YOUNG WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF VIEWING THINSPIRATION AND FITSPIRATION ON INSTAGRAM

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ABSTRACT

With the growing popularity of image-based social media platforms like Instagram, particularly among young women, researchers have begun to study relationships between social media and body image. Much of this research, however, has used quantitative research methods, which cannot capture the rich, inner experiences of individuals. Popular trends on Instagram include images of what is termed "Thinspiration" (i.e., pictures of thin girls or women intended to inspire viewers to be thin like them) and "Fitspiration" (i.e., pictures of fit girls or women who ostensibly inspire viewers to become fit like them). Given the dearth of qualitative research exploring thoroughly what young women internally experience when viewing Thinspiration or Fitspiration, the present study used consensual qualitative research to capture in young women's own words what they feel and think in response to viewing Fitspiration and Thinspiration. Twelve young women who use social media regularly and Instagram at least once per day were recruited for a study entitled "Young women's experiences of viewing Instagram #Thin- and #Fitspiration." Participants were shown lab-created Instagram fan-page profiles of one well-known Fitspiration influencer and one well-known Thinspiration influencer and then interviewed about these and similar experiences in their lives. The analytic team identified 10 general, 18 typical, and 11 variant domains. Many of the domains related to the sociocultural model of body dissatisfaction or objectification theory. Moreover, from five of the 10 general domains emerged what I have termed an emergent dialectical theory of social media and body image. When viewing Thinspiration or Fitspiration, young women often seemed to feel or think two seemingly opposite things simultaneously within the topic areas of attainability, emotional reactions, social comparison, body image, and health. Given the occurrence of dialectics within these domains, I conclude that these themes should be explored in prevention programs in ways aiming to balance

acceptance with change. I also offer broader implications and recommendations to social media companies based on results found herein.

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Young Women's Experiences of Viewing Thinspiration and Fitspiration on Instagram

Social media platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and others, are a large part of today's society. Suggested definitions of the construct of social media have united around the idea that the various platforms all involve social presence and processes or user-generated content using digital technology (e.g., Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Terry, 2009). One current and future-oriented scholarly definition of social media is: "Internet-based, disentrained, and persistent channels of masspersonal communication facilitating perceptions of interactions among users, deriving value primarily from user-generated content" (Carr & Hayes, 2015, p. 49). Carr and Hayes (2015) presented this definition due to recognizing a need for an academic way to conceptualize social media in order to work from an established theoretical foundation even 20 years in the future. They also offer this more accessible way of characterizing social media without losing the fundamental components of the definition: "Social media are Internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others" (Carr & Hayes, 2015). The act of putting information on the Internet is referred to as "posting." Thus, a "social media post" is the content (e.g., photograph, video, written message) social media users put on social media sites.

Social media use

Social media use is still a relatively new phenomenon and yet is remarkably popular. In 2019, it was estimated that 45% of the world's population actively uses some form of social media (Kemp, 2019); In 2021, 53.6% of people used social media and spent almost 2.5 hours on social media daily (Bullock et al., 2021). Within the last 16 years, social media users have

increased from just 5% to 72% of Americans (Pew Research Center [Pew], 2021a). As of 2021, between 58 and 84.9% of Canadians used social media, which is the third most popular way of spending time online, behind only e-mail and banking (Canadian Internet Registration Authority [CIRA], 2021; Kemp, 2021). With 95.9% of them doing so, nearly all young Canadians (aged 20 to 24 years old) use social media (Statistics Canada, 2021). Between about two thirds and three quarters of Canadian users frequent daily the top five most popular social media applications, which are: Facebook, messaging applications, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok/Douyin (Gruzd & Mai, 2020). Among online Canadian adults aged 18 to 24 years old, 87% are active on Instagram at least monthly (Gruzd & Mai, 2020). The picture is similar in the United States, with 84% of 18- to 29-year-olds using at least one social media site (Pew, 2021b). Among American young adults, 73% of Instagram users visit the site daily, and 53% use Instagram several times each day (Pew, 2021b). Instagram, an image-based application with over a billion active monthly and 500 million daily users (Facebook, 2020), is the one of the most popular social media applications in both Canada and the United States (CIRA, 2020; Gruzd & Mai, 2020; Kemp, 2021; Pew, 2021). At least four out of every 10 Canadians and Americans use Instagram; this percentage has been increasing in Canada over time (CIRA, 2020; 2021; Gruzd & Mai, 2020; Pew, 2020, 2021b). In Ontario, Canada's most populous province (Statistics Canada, 2020), 43% of the population uses Instagram (CIRA, 2021). The dominant group on Instagram is young adults; nearly 90% of Canadians aged 18-24 use Instagram (Gruzd & Mai, 2020), while, likewise, 71% of the American young adult population uses Instagram (Pew, 2021a).

Gender differences in social media use

Considering social media usage by gender, Canadian women are more likely than men to use social media daily, with 75% of Canadian women doing so (Simplii, 2019). Both Canadian

and American women are also more likely than men to use Instagram (Pew, 2019; 2021a; Gruzd & Mai, 2020; Kemp, 2021). Taken together, young women are among the heaviest users of image-based social media. Given similarities between how social media are used in each country and the global reach of social media posts, it is possible that research findings regarding image-based social media among young women may be generalizable between Canada and the United States.

Instagram

Instagram has been in use for 11 years (Instagram, 2019; Blystone, 2020). While it currently claims to "bring you closer to the people and things you love" (Instagram, n.d.-a), Instagram's original mission statement was to simply "capture and share the world's moments" beautifully (Instagram from Facebook, 2013). Photographs, videos, and other images including text can be posted on Instagram, along with brief text captions and hashtags. Hashtags are words or phrases following a hash sign used to categorize messages related to a certain topic on social media sites (Oxford English dictionary; OED, n.d.-a). Women, more than men, use social media for viewing photographs of others (Smith, 2014). Additionally, Instagram users are more likely to engage with content (e.g., "Like" or comment on a photograph, which requires viewing content) than to post content themselves (Feehan, 2021). Nearly 60% of all online Canadian women use Instagram (Gruzd & Mai, 2020). Given that Instagram is a photograph-based social media application, it is not surprising that women are also more likely to use Instagram than are men (Edison Research, 2019; Kemp, 2021; Pew, 2021). Though our understanding of how Instagram impacts young women is currently limited, Instagram is clearly very popular among young women.

A vast number of websites, including social media sites, promote body ideals through photographs that glorify thinness, dieting, and weight loss (Perloff, 2014) as well as ostensibly healthy lifestyles and fitness. The hashtag "#Thinspiration" is a portmanteau of "thin" and "inspiration." The hashtag "#Thinspiration" has been banned on Instagram per the company's community guidelines to disallow content that encourages or promoting self-injury, which they assert includes eating disorders (Instagram, n.d.-b; Instagram, n.d.-c). Despite this policy, content promoting the thin ideal (i.e., "Thinspiration" or "thinspo") is still relatively easy to find on Instagram through "top posts" and accounts as alternatives to searching hashtags (Gerrard, 2018). Instagram users have also circumvented the #Thinspiration ban by using alternative hashtags meant to evade being inactivated, such as "#thinspoooo." A search of this term, as of July 2020, yielded 335,000 posts; as of August 2021, it yielded 331,000 posts; and, as of February 2022, yielded fewer than 100 posts. As of February 2022, the similar but shorter "#thinspooo" hashtag yielded close to 10,000 posts, which when using the application came with a statement that recent posts for this hashtag are hidden "because some posts may not follow Instagram's Community Guidelines" but the same message does not appear on the desktop version of Instagram (#thinspooo, n.d.). "Fitspiration"— an amalgam of "fitness" and "inspiration"— idealizes visibly toned and lean bodies (Boepple et al., 2016), emphasizes appearance-based motives for exercise and eating health foods, and contains objectifying elements, such as a specific body part being the main focus of the image (Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2016). As of August 2021, there were 19.3 million Instagram posts under the hashtag "#Fitspiration," which grew to 19.5 million in February 2022. In August 2021, under the shortened form "#fitspo," there were 73.9 million posts, which grew to 74.6 million in February 2022, indicating the immense popularity of this trend. There are currently no content warning

statements associated with #Fitspiration or #fitspo. Fitspiration and Thinspiration both represent a sociocultural emphasis on being lean and thin, which is a likely primary cause of body image disturbances and, in some cases, eating disorders (Park, 2005).

In the next sections, I review two influential theories related to social media and body image: the sociocultural model and self-objectification theory. I also discuss two issues that emerge from the existing literature on social media and body image: (1) changing body ideals and (2) how women feel about seeing certain types of so-called inspirational appearance-based content and images in social media.

Sociocultural Model of Body Image Dissatisfaction

Body image is the way in which a person perceives their own body (Schilder, 1935/1950) and can be negative, positive, or neutral. Body image is comprised of perceptions and attitudes, including thoughts, attitudes, emotions, and behaviours related to one's own body (Bailey et al., 2017). Anywhere between 70% and 91% of women perceive their bodies as bigger than how they would like to look, indicating a high prevalence of body dissatisfaction among women (Fallon & Rozin, 1985; Runfola et al., 2013). So many women are preoccupied with their weight and eating to some extent that it has long been considered normative for a woman to be discontent with her body (Rodin et al., 1984). Women speaking disparagingly about their own bodies is prevalent in Western society and is associated with body dissatisfaction and disordered eating (Salk & Engeln-Maddox, 2012). Puberty is a time during which body mass increases and young women's body dissatisfaction increases (Bucchianeri et al., 2013). While this is also true for young men, even the highest levels of body dissatisfaction among young men are lower than the lowest levels of body dissatisfaction among young women (Bucchianeri et al., 2013). Clearly, body dissatisfaction among young women is widely prevalent. There is some evidence

that after viewing Fitspiration some men feel negative (DiBisceglie & Arigo, 2021), that this experience is detrimental to their body image (Barron et al., 2021) and directly predicts drive for muscularity (Seekis et al., 2021). While research into young men and their experiences of viewing Fitspiration and Thinspiration is another important related research area, young women may have unique experiences resulting from viewing the plethora of appearance-based social media content aimed at them that is worthwhile to study independent from other groups of people, such as young men. It is important to study body dissatisfaction among women because it is a risk factor for several negative psychological outcomes, including low self-esteem (Johnson & Wardle, 2005), depressive symptoms (Brausch & Gutierrez, 2009; Ferreiro et al., 2011; Johnson & Wardle, 2005), abnormal attitudes toward eating and weight (Johnson & Wardle, 2005), and clinically disordered eating (Stice, 2002; Ferreiro et al., 2011). Negative body image is a strong predictor of dieting and unhealthy weight control behaviours, as well as avoidance of physical activity and decreased vegetable and fruit intake among young women (Anton et al., 2000; Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2006). In fact, nearly 60% of young women report skipping meals in efforts to control their weight (Tylka & Subich, 2002). Understanding the ways in which young women's perceptions of their own bodies are influenced by seeing other women's bodies presented in idealized ways—as they are in Fitspiration and Thinspiration social media—can inform prevention and intervention efforts against potential deleterious psychological effects in young women of viewing this social media content.

Even before the advent of social media, many researchers employed the "sociocultural model" (Fallon, 1990; Heinberg, 1996) when examining factors influencing the origins of body dissatisfaction. The sociocultural theory (also known as the tripartite model of body image disturbance) posits that media, peers, and family are societal influences of standards of

attractiveness that can incite both idealization of unattainably thin bodies (and other difficult-to-achieve standards of beauty; Thompson & Heinberg, 1999) and appearance comparisons that, in turn, may lead to body dissatisfaction and disordered eating (Thompson et al., 1999; Keery et al., 2004). Previous research with university women has shown a significant correlation between peer and media influences as well as between parental and media influences, which aligns with this theory (Rodgers et al., 2011). My Master's research, wherein I found that engaging with appearance-based social media content of known, attractive peers caused increased body dissatisfaction in young women also aligns with this theory (Hogue & Mills, 2019).

The sociocultural model of body image emphasizes both the omnipresent and largely unattainable nature of current beauty ideals, whether comparison targets appear in mass media, in peers, or through parental influences (Thompson et al., 1999). In modern times, depictions of female beauty have been idealized through mass media (e.g., television, magazines, etc.) that blur the lines between idealized fiction and reality (Freedman, 1986). Although it is a complex relationship, exposure to mass media feminine appearance ideals generally negatively impacts some young women's body image, mood, and self-esteem (Arendt et al., 2017). To expand upon this complexity, when young women view idealized or "unrealistic" images of women's bodies, they often engage in social comparison which, in turn, can elicit the aforementioned negative outcomes (Arendt et al., 2017). Having a high tendency to compare appearance has been found to lead to more body dissatisfaction upon viewing idealized images of women on social media (Fardouly & Holland, 2018). Being invested in appearance—that is, engaging in behaviours in efforts to enhance one's appearance and considering appearance as important for self-definition (Cash & Labarge, 1996; Cash et al., 2004)—is related to negative appearance-related outcomes, such as higher body comparison (Johnson et al., 2014) and awareness of media messages (Sinton

& Birch, 2006). In other words, women who have high appearance comparison tendency and high appearance investment may be particularly vulnerable to adverse impacts of exposure to body ideal media, such as is shown in Fitspiration and Thinspiration on social media.

Mass media have been proposed as the most pervasive and powerful indicators of sociocultural standards (Heinberg, 1996; Mazur, 1986). Social media are now the predominant source of exposure to images of other women's bodies for most young women (Mills et al., 2017). Furthermore, social media combine the three important influences of media, peers, and family originally identified in the sociocultural model.

The sociocultural model predicts that social media exposure to thin and fit ideals, which are unattainable for most women, negatively impacts body image in some young women (Rodgers, 2016; Thompson et al., 1999) by increasing awareness of the discrepancy between what the ideal body looks like and what most women's bodies actually look like. Recent findings indicate that, in their everyday lives, young women are exposed to Thinspiration and Fitspiration on consistent daily and weekly bases and that they see both types of content at the same rate (Griffiths & Stefanovski, 2019). This suggests that even if not intentionally seeking out appearance-focused social media, young women are frequently exposed to both Fitspiration and Thinspiration content. Given its accessibility, interactivity, popularity, and pervasiveness, appearance-focused social media content may be the most powerful indicator of sociocultural standards of body ideals today. Consistent with sociocultural theory, there is emerging evidence that engaging with appearance-based and idealized social media content is related to negative mood (Brown & Tiggemann, 2016; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2015) and body dissatisfaction in young women, particularly those who make appearance comparisons (Brown & Tiggemann, 2016; Hogue & Mills, 2019; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2015). In sum, sociocultural theory is a

useful framework by which to understand the effects of exposure to idealized bodies on social media on the psychology of women.

Unlike traditional mass media, social media are media of not only celebrities but also of "everyday women," some of whom find fame and monetary success on Instagram through creating a seemingly authentic "personal brand" and influence their followers to consume products and services produced by companies with which they work (Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2016). These micro-celebrities are called "social media influencers" (Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2016). Some social media influencers, through their Thinspiration and Fitspiration online content, purport to inspire women to improve their appearance and/or fitness. Arguably, the nature of social media blurs the lines between idealized fiction and reality as well as normalizes unachievable body ideals for "regular" women even more than do traditional media.

Objectification Theory

Objectification theory proposes that the pervasive tendency in society to view women as their bodies or even a collection of (often sexualized and for the use or pleasure of another) body parts—rather than whole, complex, individuals—can lead to taking a primary view of the *self* as object (i.e., self-objectification) and habitual monitoring of one's own appearance, which underlie increases to body dissatisfaction and disordered eating (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Social media are thought to intensify self-objectification among women. It has been found that Instagram use is correlated with self-objectification among young women, a relationship mediated by internalization of societal appearance ideals and appearance comparisons to celebrities on Instagram (Fardouly et al., 2018). Self-objectification can occur in part through exposure to objectifying images, such as those that separate out, emphasize, or evaluate specific body parts (Bartky, 1990; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Both Fitspiration and Thinspiration

contain what could be considered objectifying images, though it is not yet known if young women actually perceive either type of content as objectifying. Content analyses of Thinspiration indicate these images tend to isolate, emphasize, and encourage evaluation of tiny waists, protruding bones, and/or small thighs (Ghaznavi & Taylor, 2015; Talbot et al., 2017). Fitspiration images of women may separate out, highlight, and elicit judgement of abdomen muscle tone (Talbot et al., 2017), leg muscle tone (Deighton-Smith & Bell, 2018), large, toned buttocks (Appleford, 2017; Deighton-Smith & Bell, 2018), and petite waists/thinness (Appleford, 2017; Simpson & Mazzeo, 2017). Young women viewing objectifying images such as those presented in Thinspiration and Fitspiration content may then engage in self-objectification and body surveillance, assess their own bodies as lacking, and experience negative affect and body dissatisfaction as a result. In sum, self-objectification theory is another framework by which to understand the potential adverse psychological effects of appearance-based social media on women.

Changing Body Ideals

Body ideals have changed throughout history for a plethora of reasons, including social and political, but these boil down to women's shifting role in society (Bonafini & Pozzilli, 2011). Throughout the 20th century, beauty pageant winners' body mass indexes (BMI) decreased significantly; and, after World War II, female motion picture stars and models represented a waiflike body ideal (Bonafini & Pozzilli, 2011). Exemplars of this thin body ideal are the supermodels Twiggy and Kate Moss. The White (Strings, 2019) thin ideal became the (White) norm of beauty/attraction, though, for most women there remains a discrepancy between their actual body size and the essentially unattainable thin ideal (Dittmar, 2008).

Measures of sociocultural attitudes towards appearance have conceptualized muscular-ideal and thin-ideal internalization as separate (Schaefer et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2004). Muscularity as an ideal has often been thought of as more relevant to a traditional male aesthetic body ideal, with men's perceived lack of muscularity being associated with poor mental health outcomes (McCreary, 2007). However, there is now evidence that drive for thinness and drive for muscularity are not mutually exclusive, with many people possessing both simultaneously; these drives are also associated with negative psychological outcomes like disordered eating and body preoccupation and anxiety (Kelley et al., 2010). Recently, there has been a rise in importance of muscularity *within* the thin ideal among women, with women showing a preference for thin muscular bodies—as is presented in Fitspiration content—over the thin ideal (Bozsik et al., 2018). Thin and muscular may be the new societally prescribed body ideal reflected in the toned, lean, and thin bodies of Fitspiration influencers on social media (Holland & Tiggemann, 2017). Women may also prefer Fitspiration to Thinspiration as a result of believing Fitspiration presents and promotes health and fitness and thus is a healthy antidote to its "dysfunctional counterpart," Thinspiration, which promotes an outdated, unhealthy thin ideal (Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2015; 2016). However, with Fitspiration, health promotion is not the actual objective and on top of societal pressure to achieve the thin ideal, women are now pressured to be muscular as well.

While it has been argued that the thin ideal emerged from racialized and racist origins and constructs a dominantly White ideal (Strings, 2019), popular culture has started to display a contemporary body ideal that merges aspects of Black and White beauty. Both White and Black women now show a preference for an "hourglass" silhouette, described by a wider bust and thighs paired with a very small waist (Overstreet et al., 2010). Fitspiration posts by women

exemplify this preference, as they often adhere to the thin ideal and feature full-body visibility with significant emphasis on their full, toned buttocks (Carrotte et al., 2017). Very famous embodiments of this new body ideal can be seen in Kylie Jenner and Kim Kardashian West, who both have full-figured buttocks and thighs as well as extremely petite waists and often emphasize their buttocks in social media posts (Jenner, n.d.; Kardashian West, n.d.). Taken together, it appears this toned bottom, average-hip, flat-and-toned midriff body type is now being idealized and objectified across racial groups of women. This new body ideal trend is colloquially known as "slim-thick" (often written as "thicc," derived from African American Vernacular English [Dow, 2018]) and is often featured in Fitspiration. That is, there is evidence of an emerging societal preference for women's body frames to be an hourglass shape in addition to being thin yet toned and muscular. Social media may be playing a role in that trend by repeatedly showing women images of body shapes that subsequently get internalized into what women want to look like (McComb & Mills, 2022). However, there are more diverse body types seen now on social media than were shown in traditional media (e.g., fashion magazines, movies) in previous decades.

Motives for Viewing Fitspiration and Thinspiration

Given the near impossibility for most women to achieve body ideals, why might they choose to expose themselves to depictions of "ideal" bodies? This dissertation aims to fill the gap of understanding young women's inner experiences (i.e., thoughts, feelings, and beliefs) *when* viewing Fitspiration and Thinspiration. However, participants may spontaneously offer explanations as to *why* they choose to view this content, if, indeed, doing so is a conscious choice. Young women who actively choose to view Thinspiration may do so to find inspiration and tips on how to lose weight and attempt to achieve a markedly thin appearance while feeling

social support and validation about their pursuit of thinness from an online community (Crowe & Watts, 2016; Tiggemann et al., 2018). Similarly, given Fitspiration's purported intention of inspiring people to engage in health and fitness activities, one such reason may be to find instructions on various ways to address health and fitness needs. In fact, in one study of mostly young women, the majority reported accessing Fitspiration to inspire them to exercise or eat healthy (Raggatt et al., 2018). Nevertheless, reasons related to weight loss and appearance are also commonly reported motivations for viewing Fitspiration (Raggatt et al., 2018).

It may be the case that young women, by nature of choosing to use Instagram, may not actively be seeking out Thinspiration or Fitspiration to view but are still being exposed to it. In both a sample of predominantly White women living with an eating disorder (Griffiths et al., 2018) and a non-clinical sample of young women (Fardouly et al., 2018), it was reported that they were exposed to Fitspiration content between "rarely" and "sometimes." In examining how exposure to Fitspiration and Thinspiration unfolds in individuals' everyday lives, it was found that a university convenience sample of young women were exposed to Fitspiration about 10 times per week and Thinspiration just over daily (Griffiths & Stefanovski, 2019). Taken together, this suggests many young women are seeing Fitspiration and Thinspiration content, whether they intend to or not.

Current Study

Consideration of how vast, accessible, and widespread social media are illuminates the importance of understanding young women's experiences, feelings, and beliefs surrounding appearance-based social media, such as Thinspiration and Fitspiration. Until recently, research on *appearance-focused* social media and body image concerns was virtually non-existent. Only 16 such (albeit all correlational) studies—the oldest of which was published in 2014—have been

identified in a recent meta-analytic review (Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019). Only 20 studies on the impact of *general* social media use on body image and disordered eating outcomes were identified in an older systematic review (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016b). Much like research on traditional mass media and body image, recent studies show that appearance-focused social media use has a small but significant positive relationship with body image concerns, particularly cognitive and behavioural aspects of body image (Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019). Viewing social media images of attractive women has even been found to be causally related to small but significant increases in state body dissatisfaction in young women (Hogue & Mills, 2019). Most young women are exposed on a daily basis to appearance-based social media that contribute to body image concerns and we know little about its effects (Griffiths & Stefanovski, 2019). Further research is needed on its influence and impact on young women and their body image, particularly from their own perspectives.

Rationale and Objectives

There are some gaps in the existing literature that informed the rationale and objectives of the current study. Almost no qualitative research on appearance-based social media and body image from the perspectives of young women has been conducted before now (although see Easton et al., 2018 for an exception). Little research on body image and media in general has used interview methods (for an exception see Becker, 2004). The current study aims to explore and better understand the influence of appearance-based social media (particularly Thinspiration and Fitspiration) on young women as they report it themselves. This study aims to understand the influence of Fitspiration and Thinspiration on young women in general. Participants may offer also their perceptions of who is most affected by this type of social media content. While one can speculate that the sociocultural model of body dissatisfaction and/or objectification theory may

be at play in young women's experiencing of appearance-based social media, rather than use a hypothesis-driven standpoint, it was decided to use a discovery-oriented perspective grounded in the data in order to gain a nuanced understanding of the phenomena under investigation. I did not start with preconceived hypotheses, as my intent was to "discover" hypotheses and theories in the process of data collection and analysis—as Hill et al. (1997) make clear is how qualitative researchers operate. The sociocultural model and objectification theory may or may not match young women's subjective and lived experiences with appearance-based social media content.

In the same way as Twiggy and Kate Moss—two famous underweight supermodels from past generations—can be referenced as examples of the thin ideal, the bodies of Kylie Jenner and Kim Kardashian may be considered exemplars of the new slim-thick ideal often portrayed in Fitspiration. In fact, Jen Salter, one famous fitpiration social media influencer, helped popularize the portmanteau "belfie," referencing selfies (i.e., photographs taken of oneself; [OED, n.d.]) featuring her buttocks (Dictionary.com, n.d.). Young women may make reference to this emerging body ideal trend while being asked about their experiences viewing Fitspiration content on social media and may reference celebrities whom they perceive as embodying this ideal. Whereas the thin ideal may have been more current previously, the fit/slim-thick ideal may be what today's young women idealize, feel societal pressure to attempt to attain, and compare their appearance against. Inspirational quotes that can occur along with Fitspiration can position Fitspiration as superior to Thinspiration (e.g., "Strong beats skinny every time," [Holland & Tiggemann, 2017]; "Exercise to be fit, not thin," [Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2015]). Given this recent trend for young women to aspire to looking fit, they may believe Fitspiration is healthier than Thinspiration, yet still indicate body dissatisfaction if they do not believe they are (or look) as fit as Fitspiration influencers. They may be less receptive to Thinspiration-style messages such

as Kate Moss famously said in an interview, “Nothing tastes as good as skinny feels,” (Moss, 2009) and more accepting of Fitspiration messages, believing these messages to be more accepting and inclusive than thin-ideal messages. This study may elucidate how young women respond to changing body ideals and societal appearance pressures.

The main objective of this study is to gain a rich understanding of what processes occur within young women when they view appearance-based social media content that promotes body image ideals, particularly the messages that thinness and fitness is inspiring and ideal (Thinspiration and Fitspiration, respectively). Moreover, the current study aimed to understand women’s personal reactions to Thinspiration and Fitspiration, which cannot be captured in questionnaires. Providing a rich description from interview data will aid in assessment of transferability of results and provide a nuanced understanding of the concepts under investigation (i.e., what young women experience when they view Thinspiration and Fitspiration).

While meta-analytic reviews of cross-sectional (Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019), experimental, and longitudinal (de Valle et al., 2021; Fioravanti et al., 2022) studies of social media and body image exist, these research methods do not allow for opportunities to capture the complex inner experiences of participants. While qualitative research methods performed by only one researcher may appear too subjective to some critics, consensual qualitative research (CQR) is a rigorous, team-based method that may help reviewers who are more familiar with quantitative research methods understand and trust the qualitative analysis more, given its focus on team members’ agreement, its situation midway between constructivism and post-positivism (Hill et al., 2005), and consideration of frequency of occurrences of domains and categories. CQR involves developing a list of topic areas (i.e., “domains”) that may be based on pre-existing expertise, interview questions, and, ultimately, categorizing material in transcripts based on an

analytic team arguing to consensus about the best classification of units of text/thoughts. Core ideas (i.e., distillation of what participants said down to its essence comparable across cases) and categories (i.e., common themes) are also consensually agreed upon by team members. Taking all of the above into consideration, I chose to use CQR in order to examine young women's individual experiences of viewing Fitspo and Thinspo in depth remaining as close/true to the data as possible.

Method

Participants

This study was approved York University's research ethics board (certificate e2018-122, renewed and approved until June 30, 2021). Participants for the current study included interviewees who participated in a larger study of women's reactions to appearance-based social media. In that larger study, 43 young women aged 18 to 25 years who use social media regularly and Instagram at least daily were recruited. Ten pilot interview participants from the community were recruited from posters on campus while the URPP was unavailable due to a labour strike at the university. Once piloting was complete, 28 participants were recruited through York University's undergraduate research participant pool (URPP). Of the 28 interviews, one was determined to be unusable and was excluded. The interviewer used her judgment to end the interview early due to the interviewee rushing the process and wanting to leave, leaving a total of 28 interviews from which to randomly sample 12 interviews for the current study. Posted study information stated that the purpose of the study was to further our understanding of young women's experiences of viewing Instagram Thinspiration and Fitspiration in their daily lives. Posted study information revealing exactly the purpose of the study may have failed to capture potential recruits who were intimately familiar with the topic but uncomfortable with the notion

of discussing their experiences. However, the current study aimed to understand the experiences of those young women who do experience viewing Fit- and Thin-spiration and are willing to discuss these experiences. It is often preferable to use this kind of criterion-based sampling in qualitative research to ensure knowledge about to whom results are applicable and provision of a meaningful context for the reader to interpret and understand the results (Hill et al., 1997). That is, having a willing sample of participants who are very familiar with the topic under study is critical (Hill et al., 1997). The interviews were conducted between August 1, 2018 and April 15, 2019 by the doctoral candidate as well as a trained part-time research assistant. A sample size of 12 interviewees, chosen from the larger URPP sample at random, was expected to yield a sufficient sample size for the current study (see Analyses below for the details).

Procedure

To ensure that participants spoke about vivid, personal experiences of viewing Thinspiration and Fitspiration and ensure they had a recent experience about the phenomenon under investigation, as is suggested by Hill et al. (1997; 2005), the procedure included first having participants privately view simulated Instagram profiles of social media influencers who promote Thinspiration and Fitspiration and asking them to pay attention to their thoughts and feelings while viewing these profiles. Immediately following this, participants were interviewed regarding this experience and related experiences they have had in their personal lives. The interviews were semi-structured, thus creating opportunities for the interviewer to ask follow-up questions encouraging specificity (See Appendix B). Example questions include: “How would you describe your experience when looking at these profiles?” and “What thoughts and feelings come up for you?” Interviews were audio-recorded for transcription, and the transcripts analyzed

using consensual qualitative research (CQR; Hill et al., 1997; see Analyses section for detailed description of method).

Participants met with either the candidate or one of the other research team members. The interviews lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes. There was a list of questions (i.e., "interview schedule") that the interviewer asked the participants (see Appendices A and B). However, the interview was left intentionally open in order to allow for new understandings and discoveries to emerge. Some participants spontaneously offered personal information during interviews.

All participants were asked near the outset of the interview how they felt when looking at these types of images. Additional probing questions were used to gather data on cognitive and emotional themes that emerged during each interview. At the end of the interview, the interviewer checked to see if the participant has any additional comments for the interviewer and how she found the interview experience overall and asked participants to self-report their estimated weight and height. Participants who indicated high levels of distress were provided appropriate referral information. After each interview, the interviewer wrote memos about the interview process, including personal reactions, thoughts on possible interpretations, and any notable reactions from the interviewee.

