

Copyright
by
Cinthia M. Lozano
2022

**The Dissertation Committee for Cinthia Lozano Certifies that this is the approved
version of the following Dissertation:**

**To Seek Inspiration or Self-Worth? The Impact of Social Media
Bridging Ties on Young Females' Well-being**

Committee:

Isabella Cunningham, Supervisor

Matthew Eastin

Renita Coleman

Natalie Brown-Devlin

**To seek inspiration or self-worth? The impact of social media bridging
ties on young females' well-being.**

by

Cinthia Melissa Lozano

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at Austin
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

August 2022

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to God, as my faith gave me the strength to always persevere. To my loved husband, Ruben Lozano who has supported me and always lent a helping hand with love and kindness. As my husband and best friend, he showed me the importance of taking a moment to slow down and take a break, encouraged me to stand up for myself, and motivated me to believe in myself as much as he does. To my parents Oscar Jimenez and Ilka de Jimenez, who always encouraged me to have faith, persevere, and pursue my dreams. I also dedicate this dissertation to Bobbi Ryder, who before knowing me, saw potential in me and welcomed me in her home and family, and helped me to achieve my dream of studying abroad.

Abstract

To seek inspiration or self-worth? The impact of social media bridging ties on young females' well-being

Cinthia Melissa Lozano, PhD

The University of Texas at Austin, 2022

Supervisor: Isabella Cunningham

Abstract: The present dissertation investigates the effect of social media bridging ties on young females' well-being including psychological well-being, self-esteem, and self-image. Particularly, study 1 tested the moderating effect of social comparison motives (self-improvement vs. self-evaluation) in the direct and indirect (through self-efficacy) relationship between bridging ties and the different measures of well-being. Study 2 tested the direct and moderating role of thin-ideals in predicting the different measures of well-being. An experiment with $n= 474$ participants in study 1 and a survey with $n=296$ participants were conducted to test the proposed hypotheses. Data analysis of study 1 indicates that bridging ties have no effect on well-being. The moderating effect of social comparison was not supported in the prediction of self-efficacy nor well-being. However, self-improvement had a positive effect on self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-image. In contrast, self-evaluation was found to have a negative effect on self-efficacy, psychological well-being, self-esteem, and self-image. Study 2 showed that interaction with bridging ties in social media can be beneficial for young females, as it has a positive effect on

psychological well-being and self-esteem. Thin ideals, on the contrary was found to negatively impact self-image.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	9
List of Figures	10
Introduction.....	11
SECTION I: LITERATURE REVIEW	14
Chapter 1: Social Media Research Background	14
Fitspiration content	14
Social media antecedents	15
Chapter 2: Social Capital	19
Bridging and bonding ties.....	22
Chapter 3: Social Comparison Theory.....	25
Motives of social comparison	27
The moderating role of social comparison motives.....	29
Chapter 4: Self-Efficacy	31
The mediating role of self-efficacy.....	32
Chapter 5: Thin-Ideal internalization (study 2)	35
Hypotheses.....	37
SECTION II: STUDY 1 AND MANIPULATION CHECK	40
Chapter 6: Method section.....	40
Study design.....	40
Sample	40
Study procedures.....	42
Measures	44

Chapter 7: Results section.....	52
Manipulation check.....	52
Study 1	54
Chapter 8: Study 1 discussion section	66
SECTION III: STUDY 2.....	69
Chapter 9: Method section.....	69
Sample	69
Study procedures.....	70
Measures	70
Chapter 10: Results section.....	73
Chapter 11: Study 2 discussion section	75
SECTION IV: CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH	77
Chapter 12: General discussion	77
Chapter 13: Limitations and future research.....	80

List of Tables

Table 1:	Sample characteristics for study 1	41
Table 2:	Comparison of influencer 1 and influencer 2 on their body size ($n=16$ influencer 1 and $n=13$ influencer 2).....	52
Table 3:	Means and standard deviations comparing the three conditions (influencer 1, influencer 2 and control group) in the diet, tracking app, workout class, and yoga class posts.....	54
Table 4:	Model coefficients for the conditional process model predicting psychological well-being.	59
Table 5:	Model coefficients for the conditional process model predicting self-esteem.	60
Table 6:	Model coefficients for the conditional process model predicting self-image.....	61
Table 7:	Bootstrap confidence intervals for the conditional effect of self-efficacy on psychological well-being.	63
Table 8:	Bootstrap confidence intervals for the conditional effect of self-efficacy on self-esteem.	64
Table 9:	Bootstrap confidence intervals for the conditional effect of self-efficacy on self-image.....	65
Table 10:	Sample characteristics for study 2	69

