body parts and functions. Please read each item and indicate how you feel about this part or function of your own body. Items are rated using a 5-point Likert scale: 1 (have strong negative feelings), 2 (have moderate negative feelings), 3 (have no feeling one way or the other), 4 (have moderate positive feelings), and 5 (have strong positive feelings). Note: The subscale for physical condition has been removed.

1. Body scent
2. Head hair
3. Hips
4. Waist
5. Thighs
6. Skin condition
7. Weight
8. Body build
9. Figure/physique
10. Buttocks
11. Sex activities
12. Chest or breasts
13. Appearance of eyes
14. Face
15. Legs
16. Sex drive
17. Appearance of stomach

Only sexual attractiveness and weight concern subscales will be measured. For women, they are:

Sexual attractiveness: body scent, buttocks, chest or breasts, appearance of eyes, sex drive, sex activities, face, head hair, skin condition

Weight concern: waist, thighs, body build, hips, legs, figure or physique, appearance of stomach, weight

Appendix H: Appropriated Racial Oppression Scale (AROS)

The 24-item scale is rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale: 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Moderately Disagree), 3 (Slightly Disagree), 4 (Uncertain), 5 (Slightly Agree), 6 (Moderately Agree), and 7 (Strongly Agree).

Factor 1: Emotional Responses
1. There have been times when I have been embarrassed to be a member of my race
2. I wish I could have more respect for my racial group
3. I feel critical about my racial group
4. Sometimes I have negative feelings about being a member of my race
5. In general, I am ashamed of members of my racial group because of the way they act
6. When interacting with other members of my race, I often feel like I don't fit in
7. I don't really identify with my racial group's values and beliefs

Factor 2: American Standards of Beauty
8. I find persons with lighter skin-tones to be more attractive
9. I would like for my children to have light skin
10. I find people who have straight and narrow noses to be more attractive
11. I prefer my children not to have broad noses
12. I wish my nose were narrower
13. Good hair (i.e., straight) is better

Factor 3: Devaluation of Own Group
14. Because of my race, I feel useless at times
15. I wish I were not a member of my race
16. Whenever I think a lot about being a member of my racial group, I feel depressed
17. Whites are better at a lot of things than people of my race
18. People of my race don't have much to be proud of
19. It is a compliment to be told "You don't act like a member of your race"
20. When I look in the mirror, sometimes I do not feel good about what I see because of my race
21. I feel that being a member of my racial group is a shortcoming

Factor 4: Appropriation of Negative Stereotypes
22. People of my race shouldn't be so sensitive about race/racial matters
23. People take racial jokes too seriously
24. Although discrimination in America is real, it is definitely overplayed by some members of my race

This 24-item scale is designed to assess the beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions to appropriate racial oppression in people of colour. Item scores are summed for each of the four subscales and then the subscale scores are summed to create a total score.

Appendix I: Passive and Active Use Measure

How frequently do you perform the following activities when you are on Instagram? (Note: Choosing "Very Frequently" means that about 100% of the time that you log on to Instagram, you perform this activity).

Items are rated using a 5-point Likert scale: 1 (Never 0%), 2 (Rarely 25%), 3 (Sometimes 50%), 4 (Somewhat frequently), and 5 (Very frequently 100%).

1. Posting photos to your profile
2. Commenting on other users' photos
3. Sending direct messages to other users
4. Checking to see what someone else is up to
5. Viewing photos
6. Viewing videos
7. Tagging other users in videos
8. Browsing the newsfeed passively (without liking or commenting)
9. Browsing the newsfeed actively (liking and commenting on other users' posts)
10. Looking through my friends' posts

Items should be presented to respondents in randomized order.
Scoring: Items are summed.
Active: 1, 2, 3, 7, 9
Passive: 4, 5, 6, 8, 10