Materials

Simulated Instagram profiles of Thinspiration and Fitspiration social media influencers were created in consultation with members of the candidate's lab. These Instagram influencers were chosen based on how closely they exemplified thin and fit ideals (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1

Simulated Fitspiration Instagram Profile in Which Jen Selter is Pictured

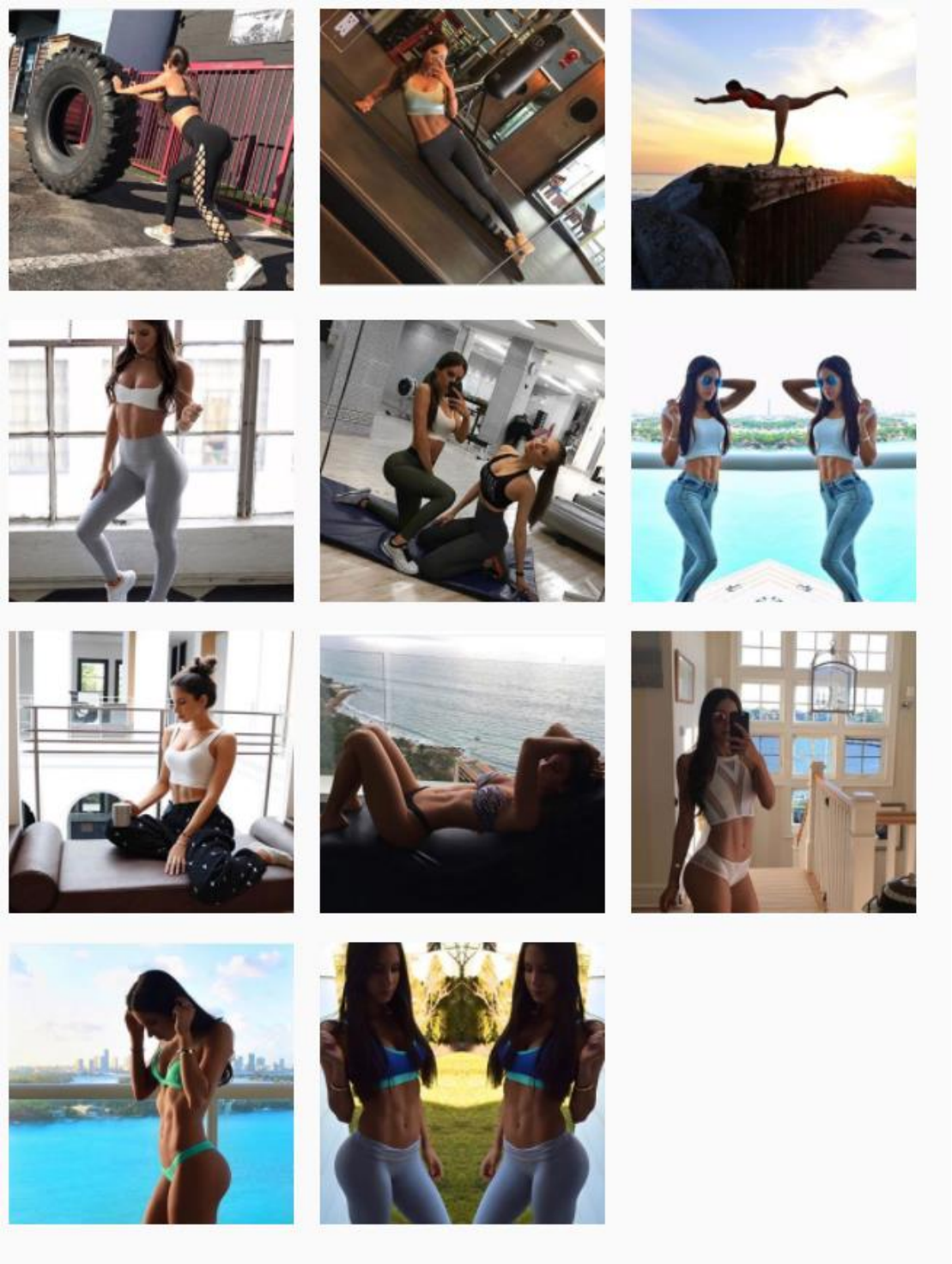
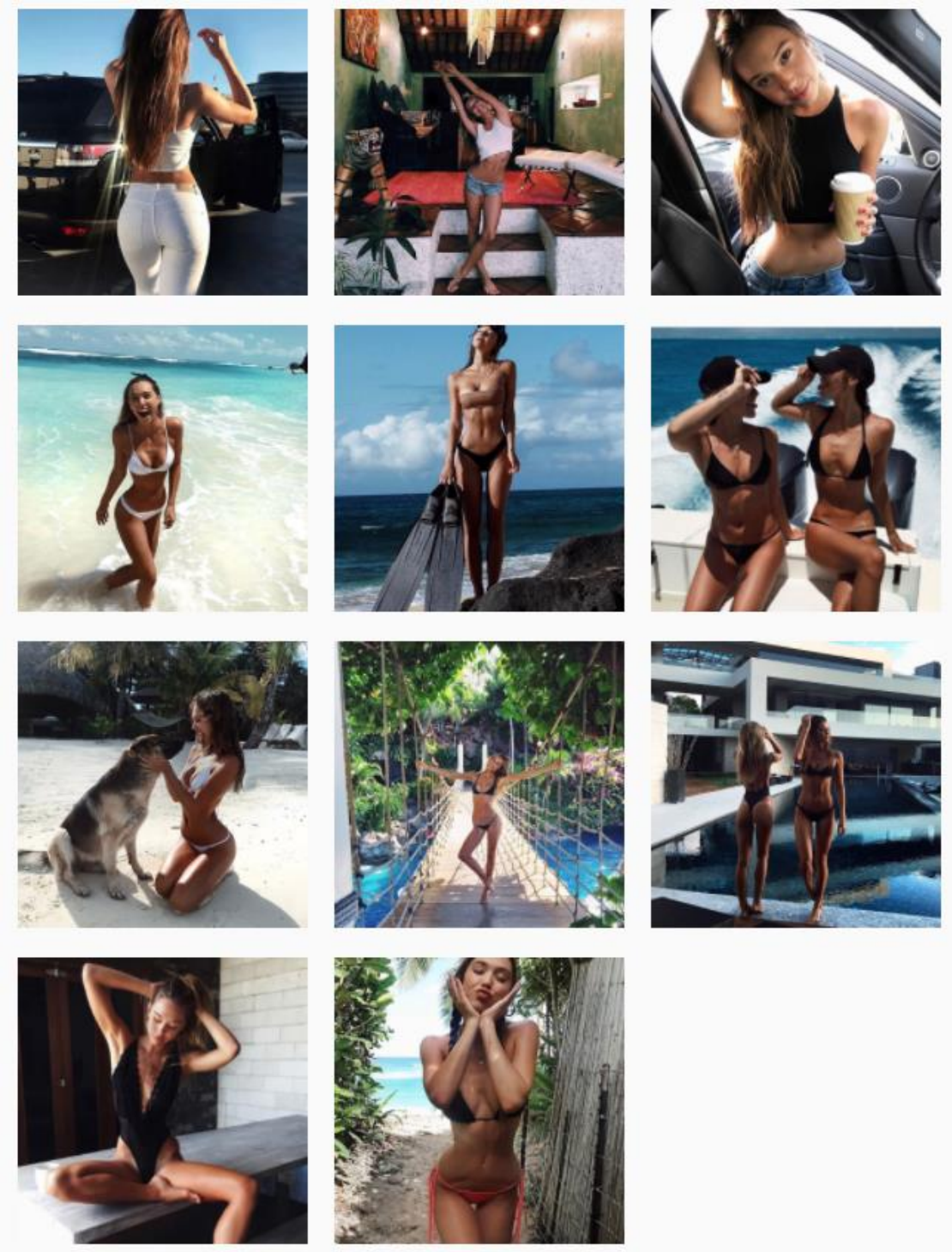


Figure 2

Simulated Thinspiration Instagram Profile in Which Alexis Ren is Pictured



While the lab-generated profiles were presented as "fan pages"—that is, online profiles created by fans dedicated to a specific celebrity (The Free Dictionary, n.d.)—, the pictured influencers both have large followings on Instagram, with each influencer having at least 12.7 million followers as of July 2020. Thus, we presumed that these were representative of the Fitspiration and Thinspiration images young women are exposed to routinely on Instagram. Jen Selter represented as the Fitspiration influencer and Alexis Ren was used as the Thinspiration influencer. The criteria employed in carefully selecting specific images for each simulated profile were:

- ensure the account appeared as natural as possible, avoiding modeling shots
- include friends/lifestyle as much as possible
- include a variety of poses and types of outfits
- include a mix of selfies/photos taken by other people
- avoid product endorsements
- avoid overly sexual images as much as possible
- each photo must have a sufficient number of "likes" (visually depicted on screen by a numeric tally appearing below a heart symbol under the image)
- each photo must show the face and body as much as possible
- the influencer must be wearing a form-fitting outfit

Team Member Composition

Aside from the candidate and trained interviewer, Gwyneth Campbell, two other individuals were on the primary analytic team. Both of these analysts were MA students in the Clinical Psychology program at York University and members of the candidate's lab (supervised by Dr. Jennifer Mills). At the time of their participation, Claire Minister had considerable

relevant experience with qualitative program evaluation analysis, and Lindsay Samson had considerable relevant experience researching appearance-based social media and body image. Taken together, the primary analytic team was highly skilled and an appropriate balance of varying perspectives. Though the analytic meetings are a truly consensual process, the role of the candidate also included managing interpersonal dynamics, time, and maintaining focus on the big-picture research question during analysis meetings. The candidate also familiarized the auditor, Dr. Mills with CQR, who conducted an audit of the primary analysis team's domain and core idea coding once those steps were completed.

The Role of the Candidate

General roles of the candidate included conceptualization of the overarching research goals and aims, data curation, and project administration. Together with other integral project contributors, I was also in part responsible for investigation (i.e., conducting interviews), leadership responsibility as it related to training other contributors, formal analysis, and write-up.

As an upper-level clinical psychology student trained in client-centered therapy, I was able to follow interviewees and ask open-ended questions to facilitate further discussion. I also have training in qualitative research methods and thus have an array of resources that deepen understanding of qualitative research methods. As such, I was able to train and guide research assistants to conduct rich interviews. The candidate conducted pilot interviews with a community sample prior to training a research assistant to conduct the interviews.

Prior to conducting pilot interviews, I consulted with Dr. Karen Fergus, an experienced qualitative methods researcher and member of the PhD supervisory committee, on the semi-structured interview schedule that my primary supervisor and I developed. Revisions to the introductory statement were made based on this consultation to encourage comfort around being

honest with the interviewer. Pilot interviews were used to inform revisions to the semi-structured interview schedule. Iterative revisions were made to the interview schedule to encourage experience-near answers, greater specificity, and depth and richness of understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (see Appendices A and B). The candidate and the research assistant interviewer communicated throughout the time the interviews were taking place and met to discuss how the interviewer felt the interviews were going and to refine the interview schedule as appropriate. The candidate appraised the research assistant through reviewing the audio recordings and transcripts as well as through supervisory meetings, in which the research assistant was able to debrief and process her interview experiences with me. The research assistant sought guidance as appropriate, and I prized her and gave feedback from going over transcripts together, noting her interview strengths, and offering recommendations for continued strong interviewer skills. In my opinion, the interviewer was conscientious, managed time and redirection to the research questions very well, was able to establish an atmosphere of trust and openness with participants and displayed excellent critical thinking and interview skills such that the data gathered for this dissertation were effective for analysis of the personal experiences young women go through when viewing Fitspiration and Thinspiration on Instagram.

I also trained other members of the CQR team, as this study was each member's first foray into using the CQR method. I trained transcribers in a manner consistent with consensual qualitative research. That is, transcribers were guided to listen to interviews and transcribe them in a quiet, confidential location, and trained to transcribe verbatim but told inclusion of nonlanguage utterances and filler words was not necessary (Hill et al., 1997). I also transcribed several interviews, which enhanced my general familiarity with cases and ability to hear subtle meanings in tone, pacing, and volume that would inform analysis (Hill et al., 2005). While

transcribing a portion of interviews did not allow me to be intimately familiar with every case, I listened to significant portions of each case, including during analysis meetings to glean tone and clarity informing analysis. I drew on my own transcription experiences to train other transcribers. The members of the analytic team also transcribed at least one interview for the same reasons. The research assistant interviewer was included in the analytic team, and one of her substantial contributions to the analytic phase was being able to offer her perception of interviewees that may not have been captured in interview audio, given that she was present with the interviewees. However, as Hill et al. (2005) advise, when meanings are ambiguous from reading transcripts, the team listened to the audio together to determine what messages were conveyed by the interviewee. This practice also increases the team's familiarity with the cases.

Through presenting Hill et al.'s seminal articles on CQR (1997; 2005) and how the current study would be approached based on these articles, I trained analytic team members. The analysis team members were instructed to read these articles as well, as well as several of the example CQR studies suggested by Hill et al. (2005) as training material (e.g., Hill et al., 2003; Knox et al., 2003).

Data Analyses

Consensual qualitative research (CQR) was used to analyze the data. As sampling from a population should be random to ensure unknown biases do not enter into the study (Hill et al., 1997), and because it may bolster the confidence of reviewers more familiar with quantitative methods in the representational generalizability of results, 12 interviews from the larger study of 40+ participants were randomly selected for analysis. My primary supervisor used a random number generator to select the 12 interviews and provided that list. Note that within qualitative research methods, *transferability*—conceptualized as akin to "generalizability"—of findings to

other contexts does not involve broad, conclusive claims but invites readers to develop contextualized connections between elements of a study and their own experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Whereas generalizability of quantitative findings refers to representational generalizability in populations, transferability of qualitative findings refers to *inferential* generalizability in which readers are provided with rich descriptions of a study's context and then determining themselves if it is sensible to "transfer" the results to a different context (Lewis & Ritchie, 2014). Random selection may contribute to increased trustworthiness (Guba, 1981) through neutrality.

The originators of CQR recommend samples between eight and 15 participants so the sample is big enough to assess if findings apply to several participants or are relevant to only a couple of individuals (Hill et al., 1997). In another data-driven, discovery-oriented qualitative research method (i.e., grounded theory; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), it is recommended that the richness and thickness of information assessed in the analysis guide amount of data gathered. That is, when qualitative analyses make it clear that no new information is being gleaned—i.e., saturation has been reached—this is an indicator that enough data has been gathered; this often occurs after five to 10 interview protocols have been analyzed (Rennie et al., 1988). Though the developers of CQR do not explicitly mention saturation, it has been claimed that saturation is central to excellent qualitative research (Morse, 1994). If the analytic team discovered that new domains continued to emerge after analyzing the 12 randomly selected transcripts (i.e., saturation was not yet reached), the analytic team was prepared to analyze additional randomly selected transcripts until saturation occurred.

The CQR approach allows for in-depth study, leading to a holistic understanding of a complex phenomenon. CQR is a method wherein researchers reach consensus via open

discussion of data classification that is then reviewed by an auditor, which can increase trustiworthiness of findings. The candidate transcribed several interviews in order to encourage in-depth immersion into the interview data. Research assistants were also encouraged to transcribe some interviews as part of furthering their interviewer training and expertise. As I used CQR for my analyses, additional research team members who transcribed interviews also participated in the transcription, which bolstered their familiarity with the raw data and capacity to identify domains during the phase of consensus achieved through open discussion of data classification.

Together, the research team met approximately three times per week for two to three hours for 26 weeks (January 2020 to September 2020) to argue to consensus, to develop and code domains (i.e., topic areas), and use core ideas (i.e., data summaries capturing the essence of what was said in interviews succinctly and with increased clarity; Hill et al., 2005), and to abstract data within domains. In the first phase of CQR, team members first independently read through a transcript as a whole and noted any initial thoughts or any ideas that emerged. Next, the research team members divided the transcripts' text into domains (i.e., "topic areas"; Hill et al., 1997) based on a "start-list" developed from existing research, a field expert's opinions, and anticipated domains based on interviewers' and transcribers' reflections. The analysis team included emerging domains that were not already accounted for by the start-list. This team included a trained interviewer, two clinical psychology Masters' students, and a clinical psychology doctoral candidate (the dissertation author).

The start-list included the following potential domains that were literature- and expertise-based: emotional reactions, social comparison, disordered eating behaviours, body image (e.g., drive for thinness, body dissatisfaction, discrepancy between ideal and current body). The start-

list also included the following potential domains that were interview- and transcription-based: realism of photos (e.g., artificiality, advertisements, influencers as doing this for a job), history and change (e.g., "I used to ___, but now I ____."), relationships, personal attainability, and differing ideals (e.g., cultural, personal).

For the second phase of CQR, summaries of the data capturing the essence of what participants said but in fewer words and with greater clarity were written to abstract interview data within domains. These succinct summaries are called "core ideas" (Hill et al., 1997). This step can be thought of as a process of "editing" interview data in a concise and comparable way across cases (Hill et al., 2005). Once the team achieved understanding of the core idea process, these summaries could be written by one team member and reviewed by the rest of the team, effectively serving as internal auditors (Hill et al., 2005). The candidate wrote the core ideas before the analytic team edited and challenged them. The final stage of CQR is a cross-analysis of participants' data that is used to conceptualize common themes across participants (that is, advance categories capturing common themes that are commonly reflected in the data; Hill et al., 2005). That is, cross-analysis is the development of categories describing core idea consistencies within domains across cases, in which data analysis moves to a higher level of abstraction. For this project, the core idea and cross-analysis phases were done in tandem. CQR, like grounded theory, uses an iterative process called the constant comparison method, in which researchers make comparisons as they constantly cycle through the data until its essence has been substantiated (Hill et al., 1997). As such, our analytic process was iterative; revisions to domains, core ideas, and categories were made to fit the emerging data. The analytic team brainstormed together about various possible categories, per a suggested method by Hill et al. (1997). This

method allowed each team member to immediately point each other to the data's evidence for our arguments, an active process that led to consensus.

Our start-list emerged from existing literature and expertise as well as initial impressions while transcribing interviews. As such, it was expected these initial topic areas would likely remain, while other topic areas were expected to emerge directly from the data as well. Start-list domains did emerge, and our list of domains grew to accommodate new topic areas. No new topics emerged after completing analysis of the 12 randomly selected transcripts (i.e., saturation was reached). Note that interview data can be double-coded; that is, the same quotes may speak to multiple topic areas; if topic areas repeatedly overlapped, one consideration is to combine them into one domain (Hill et al., 1997). Though we double-coded several segments of text, when existing theory was taken into consideration, none significantly overlapped in a way that seemed to call for amalgamating domains.

Each team member kept a memo log of their thoughts and feelings related to this research (for example, interviewers noted their impressions of interviewees to inform understanding of each case). We also maintained more general memos about thoughts we had about the broader phenomenon we are seeking to understand (that is, what emotional and cognitive processes occur within young women as they view fit- and Thinspirational images on Instagram). These memos are referenced in the write-up where applicable. Management of the data was facilitated by using word processors and/or tablets (e.g., such as for personalized memo'ing) and features within Office 365 that allow for secure sharing of live documents as well as identification and categorization of thought units within cases.

My primary supervisor served as an auditor of domains and core ideas, as the process of auditing is included in CQR in its original form (Hill et al., 1997). The analysis team consulted

with the supervisory committee member to facilitate validity of interpretation and categorization as well as the effective bracketing of previous assumptions and experiences that are not grounded in the raw data.

Research Assumptions and Expectations

My previous experience researching body image and social media and familiarity with various body image theories inform my expectations. That is, beliefs I have formed based on reading body image and social media literatures as well as from thinking about and developing research questions influence my expectations (Hill et al., 1997). I expected that some aspects of the sociocultural model of influence on body image as well as objectification theory will be evident in interviewees' responses. There is emerging evidence from our lab that engagement with appearance-based social media of physical appearance comparison targets is causally related to increases in body image concerns in young women (Hogue & Mills, 2019; McComb, 2019).

The candidate acknowledges her own personal biases that could have made it difficult to respond to the data objectively, as is advised in CQR (Hill et al., 1997). I may have a tendency to interpret ambigious statements around fitness as more appearance-motivated than health-motivated. I wonder if "fitspo may be thinspo in a sports bra," as I have read in some of the scholarly literature on the topic (Kite, 2013). That is, while ostensibly designed to motivate viewers to health and fitness goals, Fitspiration—like Thinspiration—may actually promote confinement to a body that is "to be looked at above anything else" (Kite, 2013, p. 180). In this way, perhaps Fitspiration is essentially thinly veiled Thinspiration. The analytic team members' biases were discussed throughout the analytic process, and members made efforts to see beyond their biases and to interpret the data as objectively as possible (Hill et al., 2005). For example, if

another team member tended to hear ambigious statements around fitness as more health-motivated than appearance-motivated, I was open to considering this perspective and if it more accurately captured the interview data than my bias.

The demographics of the analytic team may reflect a particular set of biases, which should be acknowledged (Hill et al., 2005). The primary analytic team was comprised of three women in their 30s who are clinical psychology graduate students and one woman in her early 20s who is an undergraduate student majoring in psychology. One member in her 30s memo'd and shared with the team that she does not identify with the selected influencers due to their perceived irrelevance to her. Additionally, the auditor is the primary supervisor of the candidate, and is an established clinical psychologist with specialized training in researching and treating eating disorders. All are women and would be visibly coded as White.

Results

Participants

Participant Descriptions

To illustrate not only a rich description and understanding of findings but of the participants from whom the findings were obtained, detailed descriptions of each participant are provided below. Pseudonyms are used to identify each participant. As demographic details aside from self-reported body mass indices (BMI) and confirmation of age were not collected systematically, these character descriptions were drawn solely from the participants' words during their interviews and, as such, contain information unique to each participant. We chose to collect and report BMI because of the study's focus on body image and because the size of a participant's body could provide contextual information. While not a perfect measure of body size, shape, or composition, BMI gives a rough indication of whether someone is living in a what

would be seen as a "smaller" versus a "larger" body according to social norms. For reference, previous studies sampling from the York URPP typically find a mean BMI among female undergraduate students between 24 to 25, which corresponds to the high end of "healthy" and the low end of "overweight" according to the WHO categories.

Ava: Ava spoke passionately about the artificial and commercial nature of appearance-based social media content and how she has chosen not to buy into it. She feels these types of posts are obnoxious. In fact, she no longer has Instagram because she feels like it was not good for her to see these types of posts constantly; she used to have a daily habit of spending about an hour mindlessly scrolling through Instagram before getting up and eating. She previously volunteered at an organization with a plastic surgery office directly in front of it; she thinks these kinds of offices are adorable and luxurious, and these procedures are expensive and quick. She is certain that the Fitspiration influencer in the images had undergone breast and buttocks surgeries; Ava has never had a surgery and is against ever doing elective procedures. She is interested in "eating what's right," and mentioned that if she does not work out, she will eat healthier. She would rather do something fun like a sport, Zumba class, or swimming than go to the gym like she imagines Fitspiration influencers do. To Ava, the Thinspiration content looks narcissistic and the sweat-absent glamorized Fitspiration selfies do not motivate her to want to go to the gym. Ava feels this kind of social media content is sexualized; men objectify influencers and expect women to look like them, and women self-objectify upon seeing influencers. Her narrative also included feeling depressed upon seeing these images because she sees influencers as lonely, sad, and empty of a rich social life. She puts both types of appearance-based content in the same general category of "fit." While she occasionally wishes for a smaller waist when she sees people with smaller waists or larger breasts, she noted she does not *want* to really care about what

influencers' bodies look like. Her thoughts and how she wants to present her body change continually. A notable thesis of her interview was the sentiment that women should be fit because they want to be healthy and/or have fun, not because they want to look like an influencer. Ava wanted to "do things with [her] life," stating, "[T]here's so much more to life. If my life boils down to looking like Kylie [Jenner], I'd be so depressed." She enjoyed the interview process due to its high ecological validity. Ava estimates her height as between 5'9" and 5'10" (1.75 and 178 m), and her weight between 150 and 160 lb (68 and 73 kg), corresponding to an estimated BMI of between 22.1 and 23.6 kg/m^2.

Georgia: Georgia considers herself to be fit and muscular from being a rugby player. She works out twice per week at the gym for an hour with her rugby team. She also does cardiovascular activity on her own through running and has a mini gym at home. Fitness is very important to her as an athlete. In high school, Georgia felt lonely even though she had lots of friends. She mentioned she was probably depressed in high school, which is a time when she prayed a lot, which helped her shift to telling herself in the mirror that she is beautiful and fearfully made (i.e., a reference to a Bible verse; King James Bible, 1769/2021, Psalms 139:14). In high school, she followed Fitspiration accounts to stay reminded and motivated to work out, which did not really help because she would forget about exercise once she was not looking at these images. She used to look at Fitspiration content and feel jealous or upset, which made her feel lonely because she did not have friends or teammates with whom to do those things. Now, these photos motivate her and remind her to reach her goals through being consistent with physical activity. Georgia believes the more you see Fitspiration content, the more you are motivated to go to the gym; that is why she follows Fitspiration accounts: to be motivated to work on her own body goals. After viewing Fitspiration content, she makes plans to go to the

gym or work out in her home gym. Being on a rugby team motivated her to achieve those goals with and for the team. Currently, she likes her body but feels it could be better. She expressed that it is hard for her to be in a bigger body than most women. She mentioned having to love yourself first before caring about what other people think of you and that she feels she just has to keep reassuring herself more and eating less, which is "on and off" for her. Georgia wants to "cut" more of the food she is eating (i.e., restrict) to improve her performance on the rugby field, so she can be one of the best players. She wants to have the appearance of the Fitspiration influencer, particularly defined abdominal muscles, which she said requires going to the gym, which she already does twice a week to be consistent. She thinks looking like a Fitspiration influencer would also require restricting food intake. Georgia thinks the interview process was good and got her thinking; she did not anticipate all of the questions that were asked. Georgia estimates her height as 5'6" (1.68 m) and weight as 170 lb (77.11 kg), corresponding to an estimated BMI of 27.4 kg/m^2.

Juliette: Juliette, a Kinesiology student who trains for increasing muscle mass, has been muscular for a long time because she has long-been a gymnast. Juliette was from a Northern Ontario city and moved cities for school. She trained as a high-performance gymnast 12 hours per week starting when she was 7 years old, and then 18 hours per week from the age of 15 years until she started university. Juliette feels like if she did not grow up doing gymnastics she would be more negatively affected by the body ideals displayed in Fitspiration and Thinspiration. While she was always an active child, when she started university she felt she "had nothing" anymore, as she was not doing gymnastics. Hence, she started going to a non-gymnastics gym when she began university and would consume "raw fitness" Instagram content to get ideas of ways to work out, which she stated helped her with school. She contrasted her "stocky," muscular build

to the fragility of Thinspiration, "all bones and ribs," which was an undesirable look to Juliette. She did not follow much Thinspiration content, as she thinks that it would be disheartening to view all the time because there is no way that she could look like them. While she did not follow girls or women on social media who are extremely thin, she did follow Fitspiration accounts in their "raw form," meaning their posts include visuals akin to this study's photographs as well as photographs of women eating cake and the ilk. Juliette mentioned it was her personal choice to follow people to whom she can relate. Although she thinks she could get to the muscular position of Fitspiration and thinks it is intriguing to see how one can push their body, she knows it would be bad for her mental health due to food restriction required. If Fitspiration had more muscle and did not have the "slim fit" look, she would want to look more like Fitspiration influencers. She is skeptical of the models and believes that hair gummies and slim teas advertised by influencers are not the only things they use to manipulate their bodies. She would prefer that Fitspiration influencers show their followers what they actually spend time *doing and working hard on*, not just posing for selfies. Juliette follows Nikki Blackketter and Whitney Simmons, who post what they *do* at the gym and what they eat; she said this pushes her to do better and offers her advice. Juliette believes the women we showed her were on unsustainable fad diets such as a ketogenic diet, whereas the "raw fitness" influencers she follows encourage eating in moderation or eating "healthy" 80% of the time and eating your cravings 20% of the time without needing tracking what you eat. Juliette knows that carbohydrates (which a ketogenic diet limits) are important for quick energy but thinks many people try to eat low-carbohydrate diets. According to Juliette, fitness is much more than what you look like; she mentioned cardiovascular factors mattering as well. She found this interview interesting because she had not deeply examined her attitudes toward appearance-based social media content before and she is working toward helping people

with their fitness through her degree. Juliette estimates her height as 5'2.5" (1.59 m) and weight as 135 lb (61.22 kg), corresponding to an estimated BMI of 24.3 kg/m^2.

Joanne: Joanne is a Biomedical Sciences student whose mother had anorexia nervosa as a young person. Her mother can no longer absorb iron well, has to take pills, and has to go for injections as a consequence of having had anorexia nervosa in the past. Joanne thinks her mother's eating-disorder history probably shaped Joanne's current thinking and how she perceives Thinspiration, making her views wiser and more informed by her mother's experience. She mentioned some Thinspiration photographs in this study looked like her mother when she had an eating disorder. Joanne is trying to gain weight, self-identifies as underweight, and gets tired easily because of it, explaining that her metabolism is too fast. Upon looking at the images in the study, Joanne mentioned she thinks many people are on ketogenic diets, which is not healthy for most individuals, as the body starts using fat supply to generate energy, which is costly, tiring, and can lead to long-term harm. She said, "Your doctor would not say, 'Hey, you know what you should do? Follow this account.'" In her youth, Joanne spent more time on Instagram but stated in the interview, "No one cares if I show up to the [Medical College Admission Test] MCAT with a great body." She did not explicitly say so, but there is a possibility this indicates she is interested in being a medical doctor. Joanne thinks these kinds of accounts, rather than showing processes of exercise and diet as well as humanity through "flaws," are designed for self-promotion of the influencers. She feels both Thinspiration and Fitspiration are extreme; whereas Thinspiration promotes losing weight and protruding bones, Fitspiration promotes being toned and following a strict exercise schedule and a strict diet. Joanne does not follow many Fitspiration or Thinspiration accounts. She chooses not to engage with this content; for example, she will not give a "like" to posts like these, as she does not want

to encourage people to starve themselves or engage in other extreme behaviours. She does not want something so extreme on her newsfeed. She thinks Fitspiration is better than Thinspiration, asking, "Who wouldn't want some muscle tone, right?" She speculates that the Thinspiration influencer might have a restrictive eating disorder and mentioned noticing her thigh gap, which some individuals suffering from eating disorders have. Joanne said she has a similar body type to Thinspiration because she has an overactive metabolism; she dislikes when she is "too thin," and would like more of a muscular body type. She consciously made the choice to unfollow accounts that promoted these messages of "get thin fast." Reflecting on the interview process, she thinks there was a reason she unfollowed these types of account, because it did have some sort of impact on her, whereas prior to the interview, she had not given this much thought. She likes that there was research on further understanding young women's experiences of viewing Thinspiration and Fitspiration; she thinks it might result in less Thinspiration content, and she is glad to contribute. Joanne estimates her height as 5'2" (1.57 m) and weight as 135 lb (61.24 kg), corresponding to an estimated BMI of 24.7 kg/m^2. However, this may have been an overestimation, given other comments she made during the interview.

Katriana: Katriana comes from a family that, according to their religion, believes being thin is "best." Most of her cousins are thin. Katriana mentioned being "very chubby" as a child and having a mother who seemed ashamed of Katriana's thick stomach and frequently told her to lose some weight. Her mother used to question how Katriana would get married if she was not thin. Over time, Katriana has been able to explain to her mother that she is happy with who she is, and now her family pressures her less about her weight than even a couple years ago. Katriana used to hate this kind of social media content and sometimes "unfollowed" body-focused influencers, as it just reminded her that she had not lost weight. Currently, she follows Thinspo

and Fitspo accounts as well as "thick" swimsuit models, who promote messages of acceptance. Talking about it made her remember her past; she went into the interview telling herself not to think of her past. She recognizes the new word "slim-thick" as indicating the world is being more accepting toward bigger people. She has been able to show her mother that the world is more understanding and more accepting of larger bodies. At some point, her friend group shifted to people that told her she should be confident, she started following body-based social media influencers again, and her response to this content shifted to thinking, "I *do* want to be like them [happy and confident]; I need to start doing better for myself." Most of her motivation to change her diet and work out is intrinsic, and a smaller portion is motivation from social media because it reminds her she "needs" to change up her lifestyle and make time for eating a certain way and working out. According to Katriana, if she did not have these images, she probably would not make time for it.

Katriana lives in student residence and does her own grocery shopping. She stated she has been "eating good food" for about a year now, cutting out chips, popcorn, and cookies, because it is tempting to eat them when she did have these kinds of snacks around. She has been buying more vegetables and said she feels more energetic and happier from changing up her diet. She indicated she is definitely on a diet. She has also been trying to go to the gym once or twice per week, which is a learning process and requires time management. While she stated it does not matter to her if she is slim or "thick," she wants to work out for a year; after that she thinks she would be happy with how she looks. She thinks many people have body image problems. She feels like if she were to lose just a bit more weight, she would be happier. She feels she *should* be confident with who she is but also wishes she were as fit as the influencers shown in this study. If Katriana sees pages like these, she does tend to think she could be fit; if she does

not see these kind of social media posts, she likes who she is and accepts herself. For Katriana, body comparison is reserved for online, whereas she does not notice or assess people's bodies when she sees them in person. The interview process gave her a better understanding of her past and how she personally feels toward thick and thin individuals. She does not really talk about this subject a lot, except with her mother. Katriana estimates her height around 5'5" or 5'6" (1.65 or 1.68 m), and her weight as 68 kg (149.91 lbs), corresponding to an estimated BMI of between 24.2 and 24.9 kg/m^2.