List of Figures

Figure 1:	Proposed model of conditional mediation predicting psychological well-being, self-esteem, and self-image (study 1).	34
Figure 2:	Proposed models testing the role of thin-ideals internalization (study 2).....	37
Figure 3:	Statistical diagram of study 1 (model 10).....	56

INTRODUCTION

Imagine a young female scrolling through her Instagram feed, and she is encountered with pictures of very thin and toned fitness influencers. Those influencers share information related to healthy eating and fitness tips. While looking at those pictures she compares to them to obtain inspiration to become more fit and improve her appearance (*Self-improvement comparison*). As she has a motivation to improve and finds an information source in her Instagram feed, she might enhance her self-efficacy, and consequently, improve her psychological well-being and self-perceptions. Now consider a different scenario, another young female is exposed to the same posts on her Instagram feed, but she compares to them to assess her self-worth (*Self-evaluation comparison*), and she feels that she won't be able to achieve those fitness goals, and therefore experiences lower psychological well-being and self-perceptions. Why does comparing to the same target lead to different outcomes in terms of the females' psychological well-being and self-perceptions? Why does comparing to the same target lower or increase their self-efficacy? The purpose of this dissertation is to answer those questions using the foundation of social capital, social comparison, and self-efficacy.

This work contributes to the growing literature on the impact of fitspiration content on young females' psychological well-being and self-perceptions. Fitspiration content denotes portrayal of messages related to dieting, exercising, and an overall improvement of wellness and physical appearance (Deighton-Smith and Bell, 2018; Griffiths and Stefanovski, 2019). Social media has become a predominant venue of this type of content, portraying physical ideals that focus on low body fat and toned bodies (Deighton-Smith and Bell, 2018). As social media serves as an information source, it is important to understand how access to that information can affect consumers. Nevertheless, there is no consensus regarding the effects of social media on well-being in the current literature.

Some studies have identified well-being benefits related to social media use (e.g., Ellison, Steinfeld, and Lampe, 2007; Oh, Ozkaya, and LaRose, 2014) and others found support for negative outcomes associated to social media use (e.g., Blachino et al., 2016; Frison and Eggermont, 2017). Social capital theory, which outlines how individuals invest and benefit from social relationships (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2001), has found vast support for numerous benefits related to social media such as access to a large source of information (Phua et al., 2017; Norbutas and Corten, 2018). The social capital framework distinguishes two forms of social capital that are presumed to serve different purposes: bridging ties, which are weak ties that can provide novel information (e.g., a mentor, a friend of a friend etc.); and bonding ties, which are strong ties that could bring in emotional support (e.g., a close friend or a relative) (Putnam, 2000). Research indicates that frequent use of social media enables the development of bridging and bonding ties, which consequently, permits consumers to access emotional support, advice, and trust from bonding ties. As well as access to information through bridging ties (Phua et al., 2017). Social comparison research on the other hand, suggests that social media use might be problematic when consumers engage in social comparison (Appel et al., 2020). Social comparison theory, which concerns to how individuals assess their opinions and abilities by comparing to others (Festinger, 1957), has proposed numerous issues regarding social media when used for social comparison, such as sadness, envy (Rosenthal-von der Pütten, et al., 2019) and body dissatisfaction (Fardouly and Vartanian, 2015).

The present dissertation attempts to contribute to the body of knowledge on the impact of social media on young females' well-being by testing two studies. Study 1 tests how bridging ties that share fitspiration content on social media affect young females' well-being and the extent to which that effect is moderated by motives of social comparison (self-improvement vs. self-evaluation) and mediated by self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can be

described as one's beliefs in regard to their ability to engage in a behavior to obtain a desired outcome (Bandura, 1977, 1986). Particularly, this study aims to test how bridging ties can enhance young females' self-efficacy and consequently improve their well-being, and how that indirect effect is conditional on their motives of social comparison (self-improvement vs. self-evaluation). Study 2 introduces the role of thin ideals internalization, a process in which social ideals of attractiveness are adopted as guiding norms (Halliwell and Dittmar, 2004; Homan, 2010; Thompson and Stice, 2001). As bridging ties have the potential to provide access to information (Granovetter, 1983; Putnam, 2000), it is important to understand how internalization of that information can impact young females' well-being.

SECTION I: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 1: Social Media Research Background

FITSPIRATION CONTENT

Fitspiration content denotes images and messages that convey an inspiration to exercise, diet, and improve one's physical appearance (Deighton-Smith and Bell, 2018; Griffiths and Stefanovski, 2019). Fitspiration content usually promotes weight standards and behaviors that allow women to be thin, fit, sensual, and pretty (Simpson and Mazzeo, 2017). Research has identified that exposure to fitspiration content can negatively affect young women's body satisfaction (Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2018) and can be more harmful for young women who have internalized thin ideals, as they tend to experience lower body satisfaction after engaging in social comparison (Myers et al., 2012). The internalization processing refers to the assimilation of thin ideals and its corresponding values (i.e., females need to be thin to be considered beautiful) as guiding principles (Thompson et al., 2004).

Research has identified that access to health and fitness information on social media facilitates young females to make informed decisions regarding their health behavior (Jong and Drummond, 2016). However, much of fitspiration content promotes harmful messages such as: objectification of women's bodies, body weight guilt, food guilt, and thin praise (Beopple and Thompson, 2016). Although Fitspiration aims to promote fitness and healthy lifestyles, a great portion of the messages are centered on body appearance, focusing mainly on the aesthetics of the body rather than health and wellness (Carrote et al., 2017). For instance, an experimental study found that exposure to fitspiration images resulted in higher body dissatisfaction, lower self-esteem, and higher negative mood (Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2015). Further, research has found that fitspiration content can have negative

implications regarding body dissatisfaction due to unrealistic expectations. Much of fitspiration content claims that with regular exercise and a healthy diet, anyone can achieve their fitness ideals, which can be unrealistic for a lot of women (Robinson et al., 2017). Moreover, fitspiration research has found that consumers are inspired to exercise after exposure to fitspiration images on social media (Robinson et al., 2017; Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2015), but that inspiration is not transformed into actual behavior (Robinson et al., 2017; Prichard et al., 2020). A content analysis study found evidence that fitspiration content in Pinterest promotes unrealistic thin and toned female bodies and implies that healthy bodies are exclusively thin and toned, which can negatively impact young women as they are more likely to engage with this type of content (Simpson and Mazzeo, 2017). These findings demonstrate that expanding our understanding of the effect of fitspiration content in social media is crucial as more and more young adults rely on social media to obtain information regarding health behaviors and norms (Vaterlaus et al., 2015).

SOCIAL MEDIA ANTECEDENTS

Research on social media and its effects in psychological well-being has doubled in recent years. However, the lack of consistent findings has led to more questions than answers (Appel et al., 2020). Many studies have documented positive outcomes in terms of well-being linked to social media (e.g., Ellison, et al., 2007; Grieve, et al., 2013; Oh, Ozkaya, and LaRose, 2014). For instance, social capital theorists have found important benefits derived from social media interaction such as access to information (Norbutas and Corten, 2018). Results of a study indicate that users of social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Twitter have higher access to career growth related information (Utz, 2016). Despite the numerous benefits proposed by social capital theorists, it seems like there is a lack of agreement regarding whether social media affects consumers' well-being or not.

Some scholars have failed to provide empirical evidence that social media interaction directly affects consumer well-being (Hawi and Samaha, 2017; Apaolaza, Hartmann, Medina, Barrutia, & Echebarria, 2013; Valkenburg et al., 2006). Other scholars have identified negative outcomes in relation to well-being associated with social media use such as Facebook (Blachnio et al., 2016; Satici & Uysal, 2015; Shakya & Christakis, 2017; Verduyn et al., 2015) and Instagram (Frison & Eggermont, 2017; Fardouly et al., 2018; Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2019). Several lines of research have addressed concerns regarding the use of social media such as media addiction (Hou et al., 2019), self-worth endangering risks like cyberbullying, stalking and online harassment (Kwan & Skoric, 2013), and the impact of social comparison (Cramer, Song, and Drent, 2016).

Many studies have postulated that social media has contributed to body image concerns, social comparison, and eating disorders (Ghaznavi and Taylor, 2015; Perloff, 2014). Although evidence concerning the negative impact of media on body esteem is not novel, interest on the interplay of social media, social comparison, and body image did not flourish in communication and psychological research until recent years (Lewallen, Benh-Morawitz, 2016). There is an extensive line of research that demonstrates that media depiction affects women's body image. For many years, researchers addressed how the portrayal of very thin bodies affect body image, body dissatisfaction, and self-esteem. In fact, the portrayal of thin models in magazines and advertising has shifted body ideals in western societies (Luff and Gray, 2009). Some researchers have theorized that the effects of content representing thin ideals on social media can be more powerful than traditional media, as consumers can access the content from different devices and platforms which reinforce repetitive exposure to the same content (Perloff, 2014). There is extensive evidence suggesting that media depiction negatively impacts women (Luff and Gray, 2009). Further, social media has shifted the way people present themselves allowing an

increase of thin and fitness ideals depiction (Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2018). Exposure to this type of content has arrived concerns among many scholars regarding the negative impact in young women (Fardouly and Vartanian, 2015; Slater et al., 2019). Previous research has found that use of social media is related to lower image perceptions among young women (Cohen and Blaszczynski, 2015; Fardouly and Vartanian, 2015). Research has also provided evidence that exposure to appearance related content in social media negatively impact women's body image perceptions (Cohen, et al., 2017).