Marina: Marina is a Brazilian woman whose mother had her at 17 years old and believed that if you are not skinny, you are not pretty. Her mother, a thin woman with a beautiful body, criticizes Marina's eating and weight. Sometimes, Marina can allow herself to step out of these situations, evaluate the evidence for her mother's criticisms, decide that she is enough, and believe that her mother loves her regardless of her weight. If her mother criticizes her and then Marina looks at appearance-based social media content and stays with her negative emotions, these emotions are sadness and anger, and she believes herself insufficient.

Marina described others telling her she does not "look" Brazilian because she does not have a large buttocks. While this used to bother her, she is more OK with it now. However, she also said she wishes she had a Fitspiration body akin to "thick" Kim Kardashian who has a big buttocks but is slim. Marina wishes she also had a big buttocks. She used to frequently compare her appearance to other women—first by scrolling through social media on her phone first thing in the morning, and then by looking at other people on the street, thinking thoughts like, "That girl is pretty, I wish I was like that . . . and not like that, etc., etc." She identified that it seems like looking a certain way is the only way to be accepted and beautiful. Previously, she had body image problems and would think twice about what she should eat to get the body she wanted to

have, based on what other people looked like. Before this, she would eat whatever she wanted. When she was smaller, these social media posts did not affect her as much. Marina thinks any woman could attain bodies akin to these influencers' bodies. Currently, Marina feels appreciation and admiration for these influencers' hard work, and tries not to have negative emotions, as she thinks that would be unfair. While Marina wants a Fitspiration body, this is not as important to her as her relationships with friends, spending quality time with them and her family, school, work—those are her priorities. She puts time in for her body for her physical health, but not in a way that takes control of her life. Marina thinks the Fitspiration influencer's whole identity is focused on the body she has and how much she works out. She considers this an appearance-focused setback rather than a healthy alternative of being experience-focused. Marina is not attracted to the thinness of Thinspiration; instead, she perceives Ren as "living life more" than Selter, because Ren was in beautiful, vacation-like settings, and Marina loves travelling. While at present Marina is figuratively and literally unmoved by the Thinspiration body, Fitspiration moves her, and the thin ideal used to affect her a lot. She used to go to the gym a lot because she thought being skinny would bring her fulfillment. She has since learned to accept and love herself how she is and looks. She does not think she will ever give a feeling of inferiority so much power to affect her again. Now she goes to the gym for health and does not do fad diets to lose weight fast. Marina now sees giving her body nutrients as healthy and respecting her own body. Marina communicated that, since she does not want Fitspo or Thinspo to affect her too much, it simply does not. In terms of the interview process, she indicated the materials we showed her had high ecological validity. Speaking about it helped her to understand and verbalize how she feels about and copes with viewing this kind of content. The interview also made her think, as big as social media are, they take a toll on everyone. Marina estimates her

height as 5’1” (1.55 m) and weight as 126 lb (57.15 kg), corresponding to an estimated BMI of 23.8 kg/m^2.

Nasreen: Nasreen, a Psychology major, thought it would be great to look like these girls, as they have her “dream body.” She seems to be very affected by this type of social media content, being quite open about it. She is more interested in looking like the Fitspiration ideal than the Thinspiration ideal. She is very interested in the idea that men love the bodies of these type of influencers. She recently had an interaction with a young man at school who was being mean to her without any reason; she thinks maybe he did not like her because of her face, her appearance. Nasreen frequently compares her body to others, whether on Instagram of photographs like these or offline. If she thinks she is better-looking than a female friend, she has a confidence boost. Nasreen avoids initiating friendships or relationships due to fear of rejection due to her appearance, though loves having relationships. She usually feels very low confidence in her appearance, so looking at appearance-focused social media decreases her self-confidence. She theorized that she is addicted to the negative feelings she experiences when viewing Fitspiration or Thinspiration. Nasreen engages in very strict dieting and goes to the gym to work on her body. She admitted she tried not to eat any food in the last month, even salads. She avoided eating because of looking at this social media content. Her father told her that was harmful and damages one’s health. After a month or two of this severe restriction, she would eat salads. Nasreen thinks she might go to the gym after exams. She is trying to work on herself, not compare herself to these kinds of photos, and unfollow these kinds of social media pages. She is somewhat ambivalent about these changes, saying, “[I]t’s two feelings that I have in my mind […] ‘I want to look like them,’ […and], ‘[Y]ou’ll have to just improve yourself just as you are, and you don’t have to compare yourself with others.’” She wants first to achieve body goals

through diet and exercise *and then* unfollow and ignore these pages because they cause her to feel bad. Nevertheless, she realized that if she did not change the way she thinks, dieting and working on her appearance in other ways would not actually change the way she feels. Nasreen wants to try to accept herself and focus on things she is good at instead. Being so focused on her appearance does not allow her to think about other things, like if what she is doing is healthy or dangerous. Nasreen feels this interview process showed her she was not aware these social media images could hurt her and result in negative feelings. The interview process helped her to know she was ignoring feelings that were dangerous for her. She left the interview seriously considering trying not to follow Thinspiration or Fitspiration content as a way to help herself. Nasreen chose not to disclose her estimated height and weight.

Sancia: Sancia, the oldest of three sisters, moved to Canada during high school. Before that, she was surrounded by friends who wanted to be thin like girls on Instagram, and she and other members of this friend group engaged in unhealthy behaviours in efforts to try to become thin. She described wanting to look like Thinspiration influencers when she was younger but not wanting to "put in the work." As an adolescent, Sancia wanted validation for the appearance of her body but now knew that was unhealthy. She saw Fitspiration Instagram posts as analogous to magazines showing fit women to which she would compare herself as an adolescent. Sancia had always struggled with her weight, and was concerned for her younger, heavier sister. When she moved countries, she moved away from friends who were very focused on physical appearance. In Canada, she went to a new high school and met new people that were not preoccupied with their appearances. During this time, she had fun and ate normally. She realized influencers and friends are just real women with real problems, and it helped not to compare herself to them. She had friends in various countries; most of their conversations were about self- and body image.

Sancia saw Alexis Ren on Instagram frequently so knew Ren shows her body a lot. She saw both Thinspiration and Fitspiration as essentially just about the influencers' bodies. She felt desensitized to pictures like these because they are so normalized. Sancia noticed there were not as many girls posting pictures of themselves on social media when she was younger, but within last two or three years this practice became prevalent. Currently, she realized Instagram is a platform where people put their best selves on display. She did not, at present, compare herself as much as when she was younger. She felt social comparison was a major issue for women and girls, stating, "[T]hat's all we do as girls, too, we just compare ourselves to everything." If she were to spend 15 minutes comparing herself on Instagram, it would ruin her day. At present, she followed girls and women who posted more realistic photos that show their "flaws" as well. Sancia thought it would be much healthier if girls and women focused on themselves, what their body needs, what they want, and *not* what they think people want of them. Seeing Fitspiration inspired her to think she could realistically incorporate going to the gym into her life as well. Sancia expressed that she valued health above appearance and thinks mental health is very important.

When she was younger, Sancia would be very jealous of these influencers, but now she is fine with them doing whatever they want. To her, while body ideals are a societal ill, you have the choice to remove yourself from consuming these messages or associating with people who want to look like these influencers. At present, Sancia tried not to look at these kinds of pages often. Removing herself from this content makes things a lot easier for her. She preferred to follow fitness pages that post everyday people and that focus on making people healthier. While Sancia knew she was not completely happy with how she was, she knew that as long as she feels mentally OK, it is fine. She did want to work toward physical health goals, not just to look good.

Also, she acknowledged that exercising and eating well helps her with stress and anxiety. She tried to remind her friends, “That’s why you should do it, not because you look good, that’s just, like, a bonus, I think.” The interview process served as a reminder to her that this content is not real; she thought about it in two ways: these influencers have the right to do whatever they want with their bodies, including creating these social media posts, but how it affects people worries her. The interview also served as a reminder that she wanted to help her younger sisters and hoped that they would be “able to differentiate themselves and grow and learn the difference between Instagram and reality.” Sancia estimates her height as 5”4.5’ (1.64 m) and weight as 175 lb (78.93 kg), corresponding to an estimated BMI of 29.4 kg/m^2.

Serena: Serena is an Italian woman who described herself as short with large breasts and curvy. She enjoys travelling with friends. She mentioned that she saw on Twitter that Alexis Ren had an eating disorder. Serena sees Ren as actively engaging in activities, such as travelling on vacation, with which Serena identified. She used to work out a lot, but now she does not consider herself part of a fitness lifestyle and is tired of working out. She used to see Fitspiration and then think she should start doing squats or push-ups immediately. When she was younger and looked at body-focused social media content, she experienced anger and felt like she need to look like a Fitspiration or Thinspiration influencer to “get a guy.” Serena knows her body would never look like these small-framed influencers. She knows it would not make her feel good about herself if she followed Thinspiration pages, so she does not. Even now, she notices pictures of herself in a bikini get more “likes,” especially from men, than a family photograph. She believes appearance-focused social media content is about sex appeal: the greater the sex appeal, the great the number of “Likes.” This content made her recall Disney princesses, whose problems were solved by their bodies; when Serena was little, she wanted large breasts and a small stomach because she saw

women's worth in their bodies. Presently, the idea that a woman must look a certain way to be able to do things makes Serena sad. She is discouraged by Fitspiration, as she sees it as solely appearance-focused, and she feels pressure to workout but does not, and negative self-talk arises.

If her smaller female friends on Instagram have more "likes" than her, she wonders if it is because they are smaller and prettier than she is. Serena also notices increased "likes" when friends' bodies become significantly smaller and fit beauty and body ideals. She described the current body ideal as having long eyelashes, tanned skin, light eyes, a thin body, "nice enough" but not too big of breasts and buttocks; she said Victoria Secret models fit this ideal. At a certain point, she unfollowed all the models because it was discouraging, and she realized it made her hyper-focused on her appearance and vanity. Presently, Serena is more accepting of different body types and would rather follow social media content that motivates her to better herself as an individual, such as female activists. She thinks it is important for people to have role models they can relate to; for example, as a White person she found it uplifting to see a larger White woman, Ashley Graham, someone who looks like her. She considers it important for folks to see people that look like them as role models. The interview process increased Serena's self-awareness. She identified wanting to be more aware of who she follows and pays attention to on social media "because some of them can have negative effects, and some can have positive effects." Serena estimates her height as 5"2' (1.57 m) and weight as 140 lb (63.50 kg), corresponding to an estimated BMI 25.6 kg/m^2.

Sophie: Sophie seemed, to the interviewer, to be fairly quiet. She loves beaches, adventurous places, and showing people fun things she is doing by taking pictures. Sophie grew up playing sports, which resulted in her feeling really confident with and proud of her body. Playing sports resulted in having always been surrounded by physically active people with

similar mindsets. When she was about 11 years old, she would think these types of influencers were pretty and wished she could look like that one day but did not think too much about it. She tries to get small workouts in frequently, although not daily. Sophie also tries to "eat healthy" and not eat too much junk food. Both Fitspiration and Thinspiration make her feel like she needs to look like or be like these influencers. Comparatively, Sophie feels these influencers are even more confident than her. If she were where they are at, she would have that level of confidence as well. She finds it hard to work out because she had no time because of work and school. She also does intramural sports, which she considers to be a workout in itself. Sophie finds it difficult to go to the gym. She described having a pattern of telling herself she will go to the gym but then always "falling off the wagon." She considers herself a very determined person; if there is something she wanted to do, she will do it. Fitness and thinness seem important to Sophie but not life-changing; it is in the back of her mind and, if she had a chance to, she would go to the gym and eat healthy every day to speed up the process. She revealed that she is mostly OK with her body but thinks that everyone sees little differences and wishes they could change something about themselves, but we have to accept ourselves for who we are. She compares her body more with Fitspiration than Thinspiration, particularly as the Thinspiration content we showed her was more vacation-focused. She described her mentality when viewing Fitspiration as thinking, "That's going to be me one day […] but just not right now. It's going to take baby steps." She found it interesting to be able to talk with someone about her experiences viewing Fitspiration and Thinspiration, as it is not something she talked about with her friends, unless it is just to note that an influencer is pretty and then dismiss it. Sophie estimates her height as 5"5' (1.65 m) and weight as 130 lb (58.97 kg), corresponding to an estimated BMI 21.6 kg/m^2.

Violet: Violet is a Kinesiology student who loves the outdoors and who, during the summer before her interview, engaged in a routine of frequenting the gym. At that time, body-focused influencers did motivate her to work out. She used to use the Instagram "explore" button to find workout routines and videos. She especially enjoys looking at transformation (i.e., before and after) photos. Violet likes to see captions and the influencer's story and process with working out, as that was more motivating and inspiring to her as a viewer. She follows a male fitness trainer because he explained the process and importance of exercise. She is not the type to take pictures of herself working out. Being a Kinesiology student, she knows that building muscle takes time and effort, stating in the interview that about five or six days of working on different muscle groups would be required. In high school, she danced a lot and had a very toned, thin body. She indicated she used to have "nice abs" and she wishes she could get them back. She believes one's body changes with age, but that one can get whatever bodily attribute back; for her, she believes she could "always go back and get those abs back." During school, seeing this type of content motivated her to want to work out but then she did not have time for it with studying. As a full-time student, she would rather go to school and study than prioritize working out. She wants to eventually get back into doing regular physical activity.

Violet found the Fitspiration posts too sexualized; she had a distaste for Jen Selter specifically. She stated that everyone she knows used to talk about Selter's buttocks, and Violet thought people should relax about this. Violet thinks that Thinspiration is just genetics and healthy eating, and that these influencers probably do not work out. She knows many people with slim bodies who just did not seem to develop fat. To her, it looked like working out consumed Selter's life. Violet thinks adolescents seeing these types of photographs would not understand; they would think that is what they have to look like. She identified social media as

being very influential to body image as well as what women "should" wear in terms of workout clothes, because Fitspiration influencers "set those rules." Violet likes being told the step-by-step process of things (e.g., instructional exercise videos) to achieve gradual changes to maintain an end goal, although she thinks it would be hard for her to achieve the body type Fitspiration advertises. Violet wants a balance between everything and did not want to just see thin models. She considers working out as being a type of recreational activity.

Violet indicated she was happy with her body but still thought there was always room for minor improvements, stating, "It sure would be nice to have a nice body like that, but it's OK." She tries not to compare herself to others because she knows it can negatively affect how she thinks about herself. She feels education and brainpower is more important than physical power. That is, knowledge is better than power, strength, or looking thin. She thinks influencers probably push aside other important things (like school) in order to maintain their bodies.

Violet feels younger girls rely on social media to express themselves. She was born between 1990-1999; she mentioned that she is concerned about girls and women born between 2000 and 2009. She believes girls going through puberty find it hard to look at these images, and that it affects them more. The interview process made her more aware of the differences between Thinspiration and Fitspiration (e.g., she no longer thinks about them as just "nice bodies"), and how this content can affect different people or our mindsets. Violet estimates her height as 5"5' (1.65 m) and weight as 120 lb (54.43 kg), corresponding to an estimated BMI of 20.0 kg/m^2.

Vera: It did not take long for the interviewer to observe Vera is quite clear that she thinks a lot of the issues around experiences of viewing Fitspiration and Thinspiration are rooted in childhood and personality. She feels her leadership trait and supportive family environment during childhood protected her from being too affected by this type of social media content. She

feels very indifferent to Thinspiration and Fitspiration content. Vera recognizes Instagram is a huge marketing tool, of which Thinspiration and Fitspiration influencers can take advantage by curating the specific image they want to portray to gain followers. She believes celebrities are held to an "above-and-beyond" overall appearance standard and it is the same for social media influencers.

Vera thinks both Selter and Ren may be fitness trainers who are "in love" with their bodies and making money. To Vera, beauty is not just being fit, but both of these influencers look very fit to her. She sees these influencers as quite similar to each other but considered Ren more social because someone else took her photographs and Selter more selfish because she took gym mirror selfies. Normally, she experiences curiosity when looking through Instagram, wanting to know where people are, clicking to see the location of the photographs and thinking maybe one day she could be there, too.

Vera noted that body ideals have changed throughout history; long ago bigger bodies meant being well-off, in the 1980's the thin ideal was in, and currently many girls and women idealize bodies like Kim Kardashian's. She sees many classmates questioning their worth due to physical features, such as being "too tall," or "too thin," etc. Vera described it being common in high-school-aged girls to start not feeling beautiful enough to date and turning to Instagram to make a change, which could result in either feeling better or experiencing depressed affect because they were not born with a certain desirable feature. Vera thinks this is a huge problem in society.

Despite considering herself an over-analyzer, in general, Vera considers herself very confident and happy with herself. She is influenced by people who help others with social needs or environmental activism; these types of individuals have more of an influence on her than

body-ideal images. Being a natural leader makes it hard to influence Vera, in her opinion; she said marketing tools do not really work on her, as she would prefer to follow her own individual opinion.

Vera felt the interview was a positive experience and stated she would continue adhering to her own beliefs about social media. She indicated she wanted to see how people perceive beauty and had suggestions for future research comparing influencers who show cellulite, are bigger, have handsome partners, and are body confident with the influencers we showed in this study. She appreciated that through the interview method we could get to know participants and their more personal thoughts in order to "really make the right conclusions." Vera estimates her height as 1.75 m (5'9") and her weight as 53 kg (116.85 lbs), corresponding to an estimated BMI 17.3 kg/m^2.

Domains Overview

A total of 10 general domains, 18 typical domains, and 11 variant domains were identified by the analytical team. Following CQR procedures, a domain was considered *general* if it occurred in one less than or all transcripts, *typical* if it occurred in more than half the cases up to the general cut-off, and *variant* if it appeared in two cases up to the typical cut-off (Hill et al., 2005). Broad overviews of the general and typical domains, their core ideas, and category names are provided in Appendix C and D. An overview of the variant domains, core ideas, and categories is provided in-text. Following the CQR method, domains and categories captured in only one case were considered miscellaneous and are not reported in the data analysis (Hill et al., 2005). Some domains did not require lower-level categories to be generated, and only core ideas of (higher-level) domains were identified. If relevant, specific categories within domains were generated that captured the core ideas observed in the data. In describing results, in both text and

tables, general domains, categories, and subcategories are presented in descending order of frequency. General and typical results are detailed in-text, while descriptions of variant results appear in tables, unless variant results were salient or only one variant category emerged within a domain. For the sake of parsimony, not all quotes the analytic team determined belong in a particular domain are included. Participant quotes are illustrative, non-exhaustive examples.

General Domains

Attainability. Each participant discussed the extent to which she believed Fitspiration and/or Thinspiration body ideals are attainable and in what ways. The general category "Self" emerged, with all participants providing commentary on how attainable they believed these body ideals are for them personally. It was typical for participants to discuss to what extent they believe Fitspiration and/or Thinspiration body ideals are attainable for everyone; an "Everyone" category emerged for nine participants. See Table 1 for variant categories of attainability, of which there were two.

Participants were asked how they thought or felt about the attainability of looking like these influencers, to describe how realistic it would be to have a similar body, and if they desired that after looking at these images. At times, social comparison was linked to this domain. While all participants shared their views on the degree to which these body ideals are attainable for themselves, several participants also spoke about attainability in general as well as to what extent these body ideals are attainable for other women.

Regarding attainability in general, perspectives tend to indicate some level of belief in attainability but with some qualifying statements. In contrast, though, Nasreen recognizes the unattainability of presented body ideals yet still engages in social comparison and strives to look like these influencers. Georgia thinks the Thinspiration ideal is attainable but not as much work

as the Fitspiration ideal. Georgia also does not find the thin body ideal desirable. Joanne's perspective is that looking exactly like this specific body-ideal social media content is unrealistic and unattainable, but that she could attain her own version of the fitness ideal. Sometimes, upon seeing an influencer do so, Sancia believes initially losing a significant amount of weight would be attainable. However, then she reappraises this belief and shifts to more realistic, non-weight-based goals and beliefs. Notable, she used to wish it was attainable to look exactly like Fitspiration influencers, particularly when she was comparing her own appearance to them. Similar to Joanne, her current perspective is that she cannot attain the exact same "results" as Fitspiration influencers yet still has a desire to look similar to them and believes this is attainable. Initially, Juliette stated that attainability is dependent on metabolism; however, later, she stated that these body ideals are attainable as long as one puts in and maintains effort.

Moving to when participants clearly spoke about attainability for other people, perspectives vary. Ava feels these body ideals are not attainable for most adults. She said, "I think most adults will not attain this – mostly are set with life." Sancia has a similar view. Sancia's perception of Fitspiration seems to be that it is more attainable than Thinspiration, though she associates money and a privileged lifestyle with the thin ideal. As mentioned in regard to attainability in general, she clarifies that one's own version of fit look is attainable in her mind. However, according to Sancia, attainability of either body ideal depends on one's own body's natural starting point. Like Ava, Sancia's mindset again calls to mind some level of belief in weight set-point theory, as exemplified in the following quote:

> I think it just depends on the person's body, some people are just naturally born like Alexis and that's completely fine, and some people can get to this – get to the fitness body easier because it depends, it depends on where they are starting from like everyone

starts at a different point basically, so yeah. I think if you want to look like Jen it might be easier because you cannot look like her but look like your version of what you think is fit. You can always work out, but you can't just be born naturally thin. Like you can work out to get to where Alexis is, but depending on your body and everything, it might not be healthy.

In contrast, Georgia gave the impression she thinks looking like these influencers is attainable. She expressed weight stigma, seeming to think it is people's fault if their body does not change. For example, she said, "But then it's like you're not doing anything about it, so like you feel like it's too late but it's not too late. But you just don't want to do anything about it." Georgia gave an overall impression that she believes being fat is bad and "fixable."

Next to consider is participants' beliefs about how attainable looking like a Thinspiration or Fitspiration influencer is for themselves, which every participant provided commentary on. This category is most relevant to the sociocultural model of influence of body image. If for the most part, participants found these ideals attainable, then this theory may be less relevant. Marina was confident she could attain these body ideals if she wanted to—it sounded like Fitspiration in particular, though it was unclear if she meant Thinspiration as well:

Interviewer: Say tomorrow you decided this was really what you wanted to do with your body, do you believe you could attain it?

Marina: 100%.

Interviewer: Mhm.

Marina: I feel like if I changed the way I ate and if I exercised like a certain amount, and if I actually put like you know a lot of effort into that, I have no doubts that I would do it.

Maybe I would like to take longer, maybe, or shorter, you never know, but yes I would get there at some point.

Similarly, Georgia believes it is attainable for her if she put in the time. Again, it is unclear if this was relevant to both or only one body ideal. Vera believes if she wanted to attain the influencers' body ideal, she would make it happen, as she knows her personality. This sounds like it is related to perfectionism and/or determination.

Serena thinks it is not attainable for herself to look like a Thinspiration influencer. She specified that Thinspiration is unattainable, whereas Fitspiration is attainable with hard work, thus it is better to follow Fitspiration influencers because it seems more motivating, given the sense of attainability. Likewise, Sancia believes Thinspiration is unattainable for her, and therefore not motivating. Both Sancia and Serena see Thinspiration as being depictions of naturally slender women, not like a "before and after" transformation. Regarding Fitspiration in particular, Violet said it would be hard for her to achieve this body ideal. Violet thinks that, even though Fitspiration advocates this body type, no one can really achieve it. Sophie thinks that attaining either body ideal would take lots of time and hard work. She indicated that these body ideals are not attainable for her because these influencers already have years of work on her. Rather than trying to achieve the unattainable, she tries to use her own version of what is attainable as her goal instead of comparing herself to people who work out every day.

Table 1

Variant Categories of the Attainability Domain

Domain/Category	Core Idea	Number of Cases

Attainability	*Participant comments on how attainable she believes Fitspo and/or Thinspo body ideals are and in what ways*	
Lifestyle	Participant comments on to what extent she believes the ostensible lifestyles of Fitspo and/or Thinspo influencers are attainable.	4
Plastic surgery	Participant comments to what extent she believes Fitspo and/or Thinspo body ideals are attainable if plastic surgery is considered.	2

Note. Italics indicate the upper-level domain's core idea. Frequency classification and number of cases of domain appear in-text only.

Comparison of #Fitspo and #Thinspo. All participants provided their perspective on comparing and contrasting Fitspiration and Thinspiration content. Seven women expressed that "their effect on me differs," the core idea of this typical category being that the participant noticed her inner experiences contrast from each other when viewing Fitspo compared to Thinspo content. In contrast, there emerged a salient variant category of "their effect on me does not differ," wherein five participants expressed that they felt similar when viewing Thinspiration to when viewing Fitspiration, often disclosing that they would like to be like either influencer and that they thought each was about health, fitness, and having a good time. Another variant category that emerged was "#Fitspo perceived as healthier than #Thinspo," wherein four participants perceived Fitspo content as healthier than Thinspo content.

Participants were asked if the way they feel when they see thin versus fit women on social media is the same or different, and to provide their theories on why. Not every line of inquiry designed to explore emotional responses generated responses about participants'

feelings. The analytic team noticed it seemed challenging for participants to identify their emotions in response to the content. However, this line of questioning did yield responses comparing and contrasting Thinspiration and Fitspiration. At first Violet thought of this type of social media content in one body-focused category. However, after going through the interview process, they seemed like different ideal-body type categories to her. That is, they now seemed different. While Joanne knows that people in general do not get enough exercise currently, to her, both Fitspiration and Thinspiration represent extremes. Sophie perceives Fitspiration as a more relevant comparison target than Thinspiration, though she still sees Fitspiration as unattainable. To her, whereas Fitspiration encourages extreme exercise, Thinspiration encourages dieting/disordered eating. Sancia sees Fitspiration as less objectifying than Thinspiration and, while both types of content feature the body, she sees Fitspiration as achieved through hard work.

Though uncommon, some participants expressed seeing Fitspiration as being healthier than Thinspiration. Serena thinks Fitspiration is healthy while Thinspiration provides an eating-disorder perspective. Sancia thinks that the Thinspiration influencer's pictures are negative or potentially harmful and contrasts this with instructional videos of Fitspiration influencers being positive and inspirational. She feels her own and other young people's self-esteem is better when viewing Fitspiration than when viewing Thinspiration.

It was typical for participants to note the effect on them of viewing Fitspiration contrasted with viewing Thinspiration. These young women tend to have a more positive reference to Fitspiration's effect on them than Thinspiration. Though it may have been an artifact of the specific images chosen, Sancia's tendency was to look at the background of the Thinspiration photos, which represented a fantastical lifestyle in her mind. As she cannot realistically go on

vacation every day, but could access a gym daily, she sees Fitspiration as more realistic. Fitspiration is Nasreen's personal body ideal. She gets a confidence boost from downward appearance comparisons with Thinspiration, while she would feel insecure in reaction to upward appearance comparison with Fitspiration. Serena stated she thinks Fitspiration is related to her body type and therefore more motivating, whereas, for her, there is no way to get to the thin ideal body type. She spoke about being motivated by Fitspiration but not Thinspiration based on perceived attainability and hard work needed:

> When you look at Alexis' [body], she is holding a coffee or like she looks . . . it kind of makes it look like she doesn't put effort into her body, so you yourself think, "Well, if she doesn't put effort into that, and I'm not putting effort into mine right now, obviously I'm not going to look like hers." Whereas for Jen Selter's, you know that she puts effort into hers and that's why she looks like that and so maybe I could eventually look that way if I put in that effort, too.

Body Image. As viewing Fitspiration and/or Thinspiration content prompted 11 participants to consider how she perceives and feels about her own body, this was a general domain. The category "body dissatisfaction" emerged for 11 participants, the core idea being that viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content reminded the participant in what ways she is dissatisfied with how she currently sees her body or believes others are reminded of this when viewing this content. The one variant category in this domain was "body satisfaction," wherein two participants indicated they were somewhat satisfied with their own body.

Most participants shared how they perceive and feel about their own body upon viewing these images and/or shared how they think other viewers perceive and feel about their own bodies. That is, young women's perceptions of their own bodies did become a common focus

after seeing other women's bodies presented in these idealized (Fitspirational and Thinspirational) ways. Some participants made comments indicating they wanted to look more like the influencers. For example, Sophie recognizes she really values the way her body looks, stating, "The only motivation I get is to look like them," though she also stated she wants to attempt this in a healthy way. Regardless of un- or healthy modality of attempting to change the shape and/or weight of her body, this appears to speak to an over-valuation of body ideals.

Even though Violet indicated she is satisfied with her body, she still feels there is room for improvement. Her body dissatisfaction seems to be somewhat attenuated when she draws upon cognitive resources to think differently. For example, she reminds herself that, while she used to have toned abs and she wishes she could get them back, bodies change with age, including metabolisms slowing down. Note, though, that she still thinks it would be nice to look like a Fitspiration model and that she does not think her old, toned abs are "gone forever," saying, "You can always go back and get those abs back. Or whatever attribute." Clearly this appearance-focused social media content is linked to her engaging in appearance comparison with her past self. Relatedly, Violet expressed concern that when young girls see this content, it can change their mood, how they dress, and their outlook on how their bodies look. In context, she seems worried that this kind of body-focused social media content negatively affected girls more than women in terms of body image. It seems clear that Nasreen was high on drive for thinness, as she spoke about recently engaging in disordered eating and trying to find a different, effective way to "be better" at looking like these influencers, such as frequenting the gym once her exams are done. It was her feeling that, "It would be great to become like these girls and [these] Instagram pictures and […], it's really my dream body to become like these girls and shape my body like that, so I really love it." Nasreen spoke specifically about wanting her body

to look more like the Fitspiration influencer's than the Thinspiration influencer's body. It was uncommon for participants to speak so explicitly and enthusiastically about wanting their bodies to look more like Thinspiration or Fitspiration influencers' bodies. However, Nasreen readily disclosed her desire and attempts to change her body to look more like these influencers, even knowing she may not be healthy. Consider the following excerpt:

> *Interviewer*: When you talked about the different things that this sort of content inspires you to do - so you said to like, exercise more, change how you're eating - does it also inspire you to be more healthy [sic]? Or is it more just about achieving the outward appearance?
>
> *Nasreen:* Exactly. It's just like, the appearance, or the way they look. It doesn't allow me to think about the other things [like], "OK, if you're gonna go on [a] diet to become like them, is it healthy for you or not,"? Or, "is it dangerous for you or not?" I'm not thinking about them anymore. Yeah, just the way I look.
>
> *Interviewer:* Yeah. So, like the actual health benefits of what you're eating isn't really a concern (*Nasreen*: No. Not really. [says this in agreement with interviewer]). Yeah, you mentioned that it kind of got you to eat very little at a certain time. (*Nasreen*: Yeah). And so that was based on these pictures and that negative feeling?
>
> *Nasreen*: Yeah, that's true. It makes me try to avoid eating. And on that moment, I completely know that that's wrong. Now I have to be careful about my health, but then I think about, "OK, the way I'm gonna (sic) look, I will avoid eating."

While Georgia also spoke about wanting to eat less after viewing Fitspiration influencers, overall, her view did not seem as extreme as Nasreen's around restricting food intake. Consider the following exchange:

Interviewer: Um, does seeing thin or fit girls on social media make you want to change any part of your lifestyle? (Georgia: Yeah, just like what I said). So, is it just like, "I am already doing all the things that I would want to change"?

Georgia: Yeah, the only thing that I would want to change is my eating habits. I said I love food, so sometimes I can't really control myself, I'll just eat more than I should, whereas the fit girl, I said she was inspiration because she has her abs, she has what other people who are eating more than they should be would want to look like in the future.