To address the effect of social media on psychological well-being, it is important to ask the right questions. Previous research has identified that time spent on social media is not as crucial as *how* consumers use social media (Berryman et al., 2017). Taking these findings into consideration, this dissertation aims to contribute to the literature by testing *how* different motives of social comparison can moderate the effect of social media ties (e.g., influencers) on young females' psychological well-being and self-perceptions within the fitspiration context. Social capital and social comparison have been widely applied in scholarly research to address the impact of social media on consumers' well-being. Both theories present strong arguments that explain the implications of social media on well-being. However, they propose opposite outcomes. On one hand, social capital scholars argue that social media can serve as a venue where individuals can access a broad source of information (Norbutas and Corten, 2018; Page-Tan, 2021) and acquire knowledge (Venter, 2019). On the other hand, social comparison theorists argue that social media serves as mechanism in which individuals compare to others (Appel, et al., 2020), which leads to lower perceptions of self-worth (i.e., Gerber, Wheeler, and Suls, 2018). By testing both theories together, this dissertation attempts to dispel the question of how social media can affect young females' psychological well-being and self-perceptions. Additionally, examining the effects of social media fitspiration content on young women is pivotal for

numerous reasons: first, women tend to use social media more often than men (Clipson, Wilson, and DuFrene, 2012); second, most of the content that promotes self-objectification and unhealthy beauty standards are targeted to young females (Ghaznavi and Taylor, 2015); third, social media is widely use by young adults, data indicates that 73% of young adults 18 to 29 years old visit social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat daily (Pew Research Center, 2021); and lastly, women are more susceptible to body dissatisfaction and sociocultural pressure to conform to body standards compared to men (Esnaola et al., 2010).

Chapter 2: Social Capital

Social capital theory has gained interest in academic research in a wide range of disciplines such as economics, sociology, and education (Pena-López and Sánchez-Santos, 2017). Although there is not a universal definition of social capital, (Shen, Monge and Williams, 2014; William, 2006) most of its definitions imply how individuals invest and/or benefit from social relationships (Lin, 2001; Coleman, 1988). Some scholars might describe social capital as an outcome as a whole and others as resources that lead to a positive outcome (Foley and Edwards, 1997). In this section, my aim is to briefly describe the most widely used definitions and discuss the approach used in this dissertation to explain how social capital can be crucial in explaining young females' psychological well-being and self-perceptions.

Bourdieu (1986) states that “social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (p. 248). This means that group membership allows its members to benefit from the social capital collectively possessed by the group. The “production” and “reproduction” of long-term valuable networks capable of producing tangible or intangible outcomes is a result of constant investment in those networks. By investing in social networks, individuals can transform contingent relations (e.g., neighborhood or colleagues) into elective relationships that implicate certain obligations such as gratitude, respect, and attachment (Bourdieu, 1986).

Lin (2001) defines social capital based on the idea that social capital is both an investment and a return. The origins of this definition are grounded in the concept of capital, which is “a surplus value and represents an investment with expected return” (p. 4). Other theories such as human-capital theory (Johnson 1960) originated from the same

idea. Human capital is perceived as an investment (e.g., education) involving an expected return (e.g., monetary outcome). According to the human capital theory, individuals invest in gaining knowledge to have more opportunities for higher paying jobs. In a similar manner, social capital is conceptualized as an “investment in social relations by individuals through which they gain access to embedded resources to enhance expected returns of instrumental or expressive actions” (Lin, 2001, p. 19). Social capital theory distinguishes between accessibility and mobilization. Accessibility constitutes the connections an individual has available to them and mobilization refers to the benefit or resources the individual can extract from those connections. In theory, the more access to different connections would result in higher mobilization of social capital. However, vast research has found that having access to a large network does not guarantee the mobilization of those resources (Lin, 1999). In fact, research indicates that benefits obtained from social capital are not equal for everybody even if they belong to the same group or community (Villalonga-Olives and Kawachi, 2017). Factors such as education, age, and gender have been proven to impact the mobilization of social capital (Tulin et al., 2018).

Coleman’s (1988) approach to social capital was meant to establish a bridge between sociology and economics. As he stated, “My aim... is to import the economists’ principle of rational action for use in the analysis of social systems proper, including but not limited to economic systems, and to do so without discarding social organization in the process. The concept of social capital is a tool to aid in this” (p. 97). Within this definition, social capital constitutes a productive mechanism. Social capital can facilitate the achievement of certain interests, interests that would not be achievable in the absence of social capital. Social organization plays a key role in determining the value produced by social capital. For instance, in some societies, members are always helping each other, and therefore, these kinds of societies rely heavily on trustworthiness of the social group which

indicates that obligations will be honored (e.g., A does something for B and expects B to return the favor in the future) (Coleman, 1988).

Putnam's (2000) approach is an extension of Coleman's definition, Putnam describes social capital as "social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity" p.19. This definition infers that social capital involves both the networks themselves and their possible outcomes (Williams, 2006). Putnam (2000) suggests that social capital can be an individual as well as a collective asset. Networking is very important for individuals, in some cases individuals have a higher chance to obtain a good job because of the people they know rather than their skills. In other words, many individuals might have an opportunity to obtain a better job because of their social capital rather than their human capital. Although social capital outcomes are not equal for everybody (Villalonga-Olives and Kawachi, 2017), social ties are crucial in people's lives, as they often help to achieve career goals, find someone who gives them a hand, companionship, and moral support (Putnam, 2000).

Social capital definitions and its dimensions can vary, however, Putnam, (2000) suggests that the most important dimension of social capital remains in bridging and bonding ties. Bridging ties refer to weak ties that can potentially bring new information and bonding ties are constituted by strong ties that might provide emotional support (Granovetter, 1983; Putnam 2000). Bridging ties can be a better source of external assets and spread of information. Bonding ties, in contrast rely heavily in norms of reciprocity and can be a good source of solidarity. As previous research has suggested that bridging ties are predominant in social media because they are easier to establish and maintain than face to face interaction (Donath and Boyd, 2004; Ellison, et al., 2014), this dissertation focuses on bridging ties, particularly, the two studies presented in this dissertation concern

to how bridging ties can affect young females' psychological well-being and self-perceptions.

BRIDGING AND BONDING TIES

Historically, social capital theorists have proposed that bridging ties are associated with economic prosperity (Granovetter, 1973, 1983; Putnam, 2000; Zhang et al., 2011; Lancee, 2016) and bonding ties are associated with well-being (Lin, 2001; Putnam, 2000). However, to the best of the author's knowledge, no study has tested the relation of bridging ties with consumer psychological well-being or self-perceptions. This dissertation addresses that gap by examining the mechanism in which bridging ties can affect young females' psychological well-being and self-perceptions.

Social capital theorists emphasize the importance of bridging ties in the access and diffusion of information (Putnam 2000; Granovetter, 1973; Norbutas and Corten, 2018). Bonding ties, on the other hand can provide limited opportunities for new information. For instance, if a person shares a rumor with their close friends, and their friends do the same, it will be very likely that some friends hear the same rumor two or three times, as strong ties tend to have common friends (Granovetter, 1973). Pioneers of social ties research (i.e., Granovetter, 1970; Putnam, 2000), highlight the importance of bridging ties in this manner, they suggest that bridging ties that have access to different social circles are more valuable than close friends who have a very similar niche of friends. These findings have been supported by other scholars. A study found that immigrants that have bridging ties are more successful at finding better paid jobs than those who don't (Lancee, 2016). Further, another study found that farmers with bridging ties are more likely to develop new technologies and practices as they acquire knowledge through those ties (Micheels and Nolan, 2016). In the career development context, there is evidence that human capital along with bridging

ties can help academic entrepreneurs achieve early career growth, as bridging ties expand their opportunities and knowledge (Scholten et al., 2015).

According to social capital theorist, access to a broader network of social ties can be very advantageous as individuals can have access to a wider source of information (Granovetter, 1983; Putnam, 2000; Norbutas and Corten, 2018). Social media offers consumers the opportunity to access a broader network of social ties, some researchers have found that bridging ties are predominant on the internet as developing such social relationships are easier and require lower maintenance than in person interaction (Donath and Boyd, 2004; Ellison, et al., 2014). Many social capital scholars have demonstrated that social interaction in social media presents numerous benefits for consumers such as greater access to information provided by bridging ties (Cao, et al., 2013; Norbutas and Corten, 2018). A study found that coworkers who follow bridging ties on social media perceive a higher information utility compared to those who only follow their bonding ties, these findings reaffirm that information provided by bonding ties can be redundant (Huang and Liu, 2017). Additionally, bridging ties present important implications in the social comparison context. There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that self-improvement comparisons to individuals who are not close to oneself, such as bridging ties can result in positive outcomes such as higher perceived control (Lockwood, et al., 2012), self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Robinson and Knobloch-Westerwick, 2020), and self-perceptions (Veldhuis et al., 2017). To the best of the author's knowledge, no study has tested the effect of strength ties within the fitness context. However, previous research has investigated strength ties effects in the context of health and body appearance issues. For instance, a study found that the number of Facebook friends was linked to higher perceived social support, which led to lower stress, and further led to improved physical health and higher psychological well-being (Nabi et al., 2013). Moreover, research has