There were other participants who spoke about at least thinking about restricting food intake to manipulate body weight. However, Nasreen's narrative seemed the most extreme. Also, she may be the most self-conscious about her weight, given her refusal to provide estimates of weight and height. Directly after her interview, the interviewer memo'd, "It is […] very clear she has disordered eating and a preoccupation with body image." Consider the possibility that Nasreen either had an active eating disorder (though this was not diagnosed or asked about in this study) or a possible history of an eating disorder.

Katriana also experiences body dissatisfaction. In response to viewing these images, she stated, "I personally feel like if were to lose just a bit more I would be just happier. I feel like I would be." Despite this mentality, she also recognizes that people often remain dissatisfied after reaching their "goal weight," saying:

There's so many people who do lose a lot of weight. And like thinking that they're still big. Like, when they look in the mirror they still think they're very big and they want to keep going and lose more and more weight.

She also said, "I just do know that if they do have body image problems that, um, seeing this they would still be like, you know, 'I want to be like that [the influencer ideal],' and still

work towards it in a way." I cannot help but notice the tension—or, again, what I will refer to as another dialectic—between these viewpoints. That is, for herself, she feels if she lost a little weight she would be happier, but, she witnesses others have similar thoughts and then continue to be dissatisfied even after weight loss.

Coping Strategies. All but one participant described strategies they use to cope with potential negative effects of viewing Thinspiration and/or Fitspiration. Typical categories of these strategies included learning to use acceptance and being happy for the influencer, which was associated with positive feelings. See Table 2 for variant categories of coping strategies, of which there were 12; there was one subcategory of a variant category.

Participants were asked what they thought made them resilient to potential effects of viewing body-focused social media content, if anything. Exploring their resilience aimed to further our understanding of what may help in body image prevention and intervention efforts. Participants provided many strategies of coping, the most common of which was being happy for the influencer. In a way, Violet is envious of the influencer's abs, but then expressed respect and happiness for the influencers, saying, "Good on them for doing this." Similarly, when asked what kind of emotions come up for her when viewing this content, Georgia said, "I'm happy for both of them, jealous for both of them, and yeah, just happy and jealous."

Joanne provides a fleshed out similar sentiment:

> Sometimes I wish I could have that body type where you can gain muscle easily, but then at the same time I'm thinking it's [Fitspo body] a lot of hard work as well, so you should just be happy with what you have type of thing, but mostly I'm just happy for them – they're working out, they're happy. It doesn't make me feel bad about myself, just

sometimes like, “Hey, I should be going to the gym,” like I’ve been saying for a year, you know?

Katriana spoke about seeing body-focused thin and/or fit influencers, feeling like she could be like them, too, if she were fit, but also thinking she should be happy with who she is. She has a family who communicates to her that she should be thinner, and these influencers remind her of this familial pressure. In this context, the following exchange happened:

Interviewer: So, when you look at these photos were there feelings associated with it, with the comparison?

Katriana: Um, I,. I wasn't mad. No nothing. I think I was more just like, um, happy (for like) them?

That is, despite the social media representation of the family pressure that “skinny is always the best,” Katriana draws on internal strength through the sentiment of just being happy for the influencers, rather than allow these pressures to negatively affect her.

Within this category, there seemed to be another distinct response that is not necessarily connected to jealousy or envy. Rather than having a link to jealousy, Vera appears to have an even more positive experience just being happy for the influencer:

Vera: Like, if it's the end of the day, like, part of their real life, again, I'm very happy for them. Like, you know, it's cool. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, so it's sort of just like happy that they're doing something that makes them feel joy kind of.

Vera: Yeah, no, definitely, definitely.

Sancia and Serena also spoke about their happiness for the influencer in a more isolated way, saying things like, “Good for you, you’re pretty!” or currently feeling, “Oh, happy for

them," when viewing this content, without mention of feeling jealous. Juliette disclosed that she followed a few Thinspiration influencers, but that her reaction in the moment was to "just scroll through it and [think], 'Nice body, I guess, good for you.'"

It was typical for participants to identify acceptance as a coping strategy. For example, self- and body-acceptance helps Marina cope, which allows her to not let body-focused social media content have as much power over her as it used to. When she realized being thin and going to the gym did not bring her the fulfillment she wanted, she learned instead to accept herself and how she looked as she is. Similarly, Nasreen spoke about realizing she would never be exactly like these influencers, which led her to consider the alternative: self-acceptance. Nasreen appeared to be in a contemplation stage of change, realizing what really needs to change is her thinking, not her body, though she still experiences some ambivalence around this.

The remaining coping strategies were variant, yet many of these categories were noteworthy. The categories that half the sample spoke about are expanded upon below. These categories include "Shift away from body-focused content" and "Conscious reflection."

Katriana's self- and body-acceptance is contingent upon not being exposed to this type of social media content. If she sees Fitspiration, without a doubt it makes her think she could also be fit. However, if she shifts away from this kind of body-focused social media content, she accepts her body the way it is. Nasreen wants to achieve certain body goals and *then* shift her focus away from body-focused content in order to cope because looking at Fitspiration and Thinspiration causes her to feel bad. Nasreen's friends point out other aspects of her that matter, such as her kindness, helpfulness, and problem-solving capabilities. She is beginning to think it would be better to try focusing on these aspects of herself, which are positive, rather than the

negatives, which, for her, seem to be concerns about if she is unattractive or not living up to the Fitspiration body ideal.

Six participants talked about how they use and/or recommend conscious reflection to cope with their experiences of viewing appearance-focused social media content. Joanne suggested that other women also slow down and examine their feelings in response to such content, and question what possibly went on behind the scenes in the photographs they see on social media. Katriana spoke to the usefulness of examining her attitude toward “thick” and thin women as well as related past, which helped her understand herself more. Nasreen provides a clear, concise example of the competing thoughts (or, *dialectic*) many participants seemed to have:

> It's two feelings that I have in my mind. Every day I'm thinking, "OK, I want to become like them, I want to look like them." But meanwhile, I'm still like, maybe my conscience is telling me that, "OK, [. . .] that is wrong. And, you'll have to just improve yourself just as you are, and you don't have to compare yourself with others." So, like, it's the negative feelings and the positive ones are struggling in my mind. Yeah, and sometimes, the negative ones win and sometimes the positive one's [win], yeah.

Nasreen felt like slowing down and exploring her inner experiences related to this content is useful; she normally does not think about the feelings viewing these photographs give her, but the interview process opened her eyes to how it is actually harming her, which led her to question why she is consuming it and to consider unfollowing such content.

Marina feels like seeing body-focused social media content could compound what others around her, such as her mother, thinks about weight and a woman’s worth. She described processing through these types of interactions:

> [It] create[s] bad feelings on me. So, like negative thoughts about myself. And when I feel myself thinking bad thoughts, I can do this 'cause if everything else is moving up the only thing I can do is think positive. So, it's just like when I realize I'm feeling that way and then I'm like, "Am I not enough? Am I . . . should I lose weight?" This and that. Then I, I control this, "No, no. Th[ese] thoughts do not belong to who I am." So that's when I leave and walk out of the situation and then I put on the table the feelings that I'm having and why they're created. And, like, what was the trigger for that. And then I try to change them. And I try to tell myself what I believe. The truly . . . the real . . . what the truth actually is.

Similar to Joanne, Marina also appeared to be suggesting that women should take the time to understand their thought processes in response to viewing Fitspiration and Thinspiration. Marina recognizes her thoughts shift quickly from wanting to look like these influencers to realizing they put in a lot of effort but that she is putting her time and energy into other aspects of her life that she values. She then concludes it is not fair for her to "wish to have something that [she knew] someone worked really hard for, not when [she doesn't] put in as much work as that person." The end result of this pattern of thinking for Marine is a kind of non-threatened, non-comparative admiration of the influencer, seemingly particularly the Fitspiration influencers.

Just under half of the sample coped by recalling that Instagram is not a valid reflection of real life. Although not a typical domain, given the blurring of ideal versus real images on social media, recent online trend for women to post "Instagram versus reality" side-by-side comparison photos (Tiggemann & Anderberg, 2020), and the emergence of disclaimer labels on appearance-based social media content (Fardouly & Holland, 2018), it is a domain worthy of examination. Juliette draws upon her Kinesiology education to recognize that the thin ideal is not easily

attainable and that every person's body is different. Ava admits she sometimes wants a smaller waist but is easily able to assess these Fitspiration and Thinspiration photographs as a kind of false advertising to which she tries not to fall prey. For Sancia, it seems that the common humanity (i.e., all humans suffer/have insecurities) aspect of self-compassion (Neff, 2003) relates to the process of realizing that Instagram is not a reflection of true reality. She understands that she does not need to compare herself to social media images. Sancia believes that Fitspiration and Thinspiration influencers change their bodies to look how they do because they clearly were not satisfied with how they looked; Sancia has decided she is not going to do that, so she may as well be happy with how she looks. Media literacy and knowing that people often take a lot of photographs of themselves in order to post only the ones they like best helps Sancia cope. She put it simply, "It's not real."

Though less than half the sample described not comparing themselves as a coping strategy, this category is worth exploring due to its relevance to the sociocultural model of influence of body image. Interestingly, Nasreen copes with negative affect that arises from comparing herself to appearance-focused influencers by turning away from these comparisons and toward comparing herself to offline comparisons with friends or acquaintances to whom she sees herself as superior in order to make herself feel better, confident, and remember she has many positive qualities. Sancia also copes by considering her friends, however, in quite a different way. Appreciation that all humans share the common experience of leading imperfect lives is the common humanity aspect of self-compassion (Neff, 2003), and this seemed to be what Sancia drew on. Realizing that everyone including her friends who she may perceive as having "amazing bodies" suffer and have real problems helps Sancia not compare herself. Sancia has good insight as to how she came to stop comparing herself; it very much relates to spending

time with peers who do not over-value appearance. Although this study is appearance-focused, she tries not to focus on appearance. The health aspect of Fitspo or Thinspo is something Sancia values more than appearance. Thinking of these influencers as just fellow human beings helps her to stop comparing herself to them as well as to place less importance on the images they are portraying and more on who they are as people and their health. She also feels it is irrelevant to compare herself to bodies that have been transformed through plastic surgery. Her thinking is that if even, for example, Kylie Jenner, cannot attain her body "naturally," then it is easier to realize it is not an attainable or a realistic comparison target. Instead of comparing herself to people who work out every day, Sophie tries to use her own version of what seems attainable as her goal. Like Sancia, Sophie identified that these influencers are not relevant comparison targets to her.

Table 2

Variant Categories of Coping Strategies Domain

Domain/Category	**Core Idea**	**Number of Cases**
Coping Strategies	*Participants describe strategies they use to cope with potential negative effects of viewing Thinspiration and/or Fitspiration*	
Conscious reflection	As a coping strategy, participant decides to process or reflect on her thoughts and emotions that occur while viewing Thinspo or Fitspo	6
Instagram is not real life	In order to cope with potential negative effects of seeing Thinspo or Fitspo, participant reminds	5

Domain/Category	Core Idea	Number of Cases
	herself that the bodies on Instagram are not representative of reality.	
Shift away from body-focused content	In response to viewing Thinspo and Fitspo, participant decides to shift her focus away from body-focused social media content as a way of coping.	6
Agency of my response to social media	Participant expressed deciding for herself how she responds to or is affected/not affected by Thinspo and/or Fitspo as a coping strategy.	5
Adaptive inspiration	Participant expressed deciding to find Thinspo and/or Fitspo adaptively inspiring on her own terms, which she sees as a healthy coping strategy.	3
Blocking affective responses	Participant copes with seeing Thinspo or Fitspo by not allowing herself to experience negative affect in response	5
Considering cons	Participant copes with potential negative impact of viewing Thinspo or Fitspo by consciously considering personal cons to trying to achieve a similar body	5

Domain/Category	Core Idea	Number of Cases
Not comparing self	Participant identifies not comparing herself to these images as a healthy way to cope with seeing them.	5
Body diversity	Reminding herself that different body types exist helps participant to cope with the potential negative impacts of viewing Thinspo or Fitspo	4
Resignation	Participant expresses coping with viewing Thinspo and/or Fitspo by resigning herself to the knowledge that she will never look like Thinspo or Fitspo influencers.	4
Shift away from #thinspo content	Participant copes with viewing Thinspo by choosing not to consume such content.	4
Body confidence	Participant believes that having body confidence would be a healthy way to cope with seeing Thinspo and/or Fitspo.	2
Differing values	Participant realizes she has different values or priorities than the perceived values of Thinspo or Fitspo influencers.	2

Note. Italics indicate the upper-level domain's core idea. Frequency classification and number of cases of domain appear in-text only.

Emotional Reactions. Participants, in general, were able to articulate to some extent how they feel when viewing Fitspiration and/or Thinspiration content, as all of them did so during their interviews. Ten young women expressed feeling negative affect when viewing such content, making this a typical category. See Table 3 for the three variant emotional reactions categories that emerged.

This study sought to explore what emotions result in young women when they view Fitspiration and Thinspiration. The majority of participants felt a range of negative affect in response to viewing Fitspiration or Thinspiration.

Considering both her words and vocal tone, the analytic team deduced that Violet experienced annoyance, though the team recognized the word "annoyed" did not explicitly occur in her phrasing. The following illustrates what we understand as Violet's annoyance:

Interviewer: So, what was that emotion when you saw her then?

Violet: It's just like, "Oh, of course." Like, it's just like, "Oh, another one of Jen's fitness pictures." Or whatever.

Interviewer: So, it's almost just like you're sick of it?

Violet: Yeah. Yeah. It's to a point where, like, if you look at these, not all the time, but, like, if you see her reoccurring on your feed, it's like, "OK, whatever. We get it! Your body's slim. You work out."

Other negative emotions that arose were hatred and disgust. At one point, Katriana hated these types of images when she saw them because they reminded her that she had not lost weight. Serena spoke about men commenting on Fitspiration or Thinspiration influencers' bodies, which disgusted her:

Interviewer: And you mentioned that a lot of the comments are from men?

Serena: Yeah. Men—or women or whatever—but a lot of them are just men, like, sexualizing them. And clearly you don't know why these girls posted their pictures. They have every right to post pictures. It's their bodies, their Instagram pages, But I don't know, it's a little – it's kind of gross, the whole environment of it.

Sophie seems to experience a degree of discouragement, feeling down when she sees this type of social media content. Despite considering herself quite body confident, Sophie spoke about not being *as* confident as these influencers. Given her description of feeling "a little down sometimes" when she sees this content, we rationally deduced that it caused her to lose a degree of confidence, which is one definition of to "discourage" (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.-b). For transparency's sake, note that the analytic team did not see Sophie's confidence about her exercise and diet as completely disintegrating, just decreased in comparison to the influencers' perceived body confidence. Serena articulated that she would feel discouraged if she only looked at Thinspiration, and stated:

Serena: I don't think I could ever reach [a similar body to] Alexis Ren, which is obviously a little discouraging because it's like, "Oh! She looks pretty. She looks like she's just having fun."

She also feels discouraged by Fitspiration:

Serena: Jen Selter's, as I said before, it's just a fitness page. It's literally solely looking at her body. And that's kind of discouraging. It's something that . . . it's not – can I see it again? [*Clicks through images.*] Like, I like the images where [Selter] is surrounded by a nice environment, but the ones where it's just her body at the gym, it's kind of discouraging.

Fitspiration and Thinspiration cause Nasreen to feel sadness, hurt, discouragement, and low confidence. Her pattern seems to be to (1) view this content, (2) compare her body to influencers' bodies, (3) think she is not good enough, and (4) feel negative affect, such as sadness. Consider the following excerpt:

Nasreen: [F]or the people that are feeling the same as me, and they think that, "OK, I'm not good enough after [looking at] these photos," it's hurting for the people like me.

Nasreen articulated a theory that she is addicted to the sadness she feels upon viewing appearance-focused social media:

> *Interviewer*: And so, do you find that that, like, it's positive for you to look at these things? Does it make you feel better or worse?
>
> *Nasreen*: Generally, I think it's not. And the negative effects of them, it's much more than the positive ones. Because every time we [inaudible] usually spend our time [on] Instagram, so every time that I look at their feature, it's like, "OK, like, I'm the worst, or maybe many of them are really better than me." So.
>
> *Interviewer*: So, it's sort of like if you're feeling low about yourself— (*Nasreen*: Exactly) it kind of reinforces that feeling. (*Nasreen*: Yeah.) So, it sort of does bring about sort of negative feelings. And so, what do you think makes you still keep looking at it then?
>
> *Nasreen*: I have no idea. Many times, I ask myself [this], but I don't know why, I still insist on following them. [*Quieter*.] I don't know.
>
> *Interviewer*: Yeah, so it's sort of just something you do. You're not really sure (*Nasreen*: Yeah) . . . what causes a behaviour.
>
> *Nasreen*: Maybe it's like an addiction. Yeah, something like that. Because I believe that. I myself am a psychology major. And I think sometimes even experiencing the negative

feelings and emotions, it become[s] an addiction. Like, it's like, you want to bother yourself, or . . . it's not just about the positive emotion. Sometimes in these cases, you keep going and you become addicted.

Interviewer: So, there's sort of this like, need (*Nasreen*: Yeah.) . . . almost making yourself feel— (*Nasreen*: Yeah, I agree). Yeah. So that's interesting. And when you see the images that we showed you today, do the same feelings, very similarly to what you normally you see come up?

Nasreen: Yeah, exactly. Just like . . . always. Yeah.

Nasreen feels it was positive to share her emotions with the interviewer.

Joanne framed her feelings as not having an overall positive affect in response to the type of content shown for this study. Her emotional reaction is negatively valanced, though not specified, and it appears to involve concern for influencers:

Interviewer: So, it seems like there's a bit of concern that because there's so much mystery that if she is doing something not healthy.

Joanne: I can't know for sure, but it *seems* like it. But right off the bat, what I'm seeing, it's concern, it's not – I don't know want to— it's not a positive feeling, you know? It's not the ideal, not exactly. . . It's just not something that I would keep on my newsfeed.

When Joanne was concerned for others, she also appeared to feel somewhat helpless, like she could not do anything to help other vulnerable individuals to whom influencers advertise. This was particularly in relation to Thinspiration:

Interviewer: What made you not want to see the "get thin fast"?

Joanne: I think it's the concern of how many people were liking it and sharing it. You know what I mean? Like following that account and the, "Hey, message me and I'll tell

you . . .” There’s too many people that want to get thin fast when it’s a much larger process – much more of a life change than just “get thin fast,” you know?

Interviewer: So, it’s almost like seeing the disregard for work or the science . . .

Joanne: Not exactly. Or even just the disregard of the mental stability of people who are very . . . like, younger kids may be impressionable. But it’s like preying on maybe they’re in a bad mood. Depending on the mood, depending on how you react to it, maybe they were having like a bad day. Maybe they would never have commented on it if they were in a good mood. And then people preying on it, in my own opinion, to get thin fast. They’re just preying on the people who are having a bad day or maybe they got insulted. That’s why – I don’t want to see [this] because I cannot do anything about it – like, I can’t say, “You guys should all unfollow this account.”

Interviewer: You would if you could try to unfollow them…

Joanne: Yeah, maybe. But there’s no way from a random account to tell them to unfollow right now.

Four participants experience ambivalent emotional reactions when viewing Fitspiration or Thinspiration. Feeling two seemingly opposite ways about something describes ambivalence, which is dialectical. Given several other occurrences of dialectics in these data, despite its variant status, I view ambivalent emotional reactions as significant. For Katriana, there are competing desires that create an ambivalent emotional reaction: to want an ideal body and to accept herself as she is:

Interviewer: So, when you look at these photos were there feelings associated with it, with the comparison?

Katriana: Um, I wasn't mad. No, nothing. I think I was more just, like, um, happy for them? And then for me it was more just like, you know, like, was confused. In a way it's like, "Oh, like should I, like, be like that? Should I not be, like, you know, I should be happy with who I am or like just— I don't know how to explain it. Like, um (*tongue click, two-second pause*), where it's, like, it's on the tip of my tongue. I don't. (*One-second pause.*) Like, overall, I was, like, happy for them and then for me it was like— you know, I'm, like, OK about it, like— (*Interviewer*: Mm hm.) towards . . .

Interviewer: So, there's sort of like a happiness for them that they have what they have. (*Katriana*: Yeah. But–) But then there's also a separate side of it which is like, "Oh but maybe I wish I was more like that." (*Katriana*: Yes, yeah, for sure.) You mentioned confusion?

Katriana: Yeah, like, um, so that feeling, um, like, I wish I could be like them. But at the same time, it's like I should be happy with who I am. So that's what's the confusion part. It's like, you know, I should be confident with who I am, like. Um, especially now generation's too, like, they're accepting, like, "thick" girls in a way so it's like, you know, like, it's, I'm not bad. Like, I should be happy with who I am.

Georgia recognizes in herself conflicting emotional reactions that seem simultaneous in nature, which occur with both Fitspiration and Thinspiration. Her negative reaction is jealousy while the positive aspect is, like Katriana, happiness for the influencer:

Interviewer: And so, when you see these types of images, what emotions or feelings come up? (Georgia: For both?) Yeah, you can start wherever.

Georgia: I'm happy for both of them, jealous for both of them, and yeah, just happy and jealous.

Interviewer: Yeah, so that happiness is sort of for them, like, "Wow you did it! Congrats!" kind of feeling? And then like the jealous is kind of, "I'm glad you have it but I kind of want it, too"? And so, is there any difference between the two accounts for those feelings or is it a quite consistent feeling? (*Georgia*: No, it's the same.) Mhm, so it's sort of like, when you feel that jealous, is it kind of insecurity or is there feeling of comparison-making? (*Georgia*: Comparisons to myself?) Mhm.

Georgia: No, there is no insecurity. It's just jealous in terms of, "I wish I was there." I mean, I'm going to be if I work as hard as they do but right now I just wish I was there.

Interviewer: Mhm, and by "there" do you mean their physical location or like the state of their body?

Georgia: Both, the other one [thinspo influencer] is too skinny, but her [fitspo influencer], yeah. She [thinspo model] was way too skinny.

When asked how looking at these images make Ava feel, she described frequently changing feelings, from happiness to disdain:

Ava: I guess I'm now happy with how I am because sometimes I think about these things and I'm like, "Oh, I wish I had a smaller waist or something or whatever," you know? But then sometimes I see people, and like, "Oh, they have a small waist, and they look good." But then next week I'll look at them and I'm like, "This is very exaggerated." And I don't like that. It changes so often.

Table 3

Variant Categories of Emotional Reactions Domain

Domain/Category	**Core Idea**	**Number of Cases**

Emotional reactions	*Participant expresses how she feels when viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content.*	
Ambivalence	Participant expresses feeling ambivalent when viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content.	4
Neutral	Participant expresses feeling neutral affect when viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content.	4
Positive	Participant expresses feeling positive affect when viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content.	4

Note. Italics indicate the upper-level domain's core idea. Frequency classification and number of cases of domain appear in-text only.

Hard work. All except one participant associated hard work and commitment with obtaining a Fitspo or Thinspo body. The one variant category "Motivated" arose for four participants, this core idea being that the participant felt motivated to work hard in response to viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content.

Almost all participants mentioned hard work in relation to body-focused social media content. Both Joanne and Sancia associate Thinspiration with hard work, with Sancia wanting to look like a Thinspiration model when she was younger but not wanting to "put in the hard work." Joanne thinks the hard work Thinspiration requires is negative, and the hard work Fitspiration required is positive:

> *Joanne*: [A Thinspiration diet] seems more strenuous. Although the muscle one [Fitspiration] is hard work, you can maybe go home and have a big meal – but assuming that they have a good diet. Though, I don't know if they have a good diet, it just seems

like they eat more because you wouldn't be putting on muscle mass if you didn't have a good diet at the same time.

Interviewer: Mhm, so it seems like they're both really hard work.

Joanne: Yeah, one probably hard work in a bad way and the other one hard work probably in a good way.

Interviewer: Mhm, so the one is sort of hard work where you feel accomplished when you do it while the other one is more like putting more stress on the body.

Later, Joanne indicated she thinks Fitspiration takes hard work, but Thinspiration requires no commitment to hard work:

Joanne: No, the other ones [Fitspiration images] they are a little bit more in awe, but inspiring is probably a little better. Like, they can stick to whatever workout plan. Like, I don't know again their diet, but they do have some sort of commitment to the gym to get those results. Like, you can't fake muscle. I don't think you can just workout once a month and get those results, it's definitely some sort of commitment to working out.

Interviewer: So, it almost seems like the commitment is inspiring in that way.

Joanne: Because, I mean, like, I say I'm going to go to the gym but I'm not going to because I don't have the commitment to it? But they somehow did. They look like every day, some sort of things, right. I don't see much muscle tone on her [Thinspiration influencer], so there was not really sort of commitment from her.

It was common for participants to associate only Fitspiration with hard work. Sancia considered the possibility that the Thinspiration influencer just naturally has a thin body. Georgia, Marina, and Serena all believe Thinspiration influencers do not do as much hard work as Fitspiration influencers. The following is a quote from Serena that illustrates this:

I think it comes down to like, when you look at Alexis, she is holding a coffee or, like, she looks . . . it kind of makes it look like she doesn't put effort into her body. So, you yourself think, "Well, if she doesn't put effort into that, and I'm not putting effort into mine right now, obviously I'm not going to look like hers." Whereas for Jen Selter's, you know that she puts effort into hers and that's why she looks like that and so maybe I could eventually look that way if I put in that effort, too.

Georgia also believes that Selter used to have a larger body and had to work hard to be where her body is at now. Similar to Joanne's mention of Fitspiration being a daily commitment, Sophie mentioned that the attainability of Fitspiration takes time, every day. The majority of participants appeared to present and accept the idea that Fitspiration reflects a lifestyle of continual and consistent commitment to hard work.

Health. All but one participant associated viewing Thinspiration or Fitspiration with health outcomes, whether positive or negative. There were no typical categories of health. See Table 4 for variant categories of health, of which there were four.

In terms of the general health domain, there were varying perspectives on how Fitspiration or Thinspiration was related to health. Juliette's view of fitness is balanced; she sees it as not *just* about body image. She said, "Fitness is so much more than just what you look like. I think that's what I'm trying to get at." She cannot tell from the photographs much about the influencers' health; she thinks she would need to know the diets and exercise routines of influencers to assess their fitness. Sancia is more interested in health-focused rather than appearance-focused Fitspiration social media content:

Interviewer: So, sort of, maybe asking yourself those questions like, "Is this really healthy? How much do I really know?" And then kind of thinking if it is attainable or not,

so learning how to ask yourself when you're sort of looking at content like this. (*Sancia*: Mhm.) And are your values of believing fitness or thinness just for your own health as opposed to your appearance, does that change or shift as you look at these types of content either now or in your day to day?

Sancia: I think when I look at this kind of content, I try to look for the people who do post more about health and everything, and if I scroll past these pictures, I think like, "Oh, that's cool to look like that and everything." But I try not to look at those kinds of pages often, I like to look at more the fitness pages, because if they post more everyday people and not so much the Instagram bloggers. I don't like to follow pages of one girl – like one-girl page. I prefer following fitness pages because they post more like everyday people and stuff that—their focus is to make people healthier. And so, I think those pages are OK.

Interviewer: Yeah, so sort of like pages that repost lots of different people, like …

Sancia: Yeah. I think that makes me think that, "Oh, that's healthy," and that's more inspiring to me, too.

Juliette knows she could get her body to a state similar to the muscularity of Fitspiration. However, she believes it would result in a poor mental state, "because just relating to food and having to restrict yourself so much, it's just not a good place to be." Both Juliette and Sancia seem to be more interested in what Juliette refers to as "raw fitness" social media content, as opposed to merely image-based Fitspiration. Juliette explains what she means by "raw" fitness on Instagram:

Interviewer: So, you mentioned the raw Instagram that you follow, what's that like? Can you expand on that?

Juliette: So, they post their workouts and stuff; I don't really like follow them because in my own brain I have it down now. And they post like what they're eating – and they post like real food, too. I feel like when I see these girls [influencers like Selter and Ren], they're just like posting like fruit and stuff all the time or they don't eat anything else. They eat keto. But the other girls [raw fitspo], they post, like, "You can eat that, just in moderation, 80/20, healthy. You don't have to track what you're eating."

Interviewer: So, it's like a little bit more free and less restrictive? The raw showing like, "It's okay to eat a donut."

Juliette: If you want a cookie, eat a cookie.

Sophie spoke about her understanding that one has to put in years of hard work to achieve what Fitspiration or Thinspiration influencers have, otherwise unhealthy shortcuts are taken. It is like Sophie believes the old adage "slow and steady wins the race" (and you may end up with a changed body). Sophie also displays some self-pressure to be motivated *by health*; however, she also acknowledges she is really also motivated by body image. Sophie, talking about motivation upon viewing the images in this study, said:

I think it can be both [positive and negative motivation] because one, you're kind of motivating yourself to be healthy but in a safe way, not trying to starve yourself or anything, eating the right amount and working out the right amount, not too much. But at the same time, it kind of brings an idea to your head like, "Oh, the only way I'm going to be motivated is to look like them." Like the only motivation I get is to look like them, but I should make sure that I'm healthy, you know what I mean?

Likewise, Nasreen understands the nuance between exercising and attending to one's diet to be healthy/to better herself and exercising and dieting to reach a body goal:

Nasreen: I'm saying that this feeling that you're [like], "OK, I'm gonna go to the gym, I'm gonna go on [a] diet or doing the other things just because I want to become like them," is completely wrong. At least I believe in that, OK? I mean, if you're gonna do something for yourself, to improve your feeling about yourself, OK, that's OK. [Like,] "I'm going to diet just because I think I become better in that way." Or, "After going to [the] gym, I will become better." But if that feeling is just because, "OK, I want to reach the body that they have," it doesn't work.

Interviewer: So, it's sort of just about becoming the best version of yourself. (*Nasreen*: Yeah, that's true.). And so, looking identical to someone else is not going to realistically happen (*Nasreen*: Yeah.) Mm hmm. And so, you're saying, like, it's better to work out for yourself. (*Nasreen*: Yeah.) and to be better, but when you first came in, you also said you want to look exactly like that.

Nasreen idolizes the appearance of Fitspiration and Thinspiration body types—more so Fitspiration than Thinspiration. Her initial response in the interview, though not related to the health domain, is why the interviewer mentioned Nasreen said Nasreen wanted to look exactly like the influencers: “I think it would be great to become like these girls and [these] Instagram pictures and I really—it’s really my dream body to become like these girls and shape my body like that, so I really love it.” So, while she understands the aforementioned nuanced difference between behaviours for health reasons and behaviours for appearance goals, it appears she strives for the former but has and is still struggling with the latter.

Several participants asserted that they would prefer health-focused content over appearance-focused content. Note that these same participants also revealed some degree of interest in the way the influencers look and looking like them. For example, Juliette said, “Oh,

that's cool to look like that and everything,"; Sophie said, "Oh, the only way I'm going to be motivated is to look like them,"; and Nasreen said, "It's really my dream body to become like these girls and shape my body like that.

Katriana is motivated by Thinspiration and Fitspiration content; she views both Ren and Selter as toned and fit, and she is interested in being fit. Consider the following excerpt:

> *Interviewer*: So, this sort of motivation which was sort of boosted by this Instagram content (*Katriana*: Yes.) has had an effect, especially on your diet.
>
> *Katriana*: Yeah, hmm mm. And I—definitely it's more of a positive effect because I do feel like more energetic and happy just changing up my diet.

Katriana seems to conceptualize "health" as well-being indicators. She notices feeling more energetic and happier after changing her diet by eliminating several energy-dense foods and buying (and ostensibly consuming) more vegetables. Note that, for her, these indicators are not about weight or shape, which are the most noticeable aspects of Fitspo and Thinspo, particularly in this study because we used only still images. "Yeah. It's like if I do workout if I'm, like, thick. Or, or if I'm slim. Like, it doesn't matter to me just like as long as I'm somewhat fit in a way," she said.

At perhaps the opposite end of the spectrum of the health domain, Vera suggests that viewing Fitspiration or Thinspiration may result in mental health issues, such as depression, in some people who try to achieve the fitspo or Thinspo ideal but "fail" to achieve desired results:

> *Vera*: But again, you know, because we're all different, there is a high chance that some girls—they might kind of, they were not able to achieve that and then it's gonna be like a different story with a different problem.

Interviewer: So, if they work really hard and then they don't get those results, then that would be very hard on them.

Vera: Mm hmm. Yeah, so like, it can be like, you know, they might end up as being depressed. And that's, like, the whole, like, disease so that you need to go to the psychologist, taking the pills, getting treated, etc. Right. So, it's like it's like every situation is really different.

Table 4

Variant Categories of Health Domain

Domain/Category	**Core Idea**	**Number of Cases**
Health	*Participant associates viewing Thinspo or Fitspo with positive or negative health outcomes.*	
Underweight	Participant views Thinspo influencer as underweight and unhealthy.	4
#Thinspo is perceived as related to disordered eating	Participant perceives Thinspo as related to disordered eating, whether dieting, fasting, "cleansing," etc.	3
Benefits	Participant feels there are health benefits that can be associated with viewing Thinspo of Fitspo.	2
#Thinspo is perceived as	Participant perceives Thinspo as related to eating disorders.	2

related to eating
disorders

Note. Italics indicate the upper-level domain's core idea. Frequency classification and number of cases of domain appear in-text only.

Objectification. All but one participant alluded to Fitspiration and/or Thinspiration content reflecting seeing women as their bodies or as a collection of body parts. No lower-level categories of objectification were identified.

Most participants referenced society's pervasive tendency to view women *as* merely their bodies or a collection of body parts—often for the use or sexual pleasure of others (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), whether directly or indirectly. Some participants spoke about their reactions to the idea of others—particularly men—objectifying Fitspiration or Thinspiration influencers. For example, Sancia feels the whole environment of men commenting on and sexualizing Thinspiration influencers' bodies is gross. Ava associates desperation with men who objectify appearance-focused influencers:

> *Ava*: All these things affect people's minds. Even men, too, like men look at this and they probably – they either like it or they don't. And they might expect females to either look like that or, I don't know—something of that sort.
>
> *Interviewer*: So, it seems like these photos – even though you or other people acknowledged they're probably not quite what reality can be, they still can be affected by it. It can still shape what they think the standard of what they should look like is, or what they should be attracted to even with men.

Ava: Definitely. Because . . . I know a lot of men who don't like this, but there are also that kind of do, maybe. I don't want to be mean, but like there are desperate men who are kind of into this because they're like, "Oh wow, she's so perfect," or whatever.

Serena takes the perspective of how many men will find these kinds of images attractive, implying a desire for male validation through one's bodily appearance:

Interviewer: So, if that success in like getting all those "feeling attractive" – like girls wanting to be jealous and also guys liking it, it kind of – all of that kind of comes up when looking through these images.

Serena: Yeah, that's really true because you think – like you compare yourself with other girls and think, "Okay, I'm not as good as them." And you also relate back – if you're a straight girl who's into guys [*Serena chuckles*], then you're going to relate to how many guys are going to like this image and stuff like that.

Serena sees this way of thinking as translating into self-objectification, seeing oneself in a different way (from the perspectives of men):

Interviewer: Mhm. And you mentioned before that like if people pose this way, they'll get more likes from guys. (*Serena*: Yeah) Is that a large part of it?

Serena: I think it is. Well, I'm saying this for straight people [*Serena chuckles*.] I can't – and for straight girls. It could be like different if you're like gay, bi- like I don't know. (*Interviewer*: Yeah.) But for straight girls, I know that – um, I feel like, obviously not every girl's like, "OK, I'm going to post this, so that every guy gets this." Some of it is also for yourself to feel good. But I think there are underlying factors of like, "Oh, this guy might like this or like if I pose in this or if I look a little bit sexier than this, then more people will like it because of that, or more cute guys will like it. Like I even notice

this on my own pictures, like in a picture of me in a bikini, that'll get more likes especially by guys than like a picture of me with my grandparents. Even though it's the same person, but the way you saw yourself is different.

Interviewer: Yeah, so it's just like how you present yourself on this platform can vary how much guys will like the images.

Serena: Yeah, even on–I feel like the way that I'm saying is making it seem like guys ruin everyone's lives, that's totally not true. But I'm saying that if you look at like deep down main factors, that's definitely one of them for sure.

Katriana grapples with appreciating a new body term "slim-thick" to indicate it is now socially acceptable to be bigger than "stick-skinny" (though still skinny in a way) and still feeling pressure to be thinner in order to be desirable enough to get married. Speaking about her experience of viewing Fitspiration and Thinspiration brought to mind familial body appearance pressures, "But there's always that constant pressure where it's like, 'Oh, like, how are you going to get married? Like, you need to be skinnier, like, you know, skinnier looks better and like, good.'" Rather than have consideration for who she is and what she can do, she feels constant pressure to look a certain, even after losing weight.

Nasreen also uses men's perspective of appearance-focused influencers as a frame of reference, which then leads to self-objectification, the view of *self as object*:

Nasreen: I think they are really attractive, and every time that a person, especially boys, look at them, OK? They love these bodies so it's really good to become like that.

Interviewer: So, it's like there's boys that are—

Nasreen: Not only boys, but for the most part it is about them.

Interviewer: Yeah, so like boys like this type of look. And so, then you feel like, OK, so I should do the same.

Nasreen: Exactly.

That is, for some participants, these social media images are a reminder of what is desirable to men. Additionally, for some young women (like Nasreen), Fitspiration or Thinspiration images motivate them to try to appear more like these influencers.

Other responses on the topic of objectification were more directly objectifying statements of the influencers, whether or not the participant liked what they saw. For example, Joanne noticed certain body parts on both the Thinspiration and Fitspiration influencers shown in this study:

Joanne: And this one I see no tone – yes, there is tone on the stomach, but it looks more like "lost weight." The other one looks full out had – you see the lines of muscles and stuff, which means they worked out. This one looked like they just starved.

Note that Joanne uses dehumanized, objectified language, such as "*the* stomach" rather than language that acknowledges the personhood of the influencer such as "*her* stomach." When asked about her feelings, Joanne made appearance-based (objectified) observations as opposed to competence-based speculations about the influencers:

Interviewer: But like what feelings came up when you were looking at these images?

Joanne: Um, like I said, the other one [Thinspo] was concern. This one [Fitspo] – maybe a little bit of awe? Because they do have quite a bit of muscle tone, so I mean who wouldn't want some muscle tone, right? This one [Thinspo] she seems a little too thin, I didn't like that one too much?

Interviewer: Mhm, and she's just lying on her back there?

Joanne: I mean, overall, just, I guess, positive? But not . . . as I don't follow accounts like this, I, overall don't – they're not my favourite and I don't want to be biased? I guess a little bit of a positive reaction, not really concerned. I am wondering if they have better things to do with their time than two hours in the gym, so maybe a little bit of criticisms, you know like, "Why spend so much time into body image?"

Note Joanne does not question why Fitspiration influencers spend time on increasing body competence/ability; she questions why they spend so much time on body appearance. Georgia said, "The fit girl, I said she was inspiration because she has her abs." Again, the participant is pointing out a body part, speaking about the influencer's ownership of abdominal muscles—not about the functionality or competence using abdominal muscles may afford a Fitspiration influencer.

Sophie also objectified the influencers, noticing their physical attractiveness, thinness, and hair, which also lead her to think about how she could post similar images on social media:

Interviewer: And so, can you tell me what you made of these images, like what went through your mind, either these images or similar ones you see at home?

Sophie: Um, that the girls were always really pretty. They have nice long hair, really thin, and they're really motivated to be doing stuff and they post like really cute photos. And I always just think like, "Oh, maybe I can post cute photos like that." So yeah.

While Sophie does mention that the influencers are "really motivated to be doing stuff," she lands on wanting to post "cute" photos on social media (a passive, image-based activity), like the influencers.

Rather than engage in direct objectification, from a more removed perspective, Violet talked about how Fitspiration is objectifying and how some individuals engage in self-objectification as a result of seeing Fitspiration:

Violet: Yeah, 'cause everyone now is younger and seeing models that's just like, "Wow, they're so. . . they have such nice bodies. I hope my body turns out like that." But, like, they're models and that's what they do for a living, they're supposed to have those types of bodies.

Interviewer: Mhm.

Violet: In order to have a living kind of thing. So, I don't know. It is definitely—Instagram and social media is very influential for body image and what your body should look like, and how you should work out, and all of that. What you should wear when you're working out, like tights and a sports bra. I don't know.

Violet is disillusioned with objectification on social media:

Interviewer: I think we did touch on this a little bit, but when you first came in here you did say like, "Oh, Jen." And you had an immediate reaction.

Violet: [*Laughs*]. Cause I knew her from like . . . everyone used to talk about her. Like, "Oh, her butt!" I'm like, "OK guys. Relax!" So, I don't know.

Interviewer: So, what was that, "Oh, not her again."

Violet: Yeah. It's just like advocated everywhere. It's so weird. She always has those protein shakes too. I don't know.

Violet does not like objectification of this kind of social media content. She alludes to Fitspiration being about the influencer self-objectifying and notes the distinction between objectified social media images and body competence:

Violet: Well, I mean I used to work out and I wouldn't like—I wouldn't like really take pictures of me, like, doing this. I definitely wouldn't take pictures of me working out or anything. So, I don't know, I just feel like she's advocating this type of body and being like not necessarily like, no one can really . . . it's hard to achieve that.

Interviewer: Mhm.

Violet: Like, I know for me it's hard to achieve that image. And like I feel like she just . . . I don't know how to explain it. Um, this is hard [*Laughs*].

Interviewer: Don't worry, take your time.

Violet: Uh yeah. Like she just—like this picture [references Fitspo image] like, OK. So, you're working at the gym, but are you really doing stuff? You're just taking a picture.

Interviewer: Mhm.

Violet: It's very like, I don't know.

Interviewer: So, like taking the photo instead of actually working out.

Violet: Yeah, I feel like it like defeats the purpose. Like, just work out and do your thing, you don't need to post on social media.

Interviewer: Mhm. So, what changes when you take photos instead of just working out?

Violet: Um, I feel like you're trying to, like, set some type of thing like, "This is the way you're supposed to work out." "This is what you should look like when you work out."

Interviewer: Mhm.

Violet: This body image, I guess you can say that.

Others. Eleven of the 12 participants offered guesses as to what other people's experiences are in relation to viewing Fitspiration and/or Thinspiration, particularly in response to being asked who they think is most affected by this type of social media content. It was typical

for participants to speak on others' imagined reactions to this social media content. This category was entitled "Others' imagined reactions." Another typical category called "Concern for others," involved expressing concern for how particular others (e.g., young girls, younger sisters, young adults, influencers, etc.) react to viewing such content. The only variant category was "I respect others' autonomy," in which participants expressed respecting other's autonomy—often the autonomy of the influencers'—of which four participants discussed.

Some participant responses were about other people in general, as opposed to fitting in a certain "Others" category. For example, Violet noted that people possess differing body ideals, but she did not say explicitly that she has differing body ideals from Thinspiration or Fitspiration. Joanne suggested a coping strategy for individuals who are affected by Thinspiration or Fitspiration content, such as thinking more deeply about how the content affects them, maybe writing out their thought.

Ten participants imagined how other people react to Fitspiration or Thinspiration content. Participants imagined negative reactions of others, for various reasons. Georgia believes others seeing this content compare themselves and want to be influencer, believing that what the influencer posts to social media is her "real life," whereas she herself understands what is real is more than what meets the eye. Serena and Marina both think people look at Thinspiration influencers and compare themselves, wishing they were somehow similar to influencers like Ren. Similarly, Sancia imagines others over-value these body ideals, believing others engage in social comparison, both in terms of lifestyle and appearance of such influencers:

> *Sancia*: I think like along people like Kylie Jenner and stuff, people may be a little unrealistic with that kind of goal because there are a lot of girls who want to be like her. And I think you should separate wanting to be like her or to—she should inspire you in a

way, but I don't think people should be so obsessed the way they are. Like, currently, I think they are too obsessed with that and it's not realistic because not everyone can be like that, not everyone has the money or like that kind of lifestyle to look like that.

Sophie's imagined reaction of others to appearance-focused social media content can be summarized like, "I want to *be* you!" However, Sophie seems to remove herself from this kind of reaction:

Interviewer: What was your attitude towards this type of social media content before doing this interview?

Sophie: Um, like how I feel when I see these photos? (*Interviewer*: Mhm.) Kind of the same way, like these photos are really pretty or they show certain parts of their life to the world and they put out this certain upfront and when people look at it, they want to be able to look at it as, "Oh wow, she has this amazing life!" or, "Oh wow, she looks like that, I wish I could look like that!" So yeah, I kind of just think that there are so many accounts like that, everyone is trying to be a copycat or be like them.

Katriana thinks that people with existing body image concerns will be impacted by form-focused social media content. She said, "But I just do know that if they do have body image problems that seeing this they would still be like, you know, 'I want to be like that [the influencer ideal],' and still work towards it in a way."

Sophie has similar sentiments to Katriana, though perhaps goes further, as she does not think those who lack body confidence should subject themselves to the type of social media content show in this study. She reasons that these individuals will look down on their own bodies and this will permeate all areas of their life:

Interviewer: Mhm, and so would you think that people like that should be following accounts like this to motivate them or no?

Sophie: No, I don't think it's the right motivation. I think it's more of just like a negative motivation where it puts them down and it doesn't really– it makes them look down on their body and their whole life.

Joanne believes everyone has different body ideals and is affected by form-focused social media content differently. Additionally, one of her imagined reactions of others had to do specifically with "overweight" individuals viewing Fitspiration:

Joanne: And I think, like, Instagram accounts like this, especially the first one [Fitspo] because she's so comfortable with herself at the gym, taking mirror pics like laying down and stuff doesn't really help if you're overweight or feeling that way.

Interviewer: Like it almost feels like she feels like she belongs so much there because she looks like that.

Joanne: Yeah, and it kind of instills the feeling that you should feel like that, too.

Given that she references "everyone," Serena actually includes herself in her imagined reactions of others to Fitspiration or Thinspiration content, stating, "But I think a pattern with both of them was I am never going to look like that (*Interviewer*: OK.), which is like what *everyone* [emphasis added] thinks when they look at these things."

Ava thinks Selter had plastic surgery but is either allowing people to believe or peddling a narrative this she acquired her large breasts and buttocks through working out. She thinks that other individuals who follow such Fitspiration "are going to want to get plastic surgery or feel depressed about themselves because they don't look as good as [Fitspiration influencers]." While the following quotes do not fall under the "Others imagined reactions" category, they provide

empathic context for the above imagination. Ava described what her experience might be if she bought into the story of Fitspiration alludes to: that "if you work out, your boobs are going to be raised, you don't have to get plastic surgery. Your butt is going to be lifted if you do squats." Ava knows "that doesn't really always work," saying, "If I were to do that, I'll probably look like a rectangle, so it's not—I'm going to be pissed off, like, 'Hey, you told me this.'"

Over half of the participants expressed concern for others. That is, participants typically expressed concern for how particular others react to viewing Fitspo or Thinspo. Participants were often concerned for young or adolescent girls, but also specifically for younger sisters, children/youth, people in larger bodies, friends, young adults, adults, and influencers. Sancia believes young people as less able to understand that Instagram is not an authentic reflection of reality. She also believes that young people are less able to manage not comparing themselves. Essentially, she implies that these are either protective factors or coping strategies. Joanne is concerned not just for young girls, but vulnerable others, which could be anyone; she relates this to negative mood and being insulted in particular. The following captures her concern for some of the aforementioned groups of people:

> *Interviewer*: What made you not want to see the "get thin fast"?
>
> *Joanne*: I think it's the concern of how many people were liking it and sharing it, you know what I mean? Like following that account and the, "Hey, message me and I'll tell you. . ." There's too many people that want to get thin fast when it's a much larger process – much more of a life change than just "get thin fast," you know?
>
> *Interviewer*: So, it's almost like seeing the disregard for work or the science . . .
>
> *Joanne*: Not exactly. Or even, just the disregard of the mental stability of people who are very—like, younger kids may be impressionable, but it's, like, preying on—maybe

they're in a bad mood. Depending on the mood, depending on how you react to it, maybe they were having like a bad day. Maybe they would never have commented on it if they were in a good mood. And then people preying on it in my own opinion, to get thin fast, they're just preying on the people who are having a bad day or maybe they got insulted. That's why – I don't want to see because I cannot do anything about it – like I can't say, "You guys should all unfollow this account."

Interviewer: You would if you could try to unfollow them . . .

Joanne: Yeah maybe, but there's no way from a random account to tell them to unfollow right now.

Interestingly, Joanne also is concerned for the Thinspiration influencer herself, thinking Ren did not get that thin in a healthy way:

Interviewer: So, with the Thinspiration model, there is that concerned feeling. Were you concerned for her or for the fans?

Joanne: Like, initially I wasn't thinking about the fans, I was thinking about her like, "OK, that's concerning, and that she's promoting it." I mean, initially it was concern for her. The ones in the bottom, it doesn't seem like she got it in a healthy way. I thought there was more of a diet change than anything. Because I don't see muscle mass. I mean maybe a little at the stomach, but I don't see it.

Vera, Joanne, and Ava are concerned for young people or "kids." Ava mentioned concern for young adults, while Sancia and Violet specified their concern for young women or women in general. Sancia is concerned girls and women may compare themselves to an unhealthy extent with appearance-focused social media content, stating, "I just think for people who might be a little more, like, younger women, younger girls, they might be impacted more, they might

compare themselves too much." Violet, Sancia, Vera, Serena, and Joanne all mentioned being concerned for either girls or "young girls." For example, consider the following excerpt from Violet's interview:

> *Violet*: Yeah. I feel like it's, like young girls, like they don't really, I don't know. Like, the newer generation, they rely a lot on social media and like those platforms, to express themselves. So, I feel like having these inspirations, or these posts, by like pretty girls with nice bodies, like I feel like it affects them more than it affects like, I guess you would say, older generations. Because we have a bit more understanding of like how it's done and stuff.
>
> *Interviewer*: Yeah. So, what generation do you say you're a part of?
>
> *Violet*: Oh, I don't even know. Uh, like the newer generation, no. That's, I don't even know. I feel like 1990-1999 that's where I'm at [*Laughs*]. And then the newer generations like 2000 to that, to 2009. They're a lot more on social media.
>
> *Interviewer*: Mhm. And that reliance, what affect does that have that you see and notice?
>
> *Violet*: It can definitely change their moods, everything. Change how they dress. How they feel. I don't know how they feel, but change how they dress, how they perceive certain images. Um, all that. Yeah. It can definitely change like their outlook on their body type, especially. Like, in this case how they look and where they can possibly eventually go with working out.
>
> *Interviewer*: Yeah. So, it seems like they don't have maybe the things that you do that kind of shield you from feeling inferior when looking (*Violet*: Yeah.) when looking at these images.

Vera believes mainly young girls are negatively affected by social media content focusing on body appearance. She considers that boys or men, maybe particularly if they are gay, can be negatively affected by it, too. Her initial response to being asked who is most affected by this content is to be concerned for young girls, though, and she wants people to love and appreciate themselves. Her response points to two parts of self within an individual negatively affected by these types of images:

> *Interviewer*: So, I guess, more specifically, who do you feel could be most affected by these types of images?
>
> *Vera*: Um, well, you know what? Mainly it's girls, right? Or it can be even a homosexual, like, guys, right, as well. Because, again, you know, it's just like, you know, it's their perception and it's their mindset, the way how they do not believe that they're beautiful, you know. And that, I believe, initially comes from the childhood when maybe parents were not acknowledging this, or the people around were not acknowledging this. And the person continuously started experiencing, like, you know, some, how to say, sorry just forgot the word. (*Interviewer*: No worries.) It's like, you know, when you have kind of like a disagreement with yourself. (*Interviewer*: conflict?) Yeah, that kind of conflict that, "I don't look like this person and I'm not beautiful. I know I'm too thin, I'm too short, I'm too tall." Like, you know, this kind of disagreement with yourself. I mean, I personally see so many young people affected by this and it's so sad because I cannot, like, how, like how you cannot love yourself! Like you know, like how [can others] love you if you don't love yourself and you do not appreciate yourself, right?

Social Comparison. Every participant except one engaged in social comparison processes in response to viewing Fitspiration and/or Thinspiration content. Of the full sample, 11 women

compared her appearance to the influencers and wished she looked like these influencers to some degree when viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content. Participants also compared and contrasted how online Fitspo and/or Thinspo content influenced them to engage in social comparison versus how in-person interactions do. Eight participants discussed this typical category, which we labeled "IRL [in real life] versus online influence." The one variant social comparison category saw six young women comparing their lifestyle to Fitspo and/or Thinspo influencers and longing for a similar lifestyle when viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content. This category was labelled "lifestyle."

The majority of participants revealed some degree of appearance social comparison processes they go through when viewing Fitspiration or Thinspiration. These were not always tremendously overt comparisons. Marina stated, for example, "So the first thought that comes is, 'Oh, nice body! 'Wish I had it.'" This may be interpreted as a subtle social comparison; nevertheless, she is indicating her body is different in comparison to body-focused influencers. Marina also spoke more explicitly about comparing her body to influencers' bodies:

> *Marina*: So, I feel like as much I feel like I wish I was like that, I think it's just the type of body I wish I have. I know there's boundaries to it. To the way I see myself as well. So, I know [it] wasn't something like she woke up like that and it just happened. She worked for it, right? So, it's as much like anything that's a lifestyle for her. And I think that—'cause, I don't know, I'm comparing myself. Is that weird?

Additionally, Marina thinks regularly consuming appearance-focused social media content perpetuates and amplifies social pressure/influence and comparison. Speaking about her own past experiences with social media, she said:

> Like, so you start calling your attention, "Oh my god, that girl is pretty. I wish I was like that. And I wish I was not like that." And so it goes on. So, like, because I was like so—I was always filling myself with so much of them. So, like a lot of other people. We start wanting to be like that.

It is noteworthy that Marina also spoke about appearance social comparison in terms of seeing her friends compare their appearances to such content. She witnesses her friends try to look like Instagram models because they want to so badly, but it is not enough for them. She spoke about people wanting to look like someone else, as opposed to bettering or doing it for themselves.

Several participants noted that they compare themselves to Fitspiration images. For example, Joanne wishes she could have a body that quickly gained muscle. For Georgia, appearance comparison with Fitspiration motivates diet specifically; she indicated that she is already fit and regularly attends the gym, so Fitspiration gives her more motivation to change her diet, as the following reveals:

> *Georgia*: Yeah, the only thing that I would want to change is my eating habits. I said I love food, so sometimes I can't really control myself, I'll just eat more than I should, whereas the fit girl, I said she was inspiration because she has her abs, she has what other people who are eating more than they should be would want to look like in the future.
>
> *Interviewer*: Mhm. So, although you may have the fitness, the motivation, and the commitment to that down, sort of then like the eating habits . . .
>
> *Georgia*: Yeah, I don't have, like, the physical appearance of where I would want to be.
>
> *Interviewer*: Mhm, and so seeing the fit girl kind of is like, "Oh, that might be the next step of where I might want to go," so that's kind of why it's inspirational? (*Georgia*:

> Yeah) Mhm. Do they make you more or less motivated to reach your own fitness goals? (*Georgia*: No just more. Not less, more.) Mhm, what makes it more motivating?
>
> *Georgia*: Uh, just the same thing that I've been saying, that she goes to the gym – I don't know how often. But you can tell she goes to the gym enough to keep those abs or keep her appearance. And then the other girl – the thin girl . . . Sorry, can you repeat the question? More or less motivating to what? (*Interviewer*: Go after your fitness goals.) OK, so we're not going to talk about thin girl because she's not really "fit," so we'll talk about the fit girl. Yes, more motivating because if I wanted to—because I do, for me to, like, want to have the appearance she has, I need to continue – or not really continue because I'm already going to the gym twice a week so be consistent, again with the food, reduce the amount of food I eat.

Georgia compares her appearance when viewing Fitspiration, which leads to feelings of jealousy. She said, "No, there is no insecurity. It's just jealous in terms of, 'I wish I was there.' I mean I'm going to be if I work as hard as they do but right now I just wish I was there." Sancia noted that Instagram is similar to magazines, which lends validation to the idea that social media are akin to mass media. Additionally, she spoke about having a high tendency toward appearance comparison when she was younger, saying:

> So, when I was younger, I obviously wanted to be thin like the girls on Instagram and stuff, but I didn't want to put in the work, and I didn't understand, like people like Alexis, how they just look like that and I'll always compare myself like, "Why don't I look like that?"

Serena also spoke about comparing her appearance to social media content when she was younger. There is still a sense that she does so now as well, but that she has some cognitive coping tools:

> *Serena*: Um, but there's always that thought at the back of your mind, that it'd be ideal to look like that, especially when [Ren] used to post with her boyfriend, Jay Alvarrez. And I was like, I remember being little and I was like, "I have to look like that, to get a guy like that. Um, I think that is something – that I don't know – you notice that you don't look like them, and that sets you apart because you're like, "Oh, I might not be as pretty." But you also accept that it's – I think as you get older, you start to realize it really is just a different body type. It's not like they're better because of that.

Sophie's intention is to pay attention to her own goals. However, due to overexposure to appearance-focused social media content, she cannot help but compare herself to Fitspiration or celebrity influencers instead. When she compares herself to influencers, it becomes more about getting to their level and becomes less about her own goals for herself:

> *Interviewer*: does seeing this sort of content change how attainable it feels?
>
> *Sophie*: Um, yeah. Because sometimes you think you can just get from where you are to where they are, like their [influencers'] body confidence or body level with how thin/fit they are. You wish you could get from where you are to where they are, but there are always steps in between, you can't just jump from A to Z, you have to go from A to B to C. So, you just have to know that there are different steps, you can't just go right away. When you look at that you think, "Oh I'll get there in like a month," but realistically you'll probably get there in like a year.

While Sophie is fairly confident, social comparison leads her to recognize her decreased confidence compared to the body confidence of influencers:

> *Sophie*: So, when I, like, see these photos, I feel like they're even more on top of that chain of like confidence and all that, so I feel like maybe if I'm at where they are, I'll have that confidence.
>
> *Interviewer*: Mhm. So, it's sort of like generally you're pretty confident about how hard you're working and the sports you do and how you eat, but then it's also like, "Oh but I could be even better."

Sophie also recognizes that everyone compares themselves, which can cause a small degree of suffering. She tries to use self-acceptance to cope with this, but perhaps seems more resigned to being different than others (like influencers):

> *Interviewer*: Mhm. Do you ever make direct comparisons between like someone you see online and yourself?
>
> *Sophie*: Um, sometimes, sometimes I look at it and I'm like, "You look so much prettier than I am," or I'm like, "You're so much skinnier," or something like that. I think everyone kind of finds a little thing that they can compare themselves to.
>
> *Interviewer*: Is that a difficult experience or is that fleeting?
>
> *Sophie*: It's kind of hard sometimes because you just want to be OK with yourself. I am OK with myself, but sometimes you just see those little differences, and everyone wishes they could change something about themselves, but we just have to accept ourselves for who we are.
>
> *Interviewer*: Yeah, so it's sort of like even though you may be confident, there might be like this one thing, and you see that on someone else, and you're like, "Argh, why do they

get to have it and not me?" (*Sophie*: Yeah) Mhm, is that like a very negative experience to happen or is it just sort of like annoying and you can immediately move on?

Sophie: It's kind of annoying. I just kind of look at it, think about it, cuss at it, and then kind of move on.

Although Violet acknowledges that no one is going to turn out to have the exact same body features (e.g., buttocks or abdomen tone) as influencers, she still suggests using influencers' bodies as a reference to one's own goals. Interestingly, Violet also engages in comparison of her current body with her past body, offering reassurance that despite bodies changing with age, one can "always go back and get [those abs or whatever attribute] back."

It was common for participants to compare their appearance to influencers, but most of these comparisons seemed small with perhaps small, negative effects. However, Nasreen's experiences with appearance social comparison stood out as the most overt examples in the sample. She expressed that she engages in an "addicting" behaviour of looking at influencers and comparing herself because on social media she has no fear of being judged and found lacking by either the influencers or anyone else, just herself. That is, it is a private activity for her. She is also afraid people offline will compare her appearance to her friends' appearances. Nasreen upwardly compares herself to an unrealistic benchmark influencers set out, and consequently, she has low state self-esteem. Nasreen uses upward appearance comparison against Fitspiration and downward appearance comparisons against Thinspiration to gauge her own position, as she prefers the Fitspiration look. She experiences a boost in confidence when making downward comparisons to Thinspiration:

Nasreen: I feel different reactions, because when I saw the last one that was a little more thin [Thinspiration], I think, I didn't like it. But I want to be fit like the second one [Fitspiration]. Yeah. I think she's better.

Interviewer: So, the page that's on the screen now then, the fit model, she's more of like—(*Nasreen*: she's more attractive for me, yeah.) So, it's sort of just one of them is just more of the goal (*Nasreen*: Yeah, that's true.) Does that affect the feelings that you get when looking at them?

Nasreen: Mm. Yeah, like the last one [Thinspo] that was more . . . that wasn't completely fit. I was thinking, "OK, I don't want to look like her because I think, right now, I'm better than her," and [it] make[s] me more confident. But the fit one, no, not really. I was thinking that maybe it's better to become like her.

Her appearance comparisons are more frequently upward comparisons, which more frequently leads to negative feelings—she finds these negative feelings "addicting." When asked who is most affected by the types of images shown in this study, Nasreen stated, "In my case, usually they give me bad feelings and make me to feel that, 'OK, I'm not beautiful," or, 'I'm not in shape enough.' So, the person that will hurt is me." Despite recognizing the impossibility of "reaching the body that [influencers fitting the Fitspiration body ideal] have," Nasreen still engages in appearance comparisons and strives to look like Fitspiration influencers.

It was typical for participants to compare and contrast how online Fitspiration and/or Thinspiration content influences them in terms of engaging in social comparison versus how offline social interactions do. Nasreen seems to have a high appearance comparison tendency, which negatively affects her life. She is afraid people offline will compare her appearance to her friends' appearances. This can cause her to avoid or ignore her friends. That is, she actively

avoids upward appearance comparison targets offline. However, she does seek out appearance-focused social media content with which to engage in upward appearance comparisons. Consider the following exploration of the difference between offline and online appearance comparisons:

> *Interviewer*: But then you also, you avoid those negative feelings in real life by avoiding those pretty people. But you say that you actively look at Instagram. (*Nasreen*: Yeah, see, that's a good point.) So, you see prettier people. So, is there a difference between the two or—?
>
> *Nasreen*: I'm not sure about the differences, but I think maybe the feeling that let me follow them on Instagram but avoid them in real world is that, OK, they're not my friends, I'm not with them [in real life]. But when, when I'm hanging out with my friends, maybe the other people that came to us or [are] meeting us, maybe they are thinking that "OK, this girl is like is not as beautiful as her friends." But the models on Instagram, OK, they are not related to me, and they're not my friends. So, I don't have to be worried about them because I'm not with them that [inaudible] someone [would] want to compare me with them. So—

Nasreen engages in both upward and downward comparisons off- and online. Like online downward appearance comparisons, "in real life" downward appearance comparisons with friends result in a confidence boost for Nasreen. She stated, "The things that I think, [are] like, 'I'm better than my friends or the people that I hang out with usually,' [and] I become more confident, and I think, 'I have many positive things.'"