demonstrated that social capital has important implications on health information. Particularly, individuals with more bridging ties might perceive a higher control and ability to solve problems as they can rely on the knowledge and skills provided by bridging ties. Regardless of their level of health literacy, having a wider network of bridging ties might enhance their perceived ability to find and comprehend health information (Kim, Lim and Park, 2015). However, research has found that social capital can be a double-edged sword as it can facilitate access to information but can also be overwhelming at the moment of decision making (Chou, et al., 2006). For example, a study found that because Instagram facilitates access to a broader network of bridging ties and pictures such as selfies, it promotes more appearance-related social comparison, which leads to higher levels of pressure to conform to appearance norms. That pressure to conform to beauty standards appears to be more prominent for women (Åberg et al., 2020). Social comparison online has been proven to lead to negative outcomes such as lower self-perceptions (Gerber et al., 2018) and depression (Lup et al., 2015; Li, 2018).

Chapter 3: Social Comparison Theory

Social comparison theory was developed by Festinger (1954, 1957), who states that individuals have an inner drive to evaluate themselves. Festinger's (1954) proposition of social comparison claims that people tend to assess their opinions and abilities by comparing to others in scenarios where objective standards are not available. For instance, a person who is trying to evaluate how fast they can run, might compare their running performance to other runners. However, other scholars have argued that people choose to compare to others even when objective standards are available (Klein, 1997). According to social comparison theory the main motivator for comparison is an accurate assessment of oneself (Festinger, 1954), although, some people might compare to others to boost their well-being (Wills, 1981). Comparisons to others might be upward or downward. The latter occurs when a person compares to less fortunate people with the purpose to enhance their well-being (Wills, 1981). Upward comparison, on the other hand, occurs when someone compares to others higher in the hierarchy or another desirable dimension (Festinger, 1954). Research has provided evidence that when people have the opportunity to choose, they tend to upward compare to others (Gerber et al., 2018). A study found that on average, people tend to compare on Facebook upward rather than downward (Vogel, et al., 2014). Wills (1981), suggests that when individuals are threatened, they are more likely to downward compare to others with the objective of enhancing their self-esteem, Wills (1981) also stated that people with low self-esteem have a higher tendency to downward compare than people with high self-esteem. More recent research has supported this argument. A study revealed that people who downward compared to the less fortunate (e.g., people in economic disadvantage) in the volunteering context reported higher satisfaction with life (Huang, 2016). Another study showed that teenage girls who engage in downward comparison based on tangible measures (e.g., number of likes and followers) with peers in

social media experience self-enhancement (Hui Chua and Chang, 2016). Research has demonstrated that upward comparison can be positive as well as detrimental (Collins, 1996). According to Li's (2018) study, teenagers that engage in upward comparisons with other online users tend to report being affected negatively (e.g., envy), which leads to higher levels of depression. Further, a study revealed that prolonged usage of Facebook influenced people's perceptions of other user's life satisfaction. The longer they have used Facebook, the more they believe that their Facebook friends have happier lives than themselves and tend to believe that life is not fair (Chou and Edge, 2012). However, when upward comparisons serve self-improvement goals (e.g., comparing to others to improve an attribute) they can lead to positive outcomes (Martin and Gentry, 1997). A study revealed that people who upward compared to others motivated by self-improvement reported higher commitment to their goals (Pavlova, et al., 2018).

According to Festinger (1954) people incline to compare to similar others, whether the comparison is upward or downward, it cannot be too divergent from the individual. People tend to evaluate their opinions and abilities when they are relevant to them, meaning that the more they care about a behavior or ability, the greater the motivation for the assessment. For instance, a study demonstrated that women who are more body conscious, tend to compare with others and engage in conversations about weight (Corning and Gondoli, 2012). In a similar manner, when someone is attracted to a group, they will be more likely to reduce any discrepancies between them and the group. The greater the desire for a group affiliation, the more relevant the group comparison will be. Festinger (1954), also stated that comparisons are mainly made to those who are close to the person. This statement was later challenged by other scholars who found that people not only compare to similar others but also to non-similar others, such as models (Martin and Gentry, 1997).

For instance, a study identified that women that compare their lifestyles to the influencers on social media reported higher levels of envy (Chae, 2018).

Research has identified that social media offers abundant opportunities for social comparison (Appel, et al., 2020), which can be very appealing to those who are prone to social comparison (Ozimek, et.al., 2020). Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) has identified different negative outcomes related to social media when consumers engage in social comparison such as depression (Lup et al., 2015), sadness and envy (Rosenthal-von der Pütten, et al., 2019), lower self-esteem (Vogel, et al., 2015) and body dissatisfaction among young females (Fardouly and Vartanian, 2015).

MOTIVES OF SOCIAL COMPARISON

Many scholars have argued that the effects of social comparison, to a certain extent, can be explained by the motives for social comparison (Halliwel and Dittmar, 2005; Knobloch-Westerwick and Romero, 2011). Helgeson and Mickelson (1995) suggest that focusing only on one motive (e.g., self-evaluations), might not capture important theoretical aspects of social comparison. Many studies have inferred the motive for social comparison from the question, the reported response, and the target. However, it is necessary to differentiate and test different motives for social comparison in addition to the target of social comparison (e.g., downward vs. upward) to provide a more complete overview of social comparison theory. Social comparison motivations can be described as self-improvement and self-evaluations. Self-improvement occurs when individuals engage in social comparison to seek for information or inspiration to improve a specific attribute (Martin and Gentry, 1997), while self-evaluation occurs when individuals attempt to assess their self-worth by comparing to others (Festinger, 1954).

Festinger, (1954) postulated that individuals have a drive to self-evaluate their opinions and abilities by engaging in social comparison, by doing that they might reduce uncertainty regarding their performance. Self-evaluations in the body ideal context usually leads to negative self-perceptions when women compare to media models (Halliwel and Dittmar, 2005). Research has found evidence that social media interaction such as comments, tags and shares can indirectly impact body image concerns through self-evaluation social comparison (Kim and Chock, 2015). Another study revealed that self-evaluation social comparison to profiles of healthy lifestyles (e.g., fitness and beauty) led to lower self-esteem (Vogel et al., 2014). Social media can fulfill self-improvement goals as well, as social media allows consumers to gather and share information; self-improvement comparison can be easier online compared to offline (Song et al., 2019). Even though social comparison can be harsh, it can be inspiring when motivated by self-improvement (Lockwood et al., 2012). A study found that self-improvement social comparison to body ideals led to higher body satisfaction (Veldhuis et al., 2017). Drawing on previous research, the present dissertation proposes that when young females have a drive for self-improvement, they will report higher psychological well-being and self-perceptions after exposure to fitspiration content shared by bridging ties. While young females who are driven by self-evaluation comparisons, will report lower psychological well-being and self-perceptions. Further, research has found that self-improvement comparison to others who have succeeded at a novel experience, or a life transition can motivate and enhance perceived control of those who are experiencing a similar transition (Lockwood et al., 2012). Another study found that testimonials induced by self-improvement lead to higher self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Robinson and Knobloch-Westerwick, 2020). Based on these previous findings, this dissertation proposes a mediator effect of self-efficacy. Meaning that young females who are driven by self-

improvement will report higher self-efficacy, and thus higher psychological well-being and self-perceptions after exposure to fitspiration content shared by bridging ties. While young females who are driven by self-evaluation, will report lower self-efficacy and thus lower self-perceptions and psychological well-being. Further details regarding the mediating role of self-efficacy will be discussed in a forthcoming section of chapter 4.

THE MODERATING ROLE OF SOCIAL COMPARISON MOTIVES

Although the benefits one can obtain from social capital are related to social comparison (Turner, 1975), this intersection has received very little attention in scholarly research. A few studies have tested strength ties and social comparison and their relation to well-being in social media. For instance, a study found that social comparison to friends in social media had a stronger effect on body dissatisfaction and desire to be thin than social comparison to celebrities among adolescents (Ho et al., 2016). Some studies have demonstrated that peer competition might be a stronger predictor of body dissatisfaction than television media (Ferguson et al., 2014). However, previous research has neglected the difference of social comparison motives, and how they can intensify or mitigate the effects of bridging ties on psychological well-being and self-perceptions. Many studies have demonstrated positive outcomes associated with self-improvement such as body satisfaction (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2015; Veldhuis et al., 2017) and perceived behavioral control (Lockwood, et al., 2012). Based on previous research, this dissertation proposes a moderating mechanism in which young females driven by self-improvement will report higher psychological well-being and self-perceptions after exposure to fitspiration content shared by bridging ties. That is, self-improvement comparison is driven by a desire to seek inspiration or information to improve an attribute (Martin and Gentry, 1997) and bridging ties have the potential to provide novel information that can be used to improve that