Serena compares herself in particular with "real-life" peers because she has a personal connection with them, whereas she does not have a personal connection with online influencers. For her, if she does not know someone that she sees online, it can be a positive experience. She

disclosed, “That personal connection makes me almost feel like, ‘Maybe you could do better.’ Like, when I look at the celebrities, I don’t have as much of that negative experience because I don’t know those people, but with your friends, it can easily be more negative because it’s personal connection.” Vera is also more influenced by people she meets in person than influencers, particularly when her values align with theirs. She stated:

> I don't even know this girl [a Fitspo or Thinspo influencer]; how she can influence myself? I'm more like, the thing is with me, I'm this type of a person who is more influenced by, like, you know, kind of physical touch. Like when I meet the person I talk, I can see, like, how much people to . . . For example, I'm more influenced by, let's say people who [are] helping, like with the social needs, right? Who is or who's trying to solve some major climate issues. I don't know, those type of things. So those type of people have more influence on me versus those type of images.

Typical Domains

Motivation. As 10 participants discussed whether or not she was motivated to achieve similar body ideals shown in Fitspiration or Thinspiration content, this was a typical domain. It was typical for participants to indicate such content motivated them to actually engage in diet and/or exercise behaviour, as eight of the 12 young women indicated this sentiment. We called this category “Social media motivates engagement in diet and/or exercise.” Another typical category was “Social media inspires desiring change in diet and/or exercise,” with eight participants specified that, believing they could work toward a similar body ideal, they found Fitspo or Thinspo *inspires a desire* to change their diet and/or exercise behaviour, though not did not indicate they *actually* make these changes. Seven participants recognized that their desire to

change their diet or exercise behaviour as a result of viewing this type of content does not last very long. We captured this typical category as "Social media's 'inspiration' is not sustainable." The one variant motivation category saw three young women express desire to diet or exercise to achieve a similar body ideal as Fitspiration or Thinspiration when they see it but that they do not currently have time to make the desired changes. This category was called "This motivates me, but I don't have time."

Multiple participants do not find Thinspiration motivating; one reason was because Thinspiration influencers can be pretty but "too skinny." More commonly, participants find Fitspiration motivating. As Sophie put it: "I think the fit one would probably be more motivating because it shows you that if I work out like she does then I can look like she does. But like you said it's not really attainable." In addition to body image motivations, Sophie also indicated in her interview that she views Fitspiration influencers as working out for their health, bettering their bodies for themselves, and bolstering their confidence, which also makes Sophie believe that if she worked out she could be confident as well.

Several young women actually engaged in diet and/or exercise behaviours as a result of viewing body-focused social media content. For example, Marina spoke about at some point feeling inferior to body-focused influencers and, as a result, she "used go to the gym a lot because [she] thought by being skinny and having certain body it looked nice." In terms of engagement in dieting, Katriana used to hate the kind of images explored in this study, but once she stopped hating it, it actually motivated her to change her diet. She reported that changing her diet led to her being more energetic and happier, despite reporting some food restrictions.
It was also typical for the young women to report feeling inspired to change their exercise or diet behaviours without necessarily indicating that they end up actually engaging in these behaviours.

For example, it is unclear from the following if Sancia tends to follow through with what she thinks she should do after seeing Fitspiration:

> It also depends on I guess the post. Like if Jen was to post a picture of like what she's eating, maybe, for example, then it would come into my mind and be like, "Oh, maybe I should eat healthier." If it's a healthy meal that she's posting, I'll probably think of that. But if it's just a picture of her body, then that doesn't really come to mind, being healthier in that way, just the working out aspect kind of come to mind. I don't really think of anything else.

It was also typical for participants to recognize the fleeting nature of the inspiration body-focused social media content gives them. Sancia described how unsustainable appearance-driven Fitspiration is in her mind:

> Sometimes it does [result in me working out], when I'm going through it [body-focused social media content] and I just get a burst of motivation I'm like, "Oh, OK, tomorrow I'll start or later today or tonight, whatever." But those are more like when I see pictures like that on Instagram and I get a sense of motivation and inspiration. I think they are more short-term because at the end of the day, I should be motivated and stuff. Kind of like, I don't know how to explain this but there should be a deeper meaning, it shouldn't just be looking at pictures of girls that shouldn't just inspire me, I think that it should be deeper than that. So, if it does inspire me, maybe I'll go to the gym for two days, but if I'm not there yet in my life, if I'm not in that place where I want to make a change, then it's kind of like a temporary inspiration, kind of temporary motivation.

Sancia was not the only participant to speak about needing intrinsic motivation to consistently engage in fitness activities long-term, whether framed as a "deeper meaning" or health reasons.

Realism of photos. It was typical for participants to provide comment on how un/realistic she finds Thinspo or Fitspo content, often finding it too edited and/or untrustworthy. Ten participants did so. Six variant categories of realism of photos were identified; see Table 5. Several participants believe that influencers social media posts are created with marketing tactics like lighting, body angles, and Photoshop in order to appeal to their intended audience. Some participants, like Sancia, indicated they think how popular and idolized influencers are negative and not helpful. Here is why Sancia said these types of social media pages are not the ones to look at to be inspired or make a change to one's body:

> It's just not real, none of it is real. I think videos and stuff that's real, I think if a girl is posting a video of her, maybe working out with machines at the gym and stuff, those are more inspirational. But then pictures like Alexis' pictures, none of that – if you are insecure, if you let those things affect you, they will, because it is like fake, like a dream life.

Table 5

Variant Categories of Realism of Photos Domain

Domain/Category	**Core Idea**	**Number of Cases**
Realism of photos	*Participant comments on how un/realistic she finds Thinspo or Fitspo content, often finding it too edited and/or untrustworthy*	

Highlight reel	Participant thinks Fitspo and/or Thinspo content presents only a positive image, but this is not the whole story behind the pictures/content.	6
Transparency	Participant makes call for Fitspo and/or Thinspo influencers to be more transparent in how edited their content is or to show more "flaws."	5
Sex sells	Participant sees Thinspo and/or Fitspo content as using a sexualized female figure to market something – whether an ideal, their "brand," or product.	4
Show me who you are	Participant wants to see full human experience/personality behind Fitspo and/or Thinspo influencer rather than a highly curated, inaccessible/unrelatable presentation	3
Should I buy in?	Participant questions whether or not she should accept, believe in, and actively participate in the messages Thinspo and/or Fitspo content promotes around exercise and diet.	2
You "are" what you post	Participant considers Thinspo influencer to be showing her natural self.	2

Note. Italics indicate the upper-level domain's core idea. Frequency classification and number of cases of domain appear in-text only.

Relational Influences. This typical domain refers to participants identifying that intimate relationships influence how they are influenced by Fitspiration or Thinspiration. Ten young women spoke on this topic area. No lower-level categories were identified. Examples of intimate relationships include friends, mothers, and potential mates. How participants were impacted by Fitspiration and Thinspiration was influenced by these relationships. For example, Serena expressed that when she saw her own peers *as* Fitspiration, she was more impacted by this than by celebrity Fitspiration influencers:

> *Interviewer:* What thoughts like go through your head when you see your friends on Instagram?
>
> *Serena*: Sometimes you're just like, "Oh, maybe I should do better. Like I could probably work out more because I know they do." Yeah, that's the thing, too, actually. When I see fitness bunnies, like that Jen Selter girl on Instagram, I don't know her—it doesn't matter to me. But when I see my own friends doing that stuff, I'm like, "Oh, maybe I should do it." Like it's kind of more awakening or something, like it becomes more realistic because it's someone that I know.
>
> *Interviewer*: Mm hm.
>
> *Serena*: And that's why I feel more negatively. Like, you can kind of doubt yourself and think, "You're not doing good enough," or, "You might not be skinny enough or pretty enough," because those actual people that you know are prettier or skinnier. They're not just fake people.

How participants saw Fitspiration or Thinspiration was also influenced by their friends' offline attitudes toward such content. Consider the following two excerpts from Sancia's interview that indicate these peer influences can be negative or positive:

Sancia: When I was younger, I used to be surrounded by people who wanted to be thin and who strive for those goals. I wanted to be like that too, but the method – people like Alexis, we don't know how she got there. We chose to do things that weren't healthy just because we want to look like them.

Sancia's group of friends changed when she moved schools, and with this social change, so did her attitude toward appearance-based social media content:

Interviewer: You mentioned you've learned to how to stop comparing yourself, but that seems like a big transformation almost, like how did that come about?

Sancia: For me it happened kind of . . . because I moved countries and moving away from people who are so focused on physical appearances and stuff really helped me because I wasn't always like that. But the group of people that I was surrounded with, they really influenced me and stuff. But then when I moved, I went to a new high school, I met new people. These girls I met weren't obsessed with what they look like. I actually had fun, ate like normal people, and that helped me a lot in realizing that as more people come out on Instagram posting their before and after, or, like celebrities that would post pictures of their bodies and it turns out they got surgery. Things like that just help me realize that everyone has insecurities and they're always trying to change how they look and everything to what they think is perfect, but everyone's idea of perfect is different, so there's no point in me to try and be like them. Because clearly they weren't satisfied, they had to change their bodies and I'm not going to do that. So, I might as well just be happy with how I look and as long as I'm mentally happy and I have friends that I care about and that I like that they like me, not having to do with what I look like, and that just help a lot, and that's how I stop comparing myself.

Some participants identified that their relationship with their mother influenced how they are impacted by Fitspiration or Thinspiration. For example, Joanne's mother's struggles with anorexia nervosa shaped how Joanne critically views Thinspiration:

> *Joanne*: I know my mom used to be anorexic when she was young. This probably shapes the way I view things. She was very concerned about body image, and she fell into anorexia and now because of that her body can't absorb iron well anymore. She has to take pills; she has to go for injections. Like in the long run, you don't see it. When she was in her 20s, she felt fine. She was anorexic, even though she didn't eat that much, she felt completely fine. And then now when you get into your 40s, it didn't learn how to absorb iron anymore because it went so long without food, and just with caffeine, it just kept going. That's probably why it tipped me off with the coffee [in one of the Thinspo influencer's photographs]. The caffeine to keep her going. You don't see – just seems like in the long-run it's not good. The muscle [of the Fitspo influencer] – if you don't work out, it'll just turn a little flabby and that's fine. It's not the same type of thing where now you got to take pills and injections, probably.
>
> *Interviewer*: It seems very difficult to have that kind of concern because you know how challenging it was through your mother.
>
> *Interviewer*: Yes. I'm thinking that my view now is probably much wiser.

Joanne's mother's eating disorder history impacts the way Joanne experiences Thinspiration but not Fitspiration:

> *Interviewer*: Do you believe that your own understanding – what your mother dealt with and her struggles with eating disorders, do you think that impacts how you look at . . .?

Joanne: Probably yeah, because some of these photos look similar even to my mom's photos when she was going through that stage and there were some similarities. So, for sure what happened to my mom probably affected the way I see the thin one. The fit one, you know, that's different, but the thin one, yeah, for sure.

Interviewer: Because you kind of know how it impacted someone's life, someone you care about, so you sort of see the downsides to this image.

Joanne: Yeah, and how easy it is for someone to get pulled into that type of lifestyle for the sake of body image – like pulled into what society defines as attractive, I guess.

Although it is not clear if it is only Thinspiration or Fitspiration or both, how Marina is influenced by appearance-focused social media content is also informed by the relationship with her mother:

Interviewer: Are there any times that it affects you more than others? Like the type of images that could affect you?

Marina: Mhm. I think my mom—she's very skinny and she has this beautiful body and she had me when she was really young. So, she had me when she was 17. So, her body image, the way that she thinks is that if you're not skinny, then you're not pretty. It's very similar. So, I think that when my mom looks at me and she's like, "Why are you eating this?" And, "Why don't you lose weight?" and those things. Then I go and see myself and I see those people [Thinspo or Fitspo influencers] then I start asking myself, I'm like "Oh, maybe she's right. Maybe that's true. Maybe like other people look like that, so why shouldn't I look like that?" But it takes me to know myself and understand that I am more than what I look [like] to come to myself and be like, "No my mom this is the way she sees herself. And this is the way she wants to navigate her own life, but this is not the

way I see myself or want to navigate." So, when she [my mom] says those things and then I allow that to get to me and then I go to my phone and then I'm faced with more things like that, then, yes.

Although not necessarily *existent* intimate relationships, some participants indicated that the *idea* of intimate partnerships with men impacted how they respond to Thinspiration or Fitspiration. Nasreen alludes to this in the following excerpt:

Nasreen: I think they are really attractive, and every time that a person, especially boys, look at them, OK—they love these bodies so it's really good to become like that.

Interviewer: So, it's like there's boys that are—

Nasreen: Not only boys, but for the most part it is about them.

Interviewer: Yeah, so, like, boys like this type of look. And so, then you feel like, OK, so I should do the same.

Nasreen: Exactly.

Serena speaks more overtly about how the idea of obtaining an intimate partnership with a man influenced her response to Thinspiration when she was younger:

Serena: Um, but there's always that thought at the back of your mind, that it'd be ideal to look like that, especially when she [Alexis Ren] used to post with her boyfriend, J. Alfred. And I was, like, I remember being little and I was like, "I have to look like that, to get a guy like that."

Values. Upon viewing Thinspo and/or Fitspo content, 10 participants reflected on personal values, often bringing up to what extent shape or weight was important to her in the context of other important areas of her life. Three variant categories of values were identified; see Table 6.

It was typical for participants to place some value on shape or weight but also mention having other priorities. Sophie, for example, had a belief that everyone should love their body, but that one can change their body if they want to. She values other life areas overachieving a fit body at the moment, but given the chance, she would like to make going to the gym and eating healthy her top priority to speed up the process. This is always in the back of her mind. Participants also talked about their values changing over time. Sancia now values her mental health over the way she looks, but this was not always the case, specifically when she was an adolescent:

> *Sancia*: I used to prioritize looking good versus feeling good. But now I realized it doesn't matter if I look good. These girls [Fitspo and Thinspo influencers] look good, but it doesn't matter if they're not happy.
>
> *Interviewer*: So, when you used to prioritize that um, what was that like?
>
> *Sancia*: It was stressful because it wasn't realistic. And my friends would look at these pictures and you want to look like that, but then your whole life you feel like it just revolves around what you look like, and you get worried, you focus so much on what other people think about you and it's just not healthy.
>
> *Interviewer*: Mhm. And what made it so unhealthy, exactly?
>
> *Sancia*: Um, becoming obsessed with those qualities and those figures. And when you realize why you're obsessed with them, it's just that – like you don't want people to be obsessed with you, but you want people to validate you for your body, but that's not healthy. And as a teenage girl, you shouldn't be thinking about stuff like that.

Table 6

Variant Categories of Values Domain

Domain/Category	Core Idea	Number of Cases
Values	*Upon viewing Thinspo and/or Fitspo content, participant reflects on personal values, often bringing up to what extent shape or weight is important to her in the context of other important areas of her life.*	
Over-valuation of body ideals	Upon viewing Fitspo and Thinspo content, participant recognizes there are some people for whom over-valuation of body ideals plays a problematic role in providing or consuming this type of social media content	4
Aligned values between "me" and influencer	Participant thinks her values align with Thinspo and/or Fitspo influencers' priorities, which may relate to positive affect and/or motivation.	3
Differing values between "me" and influencer	Participant sees her values as differing from what is shown in Fitspo and/or Thinspo content, which makes her view this content more negatively.	3

Note. Italics indicate the upper-level domain's core idea. Frequency classification and number of cases of domain appear in-text only.

Body Diversity. After viewing Fitspo and Thinspo content, nine participants acknowledged and accepted that bodies are diverse both in general and in social media. No lower-level categories of body diversity were identified.

Various participants indicated they either appreciated seeing more diverse bodies being portrayed in a healthy light online or wanting to see more of this body appreciation online. Several of them know that not every woman's body is meant to or will look like the Fitspiration or Thinspiration bodies depicted online, even if someone were to follow the exact same diet and exercise regimens as an influencer. Marina put it this way:

> And also, because when you see someone and you admire that person in social media, they, majority of the time—especially the fitness girls—they tend to post what they eat and the exercise they're doing, but they have a personal trainer. They have someone who, like, she did exams and then she found out what's the best diet for her, and like what's gonna make her look that way, and how long it's gonna take her, right? When you're taking that from someone else who is not you, and is not your body type, completely different from what's gonna happen to you. So, you try, that's what is so wrong with people posting what they eat, and what they do. Because it's not gonna cause the same thing to other people. So, I feel like they give this false idea. And then people do, like say they have the strength to go and follow exactly what that person did, they're not getting the same results and they get disappointed by that. Not knowing that this was perfectly made for who this people are. They have a different body type, so it's different types of things you need to do to achieve that.

History and Change. It was typical for viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content to prompt a participant to reflect on her trajectory of how she used to react to this content and how her responses have changed over time. Oftentimes, her young self was more negatively affected by this content than her current self. This domain was relevant to nine participants. No lower-level categories of history and change were identified. Participants tended to mention becoming more

confident with their bodies as a young adult, which was juxtaposed with feeling insecure about their bodies as adolescents, which is when body-focused social media content more negatively affected them. Georgia spoke about previously being insecure and now having more confidence:

> *Interviewer*: What do you think protect yourself from not being too affected by this content?
>
> *Georgia*: Um, I think it's just knowing who I am and loving myself as myself because before I was also really insecure, which I know she [Selter] was, but I know I was, and it took me awhile to love my body for where it is now. And I know it's going to be better but just start loving yourself because it won't get better if you keep thinking negatively about your body and not be comfortable about your body. So, for me it takes confidence to realize and recognize that even though people are going to judge or hate or whatever for how you look, for your appearance, you have to love yourself first before caring about what other people think about what you're going to be posting on social media.

Influencers' Intent. It was typical for participants to express what they perceived as Fitspo and/or Thinspo influencers' intentions and desires, as nine participants did so. No lower-level categories of influencers' intent were identified.

Some participants who theorized what the intents of influencers were think that there is a lack of transparency (such as about the hard work involved to look this way) and that influencers are trying to gain a following in order to promote or sell an ideal, such as getting thin fast. Other participants think influencers post more for empowerment purposes, such as when Marina stated, "But when they're [posting pictures of and liking themselves] that then it's just them enjoying in whatever they're doing in their everyday. They're not causing any harm." Marina believes that whatever she "take[s] from it, that's [her] problem."

Insidious Nature of Social Media. Nine participants broached the topic of how viewing Thinspiration and/or Fitspiration has at least subtle unhealthy or negative consequences. See Table 7 for the two variant categories of the insidious nature of social media and their core ideas.

Some participants who recognize the insidious nature of appearance-focused social media content decided to unfollow such content. For example, for Serena, vanity and potentially negative thoughts are negative consequences of viewing such content, as she stated below:

> *Serena*: I don't care for following this because then I become more vain when I look at just this sort of stuff.
>
> *Interviewer*: Tell me what happened when you unfollowed a lot of—
>
> *Serena*: Um, I thought it was kind of pointless because it's just like, why would I want to constantly look at that and think like potentially negative thoughts, like potentially like, "I can't get to that point," thoughts?

Though a variant category, given its relation to other research in the field, the fleeting, small, negative reactions category within this domain deserves some attention. An example of this category is shown in the following from Joanne's interview:

> *Interviewer*: Yeah, and so throughout our conversation, you've been mentioning that you have that concern for others, sort of that awareness that other people don't see the harm that you understand, but—correct if I'm wrong—even though it gives that motivation, like, "Ugh, maybe I should do a little bit more," it doesn't affect you profoundly.
>
> *Joanne*: Yeah, not too, too much. With the fit one? Yeah, not too, too much to the point where like causes something big, you know? (*Interviewer*: So, it just makes you feel a little down?) Yeah, and then I'll go back to normal like in a little bit, but it's not too, too much that would affect my everyday life.

Table 7

Variant Categories of Insidious Nature of Social Media Domain

Domain/Category	Core Idea	Number of Cases
Insidious nature of social media	*Participant suggests viewing Thinspo and/or Fitspo has at least subtle unhealthy or negative consequences.*	
Fleeting, small, negative reactions	Participant expresses that when viewing Thinspo or Fitspo, momentary, small, negative reactions are experienced.	6
Subconscious influence	Participant realized that viewing Thinspo or Fitspo has more of a negative impact on her than she'd consciously realized before.	3

Note. Italics indicate the upper-level domain's core idea. Frequency classification and number of cases of domain appear in-text only.

Predisposing Factors. Nine participant provided hypotheses as to what puts some people more at risk of experiencing a negative impact from viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content. See Table 8 for the six variant categories of predisposing factors that were identified.

Young women in this study theorized what insecurities individuals may have that lead to a negative impact of viewing Fitspiration or Thinspiration images. There were several guesses. Marina explained a number of her guesses, which all ultimately had to do with low self-worth:

> *Interviewer*: OK. And who do you think is most affected by these images?
>
> *Marina*: People that have low self-esteem. People that are constantly at home and with friends surrounded by the fact that they are not enough. People that by some reason

suffered something that makes them feel less of themselves. I feel like people that are easily influenced. I feel like people that are like in toxic relationships trying to find a way out and they see those and then they might find them – like being like that is a way out. I feel like people that don't know their true value and that they're way more than that. Those are the people that are actually affected by it.

Interviewer: Mhm. So, the people that maybe don't feel that they are more than these images.

Table 8

Variant Categories of Predisposing Factors

Domain/Category	**Core Idea**	**Number of Cases**
Predisposing factors	*Participant hypothesizes what puts some people more at risk of experiencing a negative impact from viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content.*	
Lack of body confidence	Participant thinks lack of body confidence puts some people more at risk of experiencing a negative impact from viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content.	4
Identify formation in progress	Participant thinks being in the midst of identify formation puts adolescents more at risk of experiencing a negative impact from viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content.	4

Larger bodies	Participant thinks having a larger body puts some people more at risk of experiencing a negative impact from viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content	3
Eating disorders	Participant thinks having a history of an eating disorder puts some people more at risk of experiencing a negative impact from viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content.	2
Family environment	Participant thinks certain family environments puts some people more at risk of experiencing a negative impact from viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content.	2

Note. Italics indicate the upper-level domain's core idea. Frequency classification and number of cases of domain appear in-text only.

Protective Factors. Nine participants mentioned or alluded to factors that protect young women from being negatively affected by Thinspo and/or Fitspo content. Six lower-level categories of protective factors were identified; see Table 9.

Knowing that one's worth is found in more than just looking a certain way appears to be a common theme among the categories participants identified as protective. Even the "body satisfaction" category quotes are more about being comfortable existing in and showing one's body without shame or specifically trying to promote the look of one's body. In this way, body satisfaction is about good body image, regardless of the look of one's body. Marina spoke generally about protective factors being about knowing one is more than just one's body:

Interviewer: Can you elaborate a bit on like the difference between that and how people who know who they are don't get affected as much?

Marina: 'Cause I don't think people who know who they are were affected, because they know that social media does not define who they are. So, it doesn't matter what they are gonna give it to you. It's not going to affect you 'cause, "I am more than this," right?

Table 9

Variant Categories of Protective Factors Domain

Domain/Category	**Core Idea**	**Number of Cases**
Protective factors	*Participant mentions or alludes to factors that protect young women from being negatively affected by Thinspo and/or Fitspo content.*	
Body diversity	Participant mentions or alludes to the fact that being exposed to/accepting body diversity on social media protects her from being negatively affected by Thinspo and/or Fitspo content.	3
Body satisfaction	Participant mentions or alludes to already being satisfied with or confident in her own body as protecting her from being negatively affected by Thinspo and/or Fitspo content.	3
Joyful movement	Participant mentions or alludes to experiences of movement that bring her joy or confidence as protecting her from being negatively affected by Thinspo and/or Fitspo content.	3

Domain/Category	Core Idea	Number of Cases
Self-love	Participant mentions or alludes to high self-worth and sense of self as protecting her from being negatively affected by Thinspo and/or Fitspo content.	3
Family environment	Participant mentions or alludes to enlightening or uplifting family environment as protecting her from being negatively affected by Thinspo and/or Fitspo content.	2
Indifference	Participant mentions or alludes to not really caring about this content as protecting her from being negatively affected by Thinspo and/or Fitspo content.	2

Note. Italics indicate the upper-level domain's core idea. Frequency classification and number of cases of domain appear in-text only.

Utility. Nine participants spoke to the usefulness, practicality, or helpfulness of Thinspiration and/or Fitspiration content. The category "Show me the journey!" was typical, as seven participants spoke to this. The core idea of this category was that participants made a call for Thinspo and/or Fitspo influencers to provide transparency and details regarding how they achieved their body ideal. See Table 10 for the two variant utility categories.

Several participants found utility in Fitspiration content if it specified how to work out. For example, Violet said, "Like, like if she did workout videos, OK, that's good. That's good.

That would be a better message, but these not really. Like these posts from this fan-page, not really." Recall that in this study we showed still caption-free photographs and no videos. It was also typical for participants to specifically want body-focused influencers to show the process of how they achieved the appearance of their bodies. Juliette put it this way:

> *Juliette*: Like, if you want to be a fitness person, then show the population what you actually have to do. Not just going to go to the gym once and then snap a pic and you'll look like them.
>
> *Interviewer*: So, it's like giving the idea that they don't have to work hard to look like that. (*Juliette*: Yeah) And they're showing the end result. (*Juliette*: Mhm.) What could improve then?
>
> *Juliette*: Um, well, there are girls out there that post actual videos of what they're working out. They're filmed after the workout so it's not true-to-life type of deal. But at least they're showing this is how you actually get to this, instead of just like, "Look at me! I'm there and you're not."
>
> *Interviewer*: Mhm, so by showing the process, they're almost kind of like unifying people or this is kind of a separate thing. "I'm already at this goal and you're not." That kind of feels like isolating. Um, because you do care a lot about fitness and working out it seems like, when you see this type of content, today or in your own life, does it ever motivate you to work out more, eat healthier, diet?
>
> *Juliette*: Not like this type of girl (*Interviewer*: Mhm.). But if it was someone more muscular like Nikki Blackketter or Whitney Simmons? They actually post stuff with them at the gym and what they're eating, so they kind of do a little bit – to push me to do

a little better, but this, I would not know what I'm doing if I'm just like following all those girls.

Interviewer: So, is it the difference in the body between the two you just mentioned in these or is it the difference that they show what they actually do?

Juliette: Um, I think it's a bit of both because they're showing, like, what I want my body to look like and it's starting to look like that a little bit. And like they show you the progress and they show their progress along with yours. While these girls, they don't show you when they're bloated, that's discouraging if someone was to follow them.

Table 10

Variant Categories of Utility Domain

Domain/Category	**Core Idea**	**Number of Cases**
Utility	Participant brings up the idea of how Thinspo and/or Fitspo content is useful/practical/helpful.	
Helpful	Participant views Thinspo and/or Fitspo content as helpful, particularly when exercise and/or diet advice is provided.	3
Not helpful	Participant views Thinspo and/or Fitspo content as unhelpful and not transparent enough.	3

Note. Italics indicate the upper-level domain's core idea. Frequency classification and number of cases of domain appear in-text only.

Self-objectification. Eight participants associated self-objectification with viewing Thinspo and/or Fitspo content. No lower-level categories of self-objectification were identified. A quote that provides a very direct example of this association is from Serena, who said, "If I

was only seeing these people, I would feel like, 'This is the only way to get attention. This is the only way to be successful. I have to look pretty. I have to sell myself like I'm an object.'" Several participants disclosed that viewing Thinspiration or Fitspiration images leads them to consider that perhaps the way their body looks is more important than other things, with at least one participant (Nasreen) revealing that she becomes so invested in appearance that it does not allow her to think about other important things, such as if her behaviours are healthy or dangerous.

Over-exposure. Eight participants voiced that Thinspo and/or Fitspo content is "everywhere" on social media, and that exposure to it is excessive. No lower-level categories of over-exposure were identified. Some women felt desensitized to this kind of content because it is so pervasive, with Sancia noticing its prevalence has increased from her adolescence. Some women, like Marina and Serena, feel constantly seeing social media newsfeeds show body-focused posts like from Kim Kardashian, influences people's perception of beauty and how important it is. For example, Serena said:

> I think that, I think, like, her body – it's like that, because when you constantly see pretty models like that, it makes you – it's discouraging but it's also like you try to put more importance to yourself, that also kind of makes you more vain.

Marina spoke about over-exposure to and internalization of body ideals through social media starting the moment she wakes up:

> *Marina*: when you wake up and the first thing you get is your phone. And you're scrolling down, and this is what you see. So that's your first thought, right? This is what we think is good. And then you go through your day. And then I feel like the more we see that then we start seeing it on the streets, too. Like so you start calling your attention, "Oh

my god, that girl is pretty. I wish I was like that. And I wish I was not like that." And so, it goes on. So, like, because I was like so—I was always filling myself with so much of them. So, like a lot of other people, we start wanting to be like that. So, um, and more accepted. So, it seems like that is the only way you can be accepted and beautiful.

Interviewer: So, it's harder if you're seeing it all of the time. You wake up it's on your phone. It just becomes almost normal (*Marina*: Exactly) to have that level of comparison. Yeah?

Marina: Yeah, 'cause even when I'm not thinking about, somehow I'm still thinking about it.

Perception of Influencer's Experience. As eight participants shared what they perceived Fitspo and/or Thinspo influencers' experiences are like, this was a typical domain. Eight participants spoke about perceiving Fitspo and/or Thinspo influencers as engaging in self-objectification, making this a typical category. Only one variant category emerged, that of "body confidence," in which five participants perceived Fitspo and/or Thinspo influencers as experiencing body confidence.

When speaking about the perception of the influencer's experience in general, participants indicated for the most part that influencers are just happily living their lives, although sometimes perhaps obsessed with working out. It was also typical for participants to think photographs of influencers show off various body parts (e.g., their abs, buttocks, leanness, physical attractiveness, sex appeal). Some participants, like Marina and Serena, feel influencers solely focus on their bodies, to the exclusion of other parts of life. Joanne, Ava, and Juliette all used the phrase, "Look at me!" This seems to describe how they think influencers engage in self-objectification. Ava put it this way:

> My experience is this person – these females on here, this one and the other one, I mean, it seems like they're trying to show their bodies and how pretty they are and whatever, and how they have a perfect life, I guess. It just seems that way and they're trying to entice people viewing it to be like, "Oh, I'm having such a good life, look at me." Stuff like that.

Diet/Disordered Eating. Seven of the young women associated Fitspo or Thinspo with diet or disordered eating. No lower-level categories of diet/disordered eating were identified. Although at times carefully hesitant about what they assume, typically participants indicated they think it likely that body-focused influencers restrict food intake. Some participants, like Marina, Nasreen, Georgia, and Juliette think about restrictive eating themselves when they view Fitspiration or Thinspiration. Whereas Nasreen engages in restrictive eating due to comparing herself to influencers (despite knowing looking like influencers is unattainable), some participants mentioned considering restricting food intake upon viewing body-focused social media posts but did not specify if they ended up engaging in these behaviours. For example, Marina's mental restriction sounded like: "If my day, I have a bad day, and I'm sad, then I see something like that and I'm, like, 'Oh man. I shouldn't have had those fries. Like this body is so nice. I must try to diet tomorrow.'"

Differing Body Ideals. Viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content typically prompted a participant to consider that people have differing body ideals, often revealing that she does not aspire to look like either of these body ideals. This was the case for seven of the young women. No lower-level categories of differing body ideals were identified.

Different women have different body ideals. Juliette has a more muscular body ideal, given her gymnastics background. Marina likes the "slim-thick" ideal portrayed by Kim

Kardashian. Georgia, Juliette, Ava, and Marina all mentioned not finding the thin ideal attractive. Violet described everyone having their own body ideals this way:

> *Interviewer*: But would you say that they're the goal, or you mentioned an improved version of yourself.
>
> *Violet*: Yeah, I feel like if, it's all about, like, no one's going to turn out the same. Have the same shape of abs, or tone of butt, or whatever. I think it's just about feeling better about yourself. And feeling like you've improved. Not necessarily to look like that, but to what you think is a good body type. Maybe in reference to those bodies.
>
> *Interviewer*: So, speaking of a good body type, what is that? Has like social media shaped that for you?
>
> *Violet*: Um. I mean. It depends. Like, everyone, anyone can have a good body type. It's just how they view it. It's how they view themselves. If they're not affected by this, and they don't think this is a good body type, then that's definitely gonna affect how they perceive themselves. I don't know. A good body type is whatever you're comfortable with. Like, if you're comfortable in your body, then that's a good body type, I feel like.

Should Statements. In response to seeing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content, seven participants engaged in "should statement" cognition distortions. No lower-level categories of should statements were identified. Some of these were literally "should" statements, like Georgia explaining that when she sees Fitspiration posts at the gym, she will think, "Oh gym! I said I was gonna go to the gym! So, I probably should." Other "should" (or self-pressuring) statements were framed as feeling like one "needs" to do something. For example, Sophie feels this way:

> *Interviewer*: So, is the way you feel the same or different when you see thin girls on social media versus fit girls?

Sophie: Um, I think it's the same because they both put out that they're healthy or having a good time in whatever they're doing. Either they're fit and working out or they're thin and having a good time, and they can take cute photos. Because both of them kind of made me feel like, "Oh maybe I need to look like that or be like that."

Societal Pressures. Seven participants saw Thinspo and/or Fitspo content as reflecting appearance expectations that society places on women and girls, making this a typical domain. No lower-level categories of societal pressures were identified. The societal pressures participants talked about ranged from which workouts to do and what to wear to body confidence to specific body ideals. Katriana explains how the pressure to fit into the new slim-thick body ideal is detrimental to many people, including the influencers themselves:

Interviewer: Who do you think is most affected by these kinds of images?

Katriana: I feel like for people who are very skinny they would be affected by seeing, say, like, the other model who is thick - can be like, "I want to be thick," because, though we do have, like, us who are bigger, like, be affected by the images and want to be skinnier, people who are very skinny also feel objectified and want to be thicker in a way just because of us, like, creating this whole world- like word being thick is good an' stuff. And so, yeah.

Interviewer: So, it seems like this is the category of thick almost create a new ideal that some people might feel excluded from?

Katriana: Yes. Definitely, I do feel like that. 'Cause, like, if bigger people would just feel like, "You know, I do want to be skinnier or be thick in a way, like, thin." But then at the same time I feel like everyone's just equally affected by it just because these people themselves [the influencers], um, many people do have body image problems in a way.

And so even though, yeah, they— we think they're really fit. They look good. They themselves might not feel that way. And that's why they will just continue working out more and more to a point where unless, like, they're very happy with themselves.

Interviewer: So, the new category then is almost in a way a new ideal. So, then people who are on the higher end of the spectrum feel the need to work towards getting lower. And then people on the lower end of the spectrum work on getting higher. So, it's almost—

Katriana: It's not like a win-win situation both ways. That's how it is, yeah. (*Interviewer*: So, it almost presents a new challenge.) Yes, for sure. Yes.

Sancia acknowledges the societal pressures that surround Fitspiration and Thinspiration, but suggests a personal responsibility approach to deal with these pressures:

Interviewer: It can be good and bad depending on your own choices and your own mentality.

Sancia: Yeah, and I don't think anyone should— it is kind of to blame that whole society, the Fitspiration, the thin girl society, that whole thing, you can blame that. But, at the end of the day, you just have to remind yourself that you're choosing to look at this stuff, you're choosing to associate yourself with people who want to be like that. So, when you remove yourself from that it's a lot easier.

Variant Domains

We identified 11 variant domains, two of which included categories. The variant domains with lower-level categories are detailed in Tables 11 and 12. Table 13 contains details of results for all variant domains without any identified lower-level categories.

Table 11

Precipitating Factors Domain and Its Categories

Domain/Category	Frequency	Core Idea	Number of Cases
Precipitating factors	Variant	Participant describes a factor that precipitates Thinspo or Fitspo's negative impact	4
Constant exposure	Variant	Participant describes the nature of being constantly exposed to Thinspo or Fitspo as a factor that precipitates its negative impact.	2
Criticism	Variant	Participant describes being criticized as a factor that triggers the viewing of Thinspo or Fitspo to have a more negative impact.	2
Negative mood	Variant	Participant feels that being in a negative mood can be a trigger for being negatively impacted by viewing Thinspo or Fitspo	2
Cognitions	Variant	Participant identifies having cognitions related to disordered eating upon viewing Fitspo or Thinspo content	2

Note. Shading delineates upper-level domain information from lower-level categories.

Table 12

Judgment of Influencer Values Domain and Its Categories

Domain/Category	**Frequency**	**Core Idea**	**Number of Cases**
Judgment of Influencer Values	Variant	Participant guesses at what Fitspo and/or Thinspo influencers' values are.	6
Judgment of #thinspo values	Variant	Participant guesses at what Thinspo influencers' values are.	4
Judgment of #fitspo values	Variant	Participant guesses at what Fitspo influencers' values are.	4

Note. Shading delineates upper-level domain information from lower-level categories.

Table 13

All Variant Domains with No Identified Categories

Domain/Category	**Core Idea**	**Number of Cases**
Kardashian/Jenner association	Participant spontaneously mentions Kardashian/Jenner family as associated with Fitspo and/or Thinspo content.	5
Ambivalence	Participant expresses ambivalent views or feelings in response to viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content.	4

Relatable	Participant comments on to what extent she finds Fitspo and/or Thinspo content relatable to her.	3
Softening	Participant says something she perceives as negative about Fitspo or Thinspo content and then softens to a less critical nearly apologetic tone.	3
Thin ideal still relevant	After viewing Thinspo content, participant believes that being thin is still relevant and desired.	3
Beauty equals "success"	Participant associates physical attractiveness of Fitspo and/or Thinspo influencers with their success.	2
If I try, I will fail, so I won't try	Viewing Fitspo or Thinspo content prompts participant to think that if she tried to look like these influencers, she'd fail and likely be disappointed, so she decides not to try.	2
Influencers influence consumer choices	Participant shares she thinks Fitspo and/or Thinspo influencers influence consumer choices.	2
Just be	Participant makes a call for people to just "live" and enjoy their lives instead of focus on messages of Thinspo or Fitspo.	2

Discussion

Given the dearth of qualitative research on body image and social media from the perspective of young women's own experiences, the main objective of this study was to gain a rich understanding of what inner experiences (i.e., emotions, thought processes, beliefs, and opinions) young women report having when viewing Thinspiration and Fitspiration on social media. Through the interview process and careful consensual qualitative analysis, we were able to successfully capture and further our understanding of what internal experiences and themes emerge when young women see these types of ideal-body-image social media posts. As a central research question of this study was understanding what young women feel in response to viewing Thinspiration and Fitspiration, I begin by discussing their emotional reactions before moving on to relevance of various theories.

As outlined in the introduction, sociocultural theory of body image influence has, for decades, been a useful model from which to understand the impact on young women of viewing idealized bodies on social media platforms. Several domains emerged from the current qualitative study that support this theory, which will be discussed herein. Objectification theory is another useful model to understand young women's experiences of viewing Fitspiration and Thinspiration on Instagram. Again, several domains emerged from participants' responses that relate to and support this theory, which will also be discussed below. Traditional experimental and survey research methods have been used in most of the research relating to social media and body image. The current study and the findings that emerged from exploring this topic through talking with young women directly represents a major step forward in applying these theories to real world phenomena.

As the analytic team was arguing to consensus about the topics and meanings of the transcripts, we could not help but notice some apparent contradictions within interviews. Based

on these unexpected tensions, below, I theorize that several aspects of young women's experiences of viewing appearance-based social media content are dialectical[1] in nature. To my knowledge, this is a novel, emergent theory not yet explored elsewhere in the field of social media and body image.

I acknowledge my pre-determined expectation that, "Fitspo is Thinspo in a sports bra." I also acknowledge that the fact that participants were all shown both types of body-focused content is relevant to this bias. Therefore, prior to discussing both wider and clinical implications of this study, I offer conclusions about this bias based on this study's data.

Emotional Reactions

A primary aim of the current study was to understand how young women feel when viewing Fitspiration and Thinspiration. The interviewer frequently memo'd post-interviews that many participants seemed to have trouble identifying or accessing their emotions, which is interesting in and of itself. The analytic team noticed this during reviewing and analyzing transcripts as well. While speculative, it is possible that these young women's reluctance to disclose negative affect or body dissatisfaction related to fat talk being seen as socially undesirable, seeing as not conforming to fat talk seems to increase women's likability among other women and women prefer other women who use positive body talk (Shannon & Mills, 2015). The interviewer, knowing the importance of discourse around emotion to this study, did a formidable job of continuing to gently invite participants to share their emotions. The team was meticulous in our efforts to accurately deduce affective states being discussed while bracketing our biases and remaining true to the data. Importantly, we found that the majority of participants felt a range of negative affect in response to viewing Fitspiration or Thinspiration. Note that the

[1] Denoting when two seemingly opposite things are true simultaneously; not to be confused with Marsha Linehan's "Dialectical Behavioural Therapy."

auditor did not question the team's categorization of any quotes that we determined belonged to this negative affect category of the emotional reactions domain. While not coded into separate negative emotional reaction categories, annoyance, hatred, disgust, discouragement, sadness, and helplessness were among the specific negative affects the participants experienced. The women we spoke to in this study did not appear to become emotionally dysregulated by this content during the interviews. None of the 12 participants were visibly upset or were crying during the interview. Some of them spoke about feeling helpless in regard to their concern for others, specifically young girls. One participant had the insight to realize she feels "addicted" to the sadness she feels related to high body dissatisfaction when viewing this social type of media content. Additionally, though not as frequent, young women also expressed positive, neutral, and explicitly ambivalent emotions in response to ideal-body-focused social media content. Words like "positive," "fine," "curious," and "awe," came up while participants were speaking about their emotional reactions. Some women expressed happiness for the influencers; some expressed this in addition to jealousy. Some women spoke about feeling happy or curious when viewing this content but specified that their reactions were actually to the environment that the influencer was in (i.e., paying more attention to the beach vacation background than body in foreground). While discussing their emotional reactions, some of them alluded to being overexposed to such content, which has become normalized. Taken together, the current findings suggest that young women feel desensitized to Fitspiration and Thinspiration, leaving them out of tune with their own emotional reactions to it. They reported that conscious reflection (e.g., Stop and think, "Why did I have that feeling?" and, "What possibly went on in that photo?") helped them reduce negative affect. Without prompting, women did not spontaneously express their emotions. Reponses were much more often framed in terms of beliefs or opinions.

Sociocultural Model of Body Image Dissatisfaction

Societal pressures. The sociocultural model of influence posits that family, peers, and people in the media are influences that can contribute to body ideal internalization and social comparison and, in turn, body dissatisfaction and eating pathology. Participants in this study spontaneously brought up their mothers, friends, and other famous women known for reflecting the current "slim-thick" body ideal trend (i.e., Kardashian/Jenner association domain). Participants saw both Thinspiration and Fitspiration as reflections of appearance expectations placed on girls and women today. One participant stated directly that Instagram is similar to magazines, lending support to the notion that social media are akin to mass media described in the sociocultural (aka tripartite) model of body image dissatisfaction. The societal appearance pressures noted were not only about looking "slim thick" but also what to wear, how body confident to be, and what workouts to do. The ever-changing (although maybe not "evolving") and ever-present nature of social media and its culture of validation through Likes were identified by participants as perpetuating and amplifying societal pressures, with some participants responses indicating a sense that no young women (including influencers) feel "good enough as-is," and that the current climate feels more dangerous than when they were young.

Relational Influences. In this study, I found that mothers, peers, and ideas about attractiveness to men all influence how young women react to appearance-based social media, which may then contribute to internalization (or rejection) of body ideals and/or dis/engagement, social comparison, and subsequent body dissatisfaction. As mentioned in the introduction, previous work on university women found correlations between peer and media influences as well as between parental and media influences (Rodgers et al., 2011). The present study's results align with these findings while adding in the suggestion that what potential male mates

ostensibly want in a partner may also be related to social media's influence. For example, Nasreen was very clear that she believes that men love the body types of the influencers we showed her and thus strived to become like these influencers, frequently engaging in self-objectification, body surveillance, and social comparison processes herself with the images. The addition of "potential intimate partner" and "his" influence may lead to internalization of body ideals and body surveillance, essentially adding on another sociocultural influence onto the tripartite model and combining this framework with self-objectification theory, which has been done in previous research (e.g., Fitzsimmons-Craft et al., 2012; 2014; Chansiri et al., 2020).

Some participants revealed that when their own peers self-presented as Fitspiration on social media, it impacted them more than distant influencers did. Their own peers are relevant comparison targets, even more similar to them than distant-though-"real-people" influencers. Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory argues that the more similar a comparison target is to someone, the greater the effect. This dissertation builds on my MA thesis wherein I found that engaging with appearance-based social media content of known, more attractive peers—but not non-comparison known targets—caused increased body dissatisfaction in young women (Hogue & Mills, 2019). Previous work with adolescents' experiences on social media corroborate findings that young people see their peers' social media content as a form as "peer pressure" that can lead them to feel negatively about their own bodies (Goodyear et al., 2019).

Attainability. This dissertation revealed young women's beliefs about how attainable body ideals seem to young women. The sociocultural model of body image dissatisfaction argues that body ideals are "largely unattainable" to women on average (Thompson et al., 1999). However, there emerged varying viewpoints about the attainability of the observed body ideals. One participant said, "if it's an adult looking at this, then I think that's actually sad. I think most

adults wouldn't attain this, they're mostly—I don't know, most are set with life. If they are [looking at Fitspo or Thinspo], that's actually really bad and actually show some deep-rooted problems because she's like 20 or something." For this author, the statement about most adults being "set with life," calls to mind set point theory. In this theory, body weight is primarily physiologically regulated, and energy intake and expenditure stabilize a person's weight at a specified level and resist displacement from this weight level (Harris, 1990; Keesey & Poweley, 1975; Keesey, & Hirvonen, 1997; Nisbett, 1972). In other words, a person's body is genetically predisposed to be a specific weight range within a few pounds. This aforementioned participant's response is an example of an explicit statement that, to her, Fitspiration and Thinspiration body ideals are seen as largely unattainable for most people, which fits in with the sociocultural model of body image.

Also present in the results was the suggestion that some young women tend to think that the thin ideal is unattainable, but the fit ideal is attainable. Some participants stated a belief that the thin ideal was neither attainable nor how they wanted their bodies to look. Several participants believed looking similar (although not exactly the same) to a Fitspiration influencer was attainable if time and hard work (such as through dieting and/or exercising) were invested. Several participants spoke about a desire to invest in their own version of the Fitspiration look, perhaps pointing to a realization that a highly glorified fit ideal, like the influencer's body, is not attainable for them personally, but that they still wish their body looked somewhat like that. It appears that Fitspiration content is perceived as being at least somewhat attainable to young women. However, ideas about the attainability of the fit ideal were not straightforward. Even when participants recognized the unattainability of body ideals, some of them (such as Nasreen, the most noticeably appearance-invested woman in the sample), still engaged in social

comparison and strived to look like influencers, particularly Fitspiration influencers. In other words, young women can simultaneously see the ideals as unattainable and still strive to emulate them. Given the fact that Fitspiration images promote thinness while *also* including muscle tone and large, lifted buttocks, it may actually be even less attainable (i.e., more work) than the thin ideal (Chansiri et al., 2020). Therefore, it is interesting that the fit ideal was described as seen as more attainable than the thin ideal. It is as though young women are doing "mental gymnastics," simultaneously recognizing the unattainability of the fit ideal while internalizing this newer sociocultural ideal and believing to a degree that they could or should attempt to mold their bodies in a similar way (Buote et al., 2011).

Social Comparison. Almost all participants reported that they engaged in social comparison processes in response to viewing Fitspiration and/or Thinspiration content. It was common for participants to compare their appearance to influencers. Participants saw these comparisons as affecting them in small but significant ways. It is noteworthy that most of them wanted to look at least a little bit more like one or both of the influencers, indicating some level of body dissatisfaction elicited upon engaging in appearance comparison. Some women then spoke about wanting to gain muscle, chiding themselves for not going to the gym (more), or engage in dietary restrictions, such as eating less. That is, as the tripartite model of influence (Thompson & Heinberg, 1999) would predict, appearance-based social media content elicits both social comparison and internalization of current body ideals, contributing to some perception of a discrepancy between one's body and the "ideal" body. The result is body dissatisfaction and consideration of engagement in behaviours aimed at weight loss. Note, however, that participants' body dissatisfaction comments mostly seemed somewhat understated, such as Katriana wanting to lose "only a little more weight." Corresponding with participants' reports of

body ideal social media content having small effects on their body image when they engage in appearance comparison, meta-analyses of both cross-sectional (Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019) and experimental research (de Valle et al., 2021; Fioravanti et al., 2022) have revealed that most results in this field demonstrate small to moderate effect sizes between social media exposure and resulting body dissatisfaction. While popular media (e.g., Adams, & Qureshi, 2021; Garcia-Narro, 2021) or "common views among the public" (Saiphoo & Vahedi, 2019) may like to sensationalize appearance-based social media's impact on body dissatisfaction, the present study corroborates other scientific findings in the field that demonstrate that, through social comparison, appearance-focused social media content has small but noticeable impact on young women's body image, and that they are aware of and can articulate these effects.

Others. Participants imagined what other people's reactions are to Thinspiration and Fitspiration, which were negative and often related to upward social comparison. At least one participant pointed out that she believes everyone thinks, "I am never going to look like that," when viewing such content. Participants may or may not have included themselves in imagining how others react to viewing Fitspiration or Thinspiration. However, many of them at least alluded to thinking that many young women socially compare themselves to the appearance-based Fitspiration or Thinspiration content on social media. The young women in this study seem to be telling us they believe viewing body-form-focused social media content leads to what I would call a "compare and despair" mentality—if not for them, then definitely for others.

Participants also expressed concern for others, often young girls. Some of them felt like when pubescent girls see appearance-based social media content, it is hard for them to understand, and they could end up thinking that this is what they "really have to look like." It was observed that participants were projecting the process of *internalization* of body ideals. This

concern for young girls seems related to participants' own history as young girls and adolescents, when several of them bought in to the socially defined ideals of attractiveness; that is, body ideal internalization (Thompson et al., 1999). This study lends support to the view that young women believe what the sociocultural model of influence on body dissatisfaction proposes about the importance of social comparison and body ideal internalization on body image—at least for other girls and women.

Values. While it may have been difficult for participants to recognize fully, they did typically talk about the value they place on shape and/or weight. It may be the case that body discontent is so normative that young women do not even recognize that wanting to see changes in the way one's body looks as a result of exercise or statements such as, "It'd be nice to look like that," as body dissatisfied thoughts or a negative evaluation of their own bodies (Cash, 1990; Anton et al., 2000). Different participants had varying extents of how much they valued body ideals, and thus to what extent they engaged in social comparison with appearance-based social media content. Some participants recognized the potential dangers of over-valuing appearance and seeking or being validated for one's body. Some participants expressed valuing health, including mental health, over appearance; others reported having other current priorities but given the chance, would like to make body goals a top priority. Just how important bodily appearance is to participants called to mind shape- and weight-based self-esteem, which is an assessment of the importance of shape and weight relative to other attributes contributing to self-esteem (Geller, Johnston, & Madsen, 1997). Although participants did place some importance on their body image, they also had other values they prioritized more, such as doing well professionally, social and climate issues, and feeling good (versus looking good). So, while there

were indications of some level of internalization of body ideals (as the sociocultural model of influence would suggest), not every young woman in this study valued body ideals deeply.

Body image. As stated in the Introduction, researching body dissatisfaction is important because it is a risk factor for several negative psychological outcomes, such as low self-esteem, depressive symptoms, abnormal attitudes toward eating and weight as well as disordered eating (Brausch & Gutierrez, 2009; Ferreiro et al., 2011; Johnson & Wardle; Stice, 2002). This study contributes to our understanding of ways in which young women's perceptions and evaluations of their own bodies are influenced by seeing other women's bodies presented as Fitspiration and Thinspiration. In this study, for the most part, participants were at least somewhat dissatisfied with the way their own bodies looked, as evidenced by comments indicating they wanted to look more like the influencers. These comments were often subtle or covert, making for rich, lengthy analytic team discussions dealing with the nuances of the ways in which participants expressed body dissatisfaction. As an illustration of this obscured and insidious nature of body image dissatisfaction, through the interview process, one participant seemed to have an epiphany that, when she scrolls through her Instagram feed, it is not just content that "no one takes seriously," appearance-based content actually causes her to think, "Oh yeah, I wish I looked [like that]." Some participants made comments indicating they wanted to look more like the influencers, sometimes with the caveat that they "wanted to do it in a healthy way." This reminds me of what has been termed "femvertising" (SheKnowsMedia, 2016), a marketing strategy that is ostensibly empowering to women (e.g., messages like, "Do it for yourself," and "Because you're worth it."). Whether through traditional advertising (e.g., compare yourself to this celebrity, find yourself lacking, but buy this product to "fix" the flaw we just pointed out) or femvertising, women are still buying what is being sold and companies are profiting. In a similar way, while

young women are not saying they want to look exactly like social media influencers, they still internalize a similar body ideal and believe this can be done in a healthy way. While speculative here, it is possible the $4.7 trillion "wellness industry,"—which includes beauty, diet, and fitness among other sectors (McGroarty, 2021) —is successfully selling diets and appearance-focused exercise as healthy "lifestyle changes," which could be one reason why participants included comments about wanting to change their bodies in a healthy way.

Diet/Disordered Eating. While many body image comments were seemingly subtle, it is worth noting that among 12 randomly selected interviews, at least one participant did speak freely about her desire and attempts to change her body to look more like these influencers, even knowing this may not be healthy. This led the interviewer to suspect that this participant had clear and significant disordered eating and preoccupation with body image. Disordered eating behaviours or a diagnosis of an eating disorder were not exclusion criteria for this study, as we wanted a representative sample of young women. The weighted mean of lifetime prevalence of an eating disorder for women has recently been found to be 8.4% (Galmiche et al., 2019). In a study of over 900 young women aged 18 to 25 years, it was found that the current prevalence of any type of eating disorder was 5.3%, while the lifetime prevalence was 11% (Favaro et al., 2003). If we assume the prevalence of eating disorders in our sample reflects the prevalence in the greater population, the prevalence should be about 8%. In fact, interviewer memos revealed that three of the 28 participants (i.e., 10%) in the larger sample either self-disclosed having had an eating disorder or the interviewer suspecting that these three participants had clear and significant disordered eating and preoccupation with body image. Recall that one of the 12 (~8%) participants in this study's sample clearly had disordered eating. Taken together, this increases confidence that both our large study sample and the interviews analyzed for this

dissertation were representative of the general population of women when it comes to prevalence of eating pathology.

Participants talked about food restriction in relation to both Thinspiration and Fitspiration. Some of these young women thought even Fitspiration influencers engage in restrictive eating. Some of them thought about engaging in dietary restriction after viewing appearance-based social media content. Looking at this content caused some young women to think that, in order to "have the appearance" of a Fitspiration influencer, they need to "reduce the amount of food" they eat. This indicates that, even within the fit ideal, young women still recognize and feel a societal pressure to be thin as well. Regarding restrictions in the name of "being healthy," upon viewing Fitspo and Thinspo, participants tended to think about generally about "eating healthier," and/or working out more. Upon occasion, they would mention specific dietary restrictions, such as cutting out "junk food" like cookies, chips, and pop, "eighty percent of the time eat healthy and then 20% of the time eat your cravings," and eating organic food. Likewise, they would occasionally mention specifics around working out, such as doing so for an hour per day, or going to the gym every day.

In summary, young women's own rich reflections on their experiences of viewing Fitspiration and Thinspiration map on to the sociocultural model of influence of body dissatisfaction. That is, Fitspiration and Thinspiration represent somewhat unattainable sociocultural influences that may lead to social comparison and internalization (either within young women themselves or in their imaginations of other girls' and women's reactions) that, in turn, contribute to body dissatisfaction and potentially dieting or disordered eating attitudes and behaviours.

Objectification Theory

Over-exposure. Recall that, according to objectification theory, there is a *pervasive* tendency in society to see women as objects (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Several young women in this study indicated that they saw Fitspiration and Thinspiration as pervasive on social media, and that exposure to it is excessive. Most Fitspiration imagery contains objectifying elements (Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2016). Taken together, this points to body-appearance-focused contributing to continued pervasiveness of viewing women as objects. In this study, young women expressed that Instagram had become more common in the last few years and there were "posts of girls everywhere now"; as one participant put it, "What we are seeing becomes our world."

Objectification. Most participants referenced society's pervasive tendency to view women as merely their bodies or a collection of body parts. Content analyses of Thinspiration (Ghaznavi & Taylor, 2015; Talbot et al., 2017) and Fitspiration (Deighton-Smith & Bell, 2018; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2016) show that these types of social media content contain objectifying elements. Some participants disclosed that these images are a reminder of the parts of women's bodies that are desirable to men, and that they are motivated to be like influencers because they think others (particularly men) desire this type of look in a woman. Moreover, participants made objectifying statements about the influencers, such as comments about the appearance of muscle tone (particularly abdominal and buttocks muscles), weight, physical attractiveness, and sex appeal. These types of comments are in line with recent research that has found that body objectification is one of the most predominant topic areas of comments left on Fitspiration posts (Murashka & Peng, 2021). This study's results are in line with these results and indicate that young women do perceive Fitspiration and Thinspiration as objectifying. One participant's words: "Just work out and do your thing, you don't need to post on social media," and her

sentiment that Fitspiration posts are about saying, “This is what you should look like when you work out,” capture a sentiment of rejection of and almost irritation around the objectification she perceived as present in Fitspiration. This calls to mind a measure of self-objectification, the Self-Objectification Questionnaire (SOQ), which breaks down physical self-concept into (1) appearance and (2) function wherein the self-objectification score is calculated by subtracting the function-based score from the appearance-based score (Noll & Fredrickson, 1998). Participants’ responses indicated they see Fitspiration—at least the kind displayed in this study—as about appearance rather than body competence. The current findings corroborate other recent work finding that Fitspiration exposes people to self-objectification (Cataldo et al., 2021).

Self-objectification. Self-objectification theory states that girls and women come to place more importance on appearance than their own feelings or capabilities (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). One participant disclosed that if young women are honest with themselves, when they look at influencers, it makes them think a nice, pretty body like these images is important and will get them Likes and an easier lifestyle just like the influencers have. For some young women, it is possible that this ideal body internalization may lead to an all-encompassing pursuit of being pretty, fit, and/or thin. In turn, this may lead to habitual monitoring of their body’s outward appearance, disrupting consciousness, which is what Fredrickson and Roberts’ (1997) theory would predict. Not all young women in this study discussed engaging in self-objectification; however, some of them spoke about becoming “obsessed” with wanting to look like an influencer and having people validate them for their body’s appearance that they could not focus on much else, and had little capacity to think about how unhealthy their appearance-controlling behaviours may be, indicating disruption of consciousness, lending support to the relevance of self-objectification to appearance-focused social media content.

Perception of Influencer's Experience. Participants spoke about what they thought about the influencers on social media. "Selfish," "narcissistic," "showing off their bodies," were some words used to describe how participants viewed these influencers as engaging in self-objectification. It was typical for participants to see influencers as showing off, commonly using the phrase, "Look at me!" to describe what they thought the influencer was thinking and hoping for. This phrase has been used in other research on self-objectification (Stiner et al., 2017) and has emerged in recent work on Fitspiration (Bell et al., 2019) and young women's use of social media more generally (Rucket & Hill, 2017). In other words, influencers are seen by women as embracing self-objectification and *inviting* objectification by others.

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) suggest that eating disorders are a risk to girls and women in cultures that objectify their bodies. Both self-objectification theory and the sociocultural model of influence propose processes that may lead to body dissatisfaction and disordered eating. As I have discussed both topics of body dissatisfaction and disordered eating above in outlining how results relate to the sociocultural model of influence, it is unnecessary to repeat a discussion of these topics here. In sum, while this study cannot answer the question of whether self-objectification is caused by viewing Fitspiration, the current findings lend support to self-objectification theory being relevant to young women's experiences of viewing Fitspiration and Thinspiration in that women (1) see this content as pervasive and objectifying/objectified, (2) engage in objectification of the influencers, (3) see influencers as engaging in their own self-objectification, and (4) may start seeing themselves from a "third person perspective" because of social media—that is, like an object to be viewed. Relatedly, several participants perceived both Fitspiration and Thinspiration influencers as being proud of their bodies and happily showing off how their bodies look with confidence. One participant

mentioned how huge a marketing tool Instagram is, so, in her view, "being in love" with one's body as an influencer is also a way to successfully make money. There also was the sentiment that, "sometimes you think you can just get from where you are to where they are, like [influencers'] body confidence or body level with how thin/fit they are," possibly indicating that influencers' success as being admired on social media makes objectification and self-objectification attractive or even inspirational to young women.

Emergent Dialectical Theory of Social Media and Body Image

At the outset of analyzing interviews, the team noticed that participants seemed to frequently contradict themselves, which was an unexpected observation. This observation was unanimous among the team and is noteworthy. I came to realize that many of these instances were not negations of part of what they were saying but dialectics. That is, participants would speak about two seemingly conflicting things that were both true simultaneously. These were not "either/or" sentiments but, rather, "both/and" sentiments that arise when they view Fitspiration and Thinspiration. To my knowledge, this is the first study to theorize that body-focused social media may have a dialectical impact on young women and their body image. Dialectics clearly emerged in discussion about (1) attainability, (2) emotional reactions, (3) social comparison, (4) body image, (5) values, and (6) health. I explain below what dialectics were observed. The way young women feel and think about Thinspiration and Fitspiration tended to be nuanced and dialectical in nature, which may have implications for prevention, intervention, and encouraging action at a systemic level on the part of social media companies.

Attainability. Within the attainability domain, I saw a dialectic emerge from the data. That is, some young women reject the notion that it is possible to look like social media influencers; however, one's personal version of this look is thought to be attainable. This invokes

a “possible self” hybrid of the ideal and actual self (body) (Bybee et al., 1997). One participant expressed competing ideas about the processes behind attaining the types of ideal bodies shown in this study. Initially in the interview, this participant said attainability was dependent on an individual’s metabolism; later she claimed anyone could attain these types of bodies with consistent effort. Taken together, young women’s beliefs about the attainability of idealized bodies appear self-contradictory in nature.

Emotional reaction: ambivalence. The ambivalent way some young women felt in response to viewing Thinspiration and Fitspiration was also dialectical. One participant explicitly said, “It's the negative feelings and the positive [feelings] that are struggling in my mind,” indicating an acknowledgement of an emotional tension. Some women’s emotional ambivalence presented as both happiness for influencers and jealousy of influencers. Likewise, almost half the sample expressed both positive and negative or ambivalent emotions. Competing desires seemed to create these ambivalent emotional reactions. For example, one participant wanted both to have an ideal body like an influencer *and* to accept herself just as she is. Related to participants expressing emotional ambivalence were (1) beliefs or resolutions that if one worked as hard as the influencer did, one would or could look like them too, and (2) “improving” oneself without using how influencers look at a metric of comparison. In the opinion of the team, these results represent an attempt to resolve the inherent tension between wanting to radically accept oneself and wanting to change oneself.

Social comparison. Similarly, some young women have dialectical experiences within the social comparison domain. One participant stated that she both *wants to be* - and *is* - OK with herself, however, she sometimes sees discrepancies between herself and Fitspiration or Thinspiration bodies and subsequently wishes she could change her body to be more like theirs.

She simultaneously acknowledged that many people compare themselves to others *and* that women need to accept themselves for who they are. That is, young women may engage in social comparison with appearance-focused social media content, experience some level of body image dissatisfaction, and, at the same time, acknowledge the importance of body acceptance. In other words, women talked about competing drives for self-acceptance and social comparison.

Body image. Dialectics also appeared within the body image domain. It became clear that many young women faced a tension between wanting to have a body ideal and wanting to obtain it in a healthy way—despite knowing how unhealthy it could be to attempt to achieve a body ideal for most women. Another body image tension that occurred within one participant was her feeling that if she lost a little weight she would be happier *and* the simultaneous acknowledgement that she has witnessed others expressing similar thoughts and then continuing to be dissatisfied with their bodies even after losing the desired amount of weight. This study is the first, to my knowledge, to uncover and identify these views as dialectical in nature.

Values. In a similar vein, dialectical thinking occurred with the values domain. For example, one participant currently placed more value on other life areas than on achieving a fit body; *and* she would like to make "speeding up the process" to attain a fit-looking body a priority. This same participant ascribed to the belief that everyone should love (or "accept") their body *and* that one can change their body if they want to. Clearly, within the topic area of values in this study, both a desire to accept and to change coexist. These values dialectics bring to mind Linehan's (2014) dialectic behavioural therapy (DBT) "walking the middle path" skills that help individuals balance acceptance with change in themselves.

Health. Some young women displayed internal pressure to be motivated *by health* to be like Fitspiration influencers while simultaneously acknowledging they are also really motivated

by *body image*. Beliefs around what being healthy looks like arose. For example, one participant said, “Obviously people who are fit and like show workout videos or like workout photos on Instagram or anything, they’re obviously eating healthy, right? So, you think, ‘Oh, if they eat healthy and they look like that, then if I eat healthy, maybe I’ll look like that.’” Some young women shared their perception that fitness is not only about health but appearance as well, while others expressed their opinions that individuals who want to be fit should do so to be healthy but not *to look* like Fitspiration influencers. In one interview, a participant brought up the distinction between exercising to be healthy or feel better physically versus exercising to reach a body goal. At some times she indicated that she was striving for the former but at the outset of this interview, she stated she wanted to look exactly like the influencers shown to her.

This dialectical motivation between health and body image invokes the concept of biopedagogy (Wright, 2009), which instructs women what an acceptable body looks (read: body *image*) and functions (read: body *competence*) like (Drake & Ranford, 2021). There exist socially acceptable trends in Fitspiration content not to “diet” but to “choose health” when eating and exercising (e.g., “Exercise to be fit, not skinny”; Tiggemann & Zaccardo, 2015; e.g., #cleaneating; Santarossa et al., 2019). This is a common message in Fitspiration content on social media. Cairns and Johnston (2015) refer to these ideas as both anti-diet and “do-dieting” (i.e., pro-diet): reframing dietary restrictions under the guise of health as empowerment while maintaining body discipline and self-control. They term the balance between openly restricting food choices for body image reasons and monitoring one’s eating to “embody the healthy (read: thin) ideal” “calibration” (Cairns & Johnston, 2015). This calibration would be referred to as “walking the middle path” in dialectical terms (Linehan, 2014). The biopedagogy concepts introduced here exist within the academic areas of physical and health education (Wright, 2009),

childhood studies and sociology (Cairns & Johnston, 2015), and the consumer culture theory branch of business (Drake and Ranford, 2021). I have yet to see these concepts adopted and discussed within the area of body image and social media in psychology, though popular media encourages body surveillance and monitoring of healthy eating and physical activity (Burrows & Writer, 2007). Given biopedagogy's apparent relevance to social media and body image, perhaps it is time for Psychology to consider studying the impacts of what young women are taught about how "suitable" bodies look and function.

Fitspo is/not Thinspo in a Sports Bra

Given my stated bias toward the belief that "Fitspo is Thinspo in a sports bra (Kite, 2013), this idea merits some discussion in the context of the results. Some participants saw both Fitspo and Thinspo as extreme, whereas others tended to have a more positive reference to Fitspiration's effect on them than Thinspiration. While not a common opinion, there were some participants who thought that it was better for them to view Fitspiration than Thinspiration. This positivity was related to believing Fitspo is a more relevant comparison target for them, and at least somewhat more attainable than Thinspiration through hard work. It is possible that, for these young women, their perception of Fitspiration being a more positive, realistic, and relevant representation may speak to the current body ideal trend of "slim thick" and "fit." No longer is it just about the thin ideal—being fit and toned is now idealized in women as well. Given the changing body ideal trend, for some young women, it may seem "better" to follow Fitspiration influencers than Thinspiration influencers because Fitspo seems more motivating, given a sense of attainability. Additionally, some participants expressed the perspective that Fitspiration is less objectifying than Thinspiration. At times, participants would mention liking how Fitspiration could have more of an instructional aspect (e.g., videos of workout routines) more than the kind

of Fitspiration content shown in this study did. In this same vein, several participants asserted that they prefer health- or performance-focused social media content over appearance-focused content. One participant referred to performance-focused content as "raw Fitspo." While the results of this study do not indicate with certainty that there is or is not full support for the idea that "Fitspo is Thinspo in a sports bra," perhaps the perceived validity of this statement is dependent on whether the Fitspiration is more focused on appearance or body competence/performance.

Implications/Calls to Action

There are several implications of this study. Many of the implications could be considered "calls to action" to social media platforms, particularly image-based ones with far reach like Instagram. Here, I draw the readers' attention to certain domains that relate to how Instagram could engage in prevention efforts against potential deleterious psychological effects in young women of viewing this social media content. These domains include: (1) health, (2) utility, (3) protective factors, (4) others, (5) history and change, (6) the insidious nature of social media, (7) predisposing factors, & (8) realism of photos. In late 2021, after Facebook (subsequently rebranded as "Meta"; Meta, 2021)[2] data was leaked, Meta announced several changes they intend on making to their Instagram division (Boynton, 2021; Mosseri, 2021). In this section, I also discuss the consistency of what participants expressed about concern for young girls with this leaked data about this subject. Herein, I also discuss how appropriate Meta's changes appear based on this study's results. Later on, I discuss clinical implications of this study.

[2] The Meta company includes the Facebook social media application, which is referred to as "Facebook" throughout this dissertation.

Health. Results suggest that some young women are more interested in what one participant termed "raw fitness" (i.e., performance-focused fitness content, such as how-to videos) than appearance-based Fitspiration. One participant also spoke about feeling more energized and happier when she adjusted her diet, feeling that some social media content has had a positive impact on her health. Some women in this study also expressed interest in more health-based content from Fitspiration. Thus, it seems there may be multiple types of Fitspiration; for example, appearance-focused involving body ideals, health or wellness, and performance-focused involving diverse bodies. In fact, one content analysis of "women's health" magazines identified three frames of health advice: health, appearance, and body competence (Aubrey & Hahn, 2016). While the aforementioned content analysis found that health content (i.e., focused on doing something to be healthy) is the most common category in women's health magazines (32.6% of articles coded), appearance-focused content (i.e., focused on doing something to look good) is the second most common (24.7% of articles; Aubrey & Hahn, 2016). It was acknowledged by women in the present study that they may desire to view Fitspiration content and be inspired to be healthy *but* that it also negatively impacts their body image. If Instagram wishes to protect users from negative effects of exposure to certain content, they could be proactive on an individual end-user level and analyze what proportion of time a user spends engaging with different types (i.e., health, competence, or appearance) of Fitspiration content. It is not inconceivable that platforms' algorithms could be programmed to "nudge" girls and young women away from body-image-focused Fitspiration and toward health or competence-based Fitspiration to strive for balance.

Utility. The present study suggests that it is typical for young women to want Thinspiration or Fitspiration that shows them with transparency how these influencers achieve

body ideals. It is not advisable to instruct young women to engage in disordered eating or excessive exercise, or encourage appearance-based inspiration (e.g., before and after "transformation" photos). However, some participants expressed wanting to see the full, honest narrative of process, including the "unpleasant" parts of fitness. Focus on competence and utility of Fitspiration overlap (e.g., "how-to" videos). Should Instagram wish to mitigate the negative effects of exposure to Fitspiration, they should only allow content that is realistic and functional rather than Fitspiration focused on body image.

Protective factors. Several participants provided commentary on what they find protective. Confidence, engaging in pleasurable activities, knowing oneself, acknowledging and accepting body diversity, and situating oneself as indifferent or curious about their experiences rather than critical all seem to be useful to young women viewing appearance-focused social media content. Kite and Kite (2021) describe their evidence-based body image resilience course as transforming body image through increased awareness of objectification and its associated stressors as well as using experiences of body shame, objectification, and unrealistic ideals to incite body image resilience within an individual, regardless of whether or not one's environment also changes (Beauty Redefined, n.d.). While choosing to participate in studies like the present one and choosing to enroll in courses or therapy addressing body image challenges can generate effective self-reflective processes and change, I also invite social media companies to encourage their users consuming Fitspiration or Thinspiration to challenge such users directly. For example, Instagram could send push notifications asking about other interests or promoting positive reflection on other aspects of one's identity to individuals whose use trends show heavy consumption of Fitspiration or Thinspiration in efforts to bolster protective factors. While appearance-focused Fitspiration and Thinspiration content may be here to stay, Instagram could

share messages that inspire young women to internalize the knowledge that their worth is found in *more* than just how they look.

Others. During the writing of this dissertation, Meta (called "Facebook" at the time) experienced a data leak. The data that were leaked showed that this company was aware through their own internal research that one third of adolescent girls who use Instagram report that their body image is negatively impacted by it (Raychoudhury, 2021). Within Meta's "Newsroom" (Newsroom, 2022), the company spun this statistic as meaning most adolescent girls who use Instagram report Instagram either had no effect or improved body image for them (Raychoudhury, 2021). However, as of 2021, 3.7% of all Instagram users are adolescent girls aged 13 to 17 (Statista, 2021). Given that as of 2018 the company publicly reported that they have more than one billion active Instagram users (Facebook, 2020), 3.7% of this number is 37 million adolescent girls; if "only a third" of those girls experience negative body image in association with using Instagram, that is still over 12 million girls. All that to say, a "small" portion of a massive number is still a lot of individuals. Note also that Facebook (aka Meta) has not publicly reported the number of active Instagram users since 2018, although some sources indicate that number may be more like 2 billion individuals as of late 2021 (Rodriguez, 2021); using the same simple arithmetic above, this means it is possible more like 24 million adolescent girls may experience negative body image in correlation with using Instagram.

The above is important and relevant to this study because many young women mentioned being concerned for either girls or "young girls." Some participants believed that young people are less able to manage not comparing themselves when viewing appearance-based Instagram posts. At least one participant was explicit in her belief that *mainly* young girls are negatively affected by social media content focusing on body appearance. The American Psychological

Association Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls (APA, 2007) concluded that several forms of media are cultural contributors to the sexualization of young girls, and that exposure to sexualized images can contribute to body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, low self-esteem, depressive symptoms, and physical health problems among adolescent girls and young women. Much of mass media, including social media, content includes appearance-focused and objectifying images. In 2010, children and adolescents spent more time with entertainment media than with any other activity (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). By 2016, adolescents' time spent on digital media (including social media) on average was between four and six hours per day, reflecting a steady increased engagement with digital media over time (Twenge et al., 2018). The participants' voices in the present study are important because they have been there themselves; that is, they grew up with appearance-based Instagram influencing them, and now they are expressing concern for adolescent girls who are likely even more bombarded with such content. Regardless of Meta's attempt to downplay their findings that they "make body image issues worse for one in three teen girls," which appeared in the title of a slide in a slide deck (Raychoudhury, 2021), even the US Senate wanted to know more about Facebook's (now Meta's) report. Adam Mosseri, the head of Instagram, testified in front of a Senate subcommittee in December 2021 (Romo, 2021). This study's results regarding concern for girls on Instagram shows how qualitative data and analysis may have wide-reaching transferability to real-world settings. Meta should use their knowledge, both through internal research and scholarly literature about girls, their Instagram platform, and body image to identify Instagram media targeted to girls that emphasizes objectified bodies. More importantly, social media companies should consider setting regulations around who may view such content as well as suggest engaging and positive alternatives to girls.

History and Change. It was typical for young women in this study to reflect on how exposure to Fitspiration and Thinspiration images reminded them of their past selves. Many of them had stories of having overcome appearance-based social media negatively impact them deeply. It is as if they have gained power; recall one participant saying, "I don't think I would ever give that so much power to affect me ever again." Some expressed being less affected by body image with time and age. Some participants also expressed hopes to help younger girls and women (for example, their younger sisters) by sharing their stories with them. Thus, social media platforms should explore ways in which they can connect women with younger girls and adolescents in mentorship roles.

Insidious nature of social media. The immediate negative impacts of appearance-based social media content can be small and fleeting. However, young women also identify that "the smallest things matter," as one participant put it. Young women in this study saw children as being especially susceptible to subtle marketing strategies. For example, one woman stated that if a child sees that an influencer is wearing a Nike sports bra, they are going to think, "Oh, I want to wear a Nike sports bra like that," and think they need to exercise at a gym, even at 10 years old, rather than engage in age-appropriate activities like group sports. Women in this study thought that "all these things affect people's minds." They also shared that seeing these body-focused influencers can impact guilt around food and desire to diet, whether or not they follow through with dieting afterwards. Given the insidious nature of appearance-focused social media content that young women reported experiencing starting in adolescence, and how vulnerable children and adolescents may be at risk of its deleterious effects, Instagram should permanently suspend plans to create Instagram Kids, which they currently have on pause after public criticism of the launch (Instagram, n.d.-d).

Predisposing factors. Results of this study indicate that young women believe some individuals are more at risk of negative effects of body-focused social media content than others. Some young women thought that individuals who are still forming their identity, have low self-worth, or who socialize in image-focused peer groups may be predisposed to such effects. Other researchers have suggested that, for individuals in a state of identity formation, image-centred social media platforms may increase the probability of identity commitments centred on appearance (Trembaly et al., 2021). Measures could be taken to try to protect all users who may have predisposing factors making them vulnerable to negative effects of body-focused social media content. In fact, in 2022, Meta launched a "Take a Break" Instagram feature, designed to help users regulate their Instagram use and learn about expert-backed ways to help users "reset and reflect (Mosseri, 2021), including deep breathing, listening to music, attending to one's to-do list, or writing down what they are thinking (O'Boyle, 2021). However, this feature is not showcased in the Instagram app or automatically applied. Instead, users first have to know the feature exists, and then figure out how to apply the feature, and choose from the options of 10, 20, or 30 consecutive minutes of using the app, after which the expert-backed tips will appear. Meta is also planning on being stricter about what they recommend to adolescents in their search, explore, hashtags, and suggested accounts features, as well as "nudging" teens to different topics "if they've been dwelling on one topic for a while" (Mosseri, 2021). While these new features appear to be a step in the right direction in order to protect vulnerable users, more could be done. Therefore, I recommend that Meta showcase their Take a Break feature to all Instagram users, simplify the process of setting the feature up, and offer more options, such as choosing to see the Take a Break recommendations after 10, 20, or 30 non-consecutive spent on Instagram and/or including a space within the app to record if the user engaged in deep breathing or listened to

music, or what the user did from their to-do list, or what thoughts they want to write down. Instagram could also prompt users to do body image checks before and after engaging in the expert-backed tips. I also recommend that Meta implement the "nudge" feature they plan on using for adolescents to all users to encourage all users to diversify their Instagram feeds.

Realism of photos. The current results suggest that many young women are upset with how unrealistic Thinspiration or Fitspiration appears. It seemed important to some young women for influencers to be more transparent with how edited or unnatural their content is. Note that they did not indicate that they wanted the influencers' content to be removed from Instagram. Concern was expressed about how young people may believe body-focused still images on Instagram is realistic or "natural," thus increasing social comparison and pressure to look similar to these types of influencers. Young women in this study also suggested they would like to get to know and feel a connection with influencers. While support has generally not been found for the effectiveness of thin ideal media disclaimers (McComb & Mills, 2020), viewing both positive appearance and reality check comments simultaneously on Thinspiration posts has been found to reduce body dissatisfaction (Tiggemann & Velissaris, 2020). It has also been found that viewing "Instagram vs. reality" side-by-side photos, wherein the photo on one side is clearly posed or manipulated in a way to appear ideal and the other photo is a more natural depiction, decreases body dissatisfaction relative to viewing just ideal images (Tiggemann & Anderberg, 2019). One average-sized comedian uses a similar video-based reminder of how unrealistic some body-based Instagram content is, by first posting videos of mainly Thinspiration and then imitating the influencer in a humorous way, using the juxtaposition to show how ridiculous body ideals are (Barber, n.d.). Some young women appear to cope with the potential negative effects of viewing ideal-body-focused social media content with reminders that these images do not tend to be

based in reality. Therefore, I recommend that Instagram develops tools that encourage both influencers and users alike to dialogue and challenge how balanced, realistic, and positive ideal-body-focused social media content really is.

Clinical Implications. This research aimed to advance knowledge and benefit the innumerable young women who use social media, helping them to gain a deep and rich understanding of the ways they respond to experiencing viewing Fitspiration and Thinspiration. This research adds to understanding and knowledge of how young women interact with online technology and how this affects what they think and feel as well as how they live. These findings have supported existing theories (i.e., the sociocultural model of influencer and objectification theory). Importantly, they led to the development of an emergent theory of body image and social media involving numerous dialectics that could not be captured with quantitative methods. These findings may inform prevention programs and psychological interventions for a variety of mental health issues (e.g., anxiety, depression, eating disorders) and provide insight to therapists around how appearance-based social media content affects the psychology of young women. For example, in response to the finding that young women express that Fitspiration and Thinspiration inspire them to think about changing their bodies for both body image and health, preventative programs could acknowledge how common it is for young women to care about the way their bodies look *and* feel, and the "walking the middle path" DBT skill could be introduced to encourage a healthy balance of these dialectics, and a balance of self-acceptance with change. Similarly, prevention programs could adopt Cairns and Johnston's (2015) idea of "calibrating," dietary restriction for body image reasons and monitoring one's eating in the name of health. Given how normative it is for young women to be discontent with their bodies, perhaps prevention programs should explicitly and nonjudgmentally acknowledge the common desire of

girls and women to diet for both body image and health purposes. If many young women are going to take a "careful but moderate approach to healthy eating" (Cairns & Johnson, 2015) and some are going to engage in pathological food restriction, perhaps prevention programs could engage those in the former camp to reflect on and notice what cues would indicate they had "tipped the scales" from careful monitoring for health to extreme dietary restriction for body image. Again, using this idea of calibration (or "walking the middle path" skill in DBT terms), prevention programs could also encourage women to reflect on what would help them get from excessive dietary restriction in the name of body image back to being empowered to intentionally eat in a balanced way to attain ideal health. I view this approach much like common psychoeducation about anxiety—some anxiety is normal and useful, while not enough or too much anxiety can stop individuals from feeling able to engage in behaviours they would otherwise like to.

Another implication of this study is that girls and women may benefit from talking or writing about and processing their thoughts and feelings while viewing Fitspiration and Thinspiration. The ability of clinical psychologists and therapists to provide reflective and responsive care to those whose presenting problems may be influenced by exposure to Thinspiration and/or Fitspiration on social media may be enhanced by this fuller understanding how young women react to appearance-based social media. Clearly, young women's experiences of viewing Fitspiration and Thinspiration are not "black and white." Their emotions, cognitions, behaviours, and beliefs involve "shades of grey" and maybe even a spectrum of colours.

Conclusions and Future Directions

This novel qualitative study sought to understand from young women's own perspectives what thoughts, emotions, and beliefs they have in response to viewing Fitspiration and

Thinspiration. Clearly, young women have complex responses to appearance-focused social media content that are not easily summarized. Even when directly and at times repeatedly asked within the context of a nonjudgmental, inviting interview atmosphere, it appears to be a struggle for young women to identify and/or communicate their emotional responses to appearance-focused social media content. Regardless of whether they use quantitative or qualitative methods, researchers should keep this is mind when designing studies and collecting data. It is possible that the difficulty accessing emotions may relate to why, on the whole, research on social media and body image tends to find small but significant effects.

The sociocultural model of body image disturbance and objectification theory are both relevant to how young women respond to viewing Fitspo and Thinspo. Additionally, a new theory emerged from the data—what I have termed an emergent *dialectical theory of social media and body image*. As dialectics emerged within the core domains of attainability, emotional reactions, social comparison, body image, values, and health, these topic areas should be explored in prevention or intervention programs in ways that aim to balance acceptance with change.

Strengths of the current study are its capacity to show nuanced, complex views. Another strength of this study is its ability to inform adaptive changes to social media, at both organizational and individual levels. Limitations of course include the inability to understand cause and effect from viewing Fitspiration, Thinspiration, or both together, given the study's qualitative nature. Additionally, results are based only on one sample of participants that the reader must determine for themselves if are transferrable to other groups of individuals. There may have been a self-selection bias to participate in this study and participants may not be equivalent to young women who are uninterested in this topic. Perhaps another limitation is the

fact that our materials were only still images and not videos like workout routines or "what I eat in a day" videos for Fitspiration and Thinspiration content respectively. While participants' discourse indicated they saw different types of Fitspiration, we did not account for these subtypes in our design.

Future research could compare and contrast responses to still-image Fitspiration, videos of "raw fitness" (i.e., competence-based Fitspiration), and Fitspiration with health content. Future research could also compare and contrast responses to Thinspiration-only content with various kinds of Fitspiration content. It may also be interesting to conduct qualitative research from influencers' perspectives to understand their experiences and if and where they align with consumers' perceptions.

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Appendix A

Pilot Interview
Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to participate in our research project. As stated during the consent process, we are interested in understanding what thoughts go through young women's minds and how they feel when they view Instagram images like the ones of the thin and fit girls you just saw. Although I have some questions prepared, we're interested in really hearing and understanding your perspective, so I'll be following up some of your answers with questions that help me do that during the interview.

- Can you describe in detail what I just asked you to look at? What stood out to you? How would you describe your experience?

- Can you tell me about what you made of these images? What goes through your mind when you look at these types of images (i.e., photos that promote fitness and thinness) on social media?

- Can you describe to me what feelings come up when you see these kinds of images?

- Is the way you feel the same or different when you see thin girls on social media versus fit girls? How so? Why do you think that is?

- How do you feel *about yourself* after looking at these kinds of photos on social media?

(Follow-up questions should encourage specificity.)

- To what extent do these kinds of images make you feel stressed or anxious?

- We're curious about comparisons you might have made about yourself to the young women we asked you to view, and also about comparisons you might find yourself making in your daily social media use. Can you tell me about similarities or differences (that is, comparisons) that you find yourself noticing?

- If seeing thin and/or fit girls on social media makes you wish to change any part of your lifestyle, can you describe what changes you wish to make?
    - Potential follow-up questions:
        - To what extent does viewing these types of profiles/images make you want to exercise more?
        - Inspire you to be healthy?
        - Make you consider dieting? / Want to diet (more)?
        - Make you more/less motivated to go after your fitness goals?
        - How attainable do your goals feel after viewing these images?

- You may have heard the terms "Thinspiration" or "Fitspiration." The profiles you were shown are of young women who aim to inspire others to be thin and fit. Can you tell me

about if you feel inspired to try to obtain a similar body when seeing these kinds of images? Why or why not?

- Tell me what you think or feel about the attainability of looking like that. Describe how realistic it would be for you to have a similar body and if you desire that now.

- How important does thinness or fitness seem to you after looking at these photos? To what extent do your values or beliefs shift from what you usually value or believe when looking at this kind of appearance-based social media content?

- If you don't consider yourself inspired by Thinspiration or Fitspiration on social media, why do you think that is? Is there something about you that kind of protects you from being affected by these messages?

- Who do you think is most affected by these kinds of images?

- What was your attitude toward this kind of social media content before doing this interview? (Has it changed?)

- We are nearing the end of our interview – Is there anything more you wish to say that we didn't have a chance to discuss?

- What has this process been like for you?

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to participate in our research project. As stated during the consent process, we are interested in understanding what thoughts go through young women's minds and how they feel when they view Instagram images like the ones of the thin and fit girls you just saw. Although I have some questions prepared, we're interested in really hearing and understanding your perspective, so I'll be following up some of your answers with questions that help me do that during the interview. Also, I want to make sure you know there are no "right or wrong answers." All we're really looking for is your own personal truth. And, of course, everything you say will be confidential.
Also, let me know if you'd like to flip back to either profile or any specific images as you talk about your experience with them.

Interviewer note: Follow-up questions should encourage *specificity.*

- How would you describe your experience when looking at these profiles? What thoughts and feelings come up for you?
- What stood out to you about the profiles I just asked you to look at?
- Can you tell me about what you made of these images? What goes through your mind when you look at these types of images (i.e., photos that promote fitness and thinness) on social media in your personal life?
- Can you describe to me what feelings come up when you see these kinds of images?
- Is the way you feel the same or different when you see thin girls on social media versus fit girls? How so? Why do you think that is? What about how you think or what you believe?
- How do you feel *about yourself* after looking at these kinds of photos on social media?
    - Does it make a difference when people are close friends or acquaintances or celebrities?
- Can you tell me what you feel motivates you to look at this kind of social media (Instagram) content?
- What is your experience with posting these types of images, if any?
    - *(Follow-up questions should encourage specificity, e.g.,* What were/are your motives, how do you feel/think right before? During? After? Before posting, how do you *think* you will feel or think?)
- To what extent do these kinds of images make you feel stressed or anxious?

- What are your thoughts and feelings about the idea that people might view themselves as objects to be viewed on social media like these profiles? Do you ever experience anything like that? (When, why, etc., - is it them/others/both they see self-objectifying?)

- Do you think there's anything about your personality in particular that makes you vulnerable/resistant to social media's effects?

- We're curious about comparisons you might have made about yourself to the young women we asked you to view, and also about comparisons you might find yourself making in your daily social media use. Can you tell me about similarities or differences (that is, comparisons) that you find yourself noticing?
    - -What specifically do you compare yourself to?

- If seeing thin and/or fit girls on social media makes you wish to change any part of your lifestyle, can you describe what changes you wish to make?

    - Potential follow-up questions:
        - To what extent does viewing these types of profiles/images make you want to exercise more?
        - Inspire you to be healthy?
        - Make you consider dieting? / Want to diet (more)?
        - Make you more/less motivated to go after your fitness goals?
        - How attainable do your goals feel after viewing these images?

- You may have heard the terms "Thinspiration" or "Fitspiration." The profiles you were shown are of young women who aim to inspire others to be thin and fit. Can you tell me about if you feel inspired to try to obtain a similar body when seeing these kinds of images? Why or why not?

- Tell me what you think or feel about the attainability of looking like that. Describe how realistic it would be for you to have a similar body and if you desire that now.

- How important does thinness or fitness seem to you after looking at these photos? To what extent do your values or beliefs shift from what you usually value or believe when looking at this kind of appearance-based social media content?

- If you don't consider yourself inspired by Thinspiration or Fitspiration on social media, why do you think that is? Is there something about you that kind of protects you from being affected by these messages?

- Who do you think is most affected by these kinds of images?

- What was your attitude toward this kind of social media content before doing this interview? (Has it changed?)

- We are nearing the end of our interview. Is there anything more you wish to say that we didn't have a chance to discuss?

- What has this process been like for you?

Appendix C

Overview of Ten General Domains, Core Ideas, and Category Names

Domain	Core Idea	Category Names
Attainability	Participants comment on how attainable they believe Fitspo and/or Thinspo body ideals are and in what ways.	Self; everyone; lifestyle; plastic surgery
Comparison of #Fitspo & #Thinspo	Participants compare and contrast Fitspo and Thinspo content.	Their effect on me differs; their effect on me does not differ; "#Fitspo perceived as healthier than #Thinspo
Body image	Viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content prompts participants to consider how they perceive and feel about their own body.	Body dissatisfaction; body satisfaction
Coping strategies	Participants describe strategies they use to cope with potential negative effects of viewing Thinspiration and/or Fitspiration.	Acceptance; being happy for the influencer; Conscious reflection; Instagram is not real life; shift away from body-focused content; agency of my response to social media (adaptive inspiration); blocking affective responses; considering cons; not comparing self; body diversity; resignation; shift

		away from #thinspo content; body confidence; differing values
Emotional reactions	Participants express how they feel when viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content.	Negative affect; ambivalence; neutral; positive
Hard work	Participants associate hard work and commitment with obtaining Fitspo or Thinspo body.	Motivated
Health	Participants associate viewing Thinspo or Fitspo with positive or negative health outcomes.	Underweight; #Thinspo is perceived as related to disordered eating; benefits; #Thinspo is perceived as related to eating disorders
Objectification	Participants allude to Fitspo and Thinspo content reflecting seeing women's value in "just" their bodies or as a collection of body parts.	(*No categories identified.*)
Others	Participants guess at what other people's experiences are in relation to viewing Fitspo or Thinspo.	Others' imagined reactions; concern for others; "I respect others' autonomy."
Social comparison	Participants engage in social comparison processes in response to viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content.	IRL [in real life] versus online influence; lifestyle

Appendix D

Overview of 18 Typical Domains, Core Ideas, and Category Names

Domain	Core Idea	Category Names
Motivation	Participants discussed whether or not they were motivated to achieve similar body ideal shown in Fitspo or Thinspo content.	Social media motivates engagement in diet and/or exercise; social media inspires desiring change in diet and/or exercise; social media's 'inspiration' is not sustainable; this motivates me, but I don't have time.
Realism of photos	Participant comments on how un/realistic she finds Thinspo or Fitspo content, often finding it too edited and/or untrustworthy.	Highlight reel; transparency; sex sells; show me who you are; should I buy in?; you "are" what you post
Relational influences	Participants identified that intimate relationships influence how they are influenced by Fitspiration or Thinspiration.	(*No categories identified.*)
Values	Upon viewing Thinspo and/or Fitspo content, participants reflect on personal values, often bringing up to what extent shape or weight is important to	Over-valuation of body ideals; aligned values between "me" and influencer; differing values between "me" and influencer

	her in the context of other important areas of her life.	
Body diversity	After viewing Fitspo and Thinspo content, participants acknowledge and accept that bodies are diverse.	(*No categories identified.*)
History and change	Viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content prompts participants to reflect on the trajectory of how they used to react to this content and how their responses have changed over time. Oftentimes, young selves were more negatively affected by this content than current selves.	(*No categories identified.*)
Influencers' intent	Participants expressed what they perceived as Fitspo and/or Thinspo influencers' intentions and desires.	(*No categories identified.*)
Insidious nature of social media	Participants suggest viewing Thinspo and/or Fitspo has at least subtle unhealthy or negative consequences.	Fleeting, small, negative reactions; subconscious influence

Predisposing factors	Participants hypothesize what puts some people more at risk of experiencing a negative impact from viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content.	Lack of body confidence; identify formation in progress; larger bodies; eating disorders; family environment
Protective factors	Participants mention or allude to factors that protect young women from being negatively affected by Thinspo and/or Fitspo content.	Body diversity; body satisfaction; joyful Movement; self-love; family environment; indifference
Utility	Participants spoke to the usefulness, practicality, or helpfulness of Thinspiration and/or Fitspiration content.	Show me the journey!; helpful; not helpful
Self-objectification	Participants associate self-objectification with viewing Thinspo and/or Fitspo content.	(*No categories identified.*)
Over-exposure	Participants identify that Thinspo and/or Fitspo content is "everywhere" on social media, and that exposure to it is excessive.	(*No categories identified.*)

Perception of influencer's experience	Participants shared what they perceived Fitspo and/or Thinspo influencers' experiences are like.	Body confidence
Diet/disordered eating	Participant associates Fitspo or Thinspo with diet/disordered eating.	(*No categories identified.*)
Differing body ideals	Viewing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content prompts participants to consider that people have differing body ideals, often revealing that they do not aspire to look like either of these body ideals.	(*No categories identified.*)
Should statements	In response to seeing Fitspo and/or Thinspo content, participants engage in "should statements."	(*No categories identified.*)
Societal pressures	Participants see Thinspo and/or Fitspo content as reflecting appearance expectations that society places on women and girls.	(*No categories identified.*)