attribute (Granovetter, 1973, 1983; Putnam, 2000; Micheels and Nolan, 2016), thus, they can enhance their psychological well-being and self-perceptions. The negative impact of social comparison can be mitigated when consumers have a self-improvement motivation to engage in social comparison. Consumers might choose to compare to others to improve certain attributes to obtain long term benefits, even if they must overcome the short-term impact of facing their limitations or inferiorities at the moment of comparison (Lockwood, et al., 2012). For instance, a study found that when people with high self-esteem compared to others on Facebook motivated by self-improvement, the comparison triggered a positive affect (Cramer, Song, and Drent, 2016). Furthermore, In the academic context, students might compare to peers that present better performance, so they can learn from them, even if they must confront their own weaknesses (Dijkstra et al., 2008). In the case of self-evaluation comparison, many studies have found evidence of negative outcomes related to self-evaluation motives such as envy (Chae, 2018) and lower self-esteem (Vogel et al., 2014). As such, research has shown that self-evaluation comparison can be detrimental as it can have a negative impact on body satisfaction among adolescent females (Rodgers et al., 2015) and young adult females (Tiggemann et al., 2013). Drawing on previous research, this dissertation proposes that when young female consumers have a drive for self-evaluation comparison, they will report lower psychological well-being and self-perceptions after exposure to fitspiration content shared by bridging ties (e.g., fitness influencer). In contrast to self-improvement motivation, self-evaluation motivation does not involve interest for information or inspiration for improvement. Self-evaluation is mainly employed to evaluate or assess one's performance, which generally leads to negative affects (Festinger, 1954; Martin and Gentry, 1997).

Chapter 4: Self-Efficacy

Perceived self-efficacy can be described as individuals' belief regarding their capability to perform a behavior required to obtain a desired outcome (Bandura, 1977, 1986). Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) postulates that personal effectiveness can be shaped by psychological processes. That is, perceived self-efficacy can determine the activities and behaviors an individual will engage in, and the amount of time and effort they are willing to spend to persevere when encountered with obstacles. Research indicates that behavioral change is predicted by self-efficacy (Bandura and Adams, 1977).

Self-efficacy research in the health domain has explored different health-related behavior categories such as physical activities, alcohol preventions, and eating fruit and vegetables (Chilton et al., 2018). Research has proposed important implications of self-efficacy in health behavioral change, a meta-analysis study found that self-efficacy, attitudes and norms have causal effects on intentions and behaviors (Sheeran et al., 2016). Self-efficacy and motivations are important determinants of physical activity (Bauman, et al., 2012). Perceived self-efficacy presents crucial implications in well-being as well. People with strong sense of self-efficacy may perceive difficult activities or tasks as a challenge rather than a threat, which fosters an intrinsic interest in the activity or task. People with high self-efficacy tend to set challenging goals and remain committed to those goals. They are more likely to maintain their commitment even when facing obstacles or failures, and promptly recover their self-efficacy. Research indicates that people with high self-efficacy may report higher convictions they can execute control over difficult situations. This approach can enhance personal accomplishments, lower stress, and likelihood of depression (Bandura and Wessels, 1994). Further, a study found that self-efficacy had a positive effect on psychological well-being including personal growth and self-acceptance (De Caroli and Sagone, 2014). Another study found that general self-

efficacy positively impacts psychological well-being and personal accomplishment (Milan et al., 2019).

THE MEDIATING ROLE OF SELF-EFFICACY

One of the objectives of this dissertation is to test how fitspiration content shared by bridging ties can directly or indirectly (through self-efficacy) affect young females' self-perceptions and psychological well-being. Due to the potential of bridging ties to provide novel information (Granovetter, 1983; Putnam 2000; Norbutas and Corten, 2018), it is important to address the questions of whether that information can enhance self-efficacy, and thus increase psychological well-being and self-perceptions. Although self-efficacy can present important implications in the social capital context, this intersection has been neglected in scholarly research. There are only a few studies that have tested both concepts together. For instance, a study tested the impact of social capital and self-efficacy in the context of health-related social networking sites (SNSs) for smoking cessation. Results of the study revealed that both bridging and bonding ties accessed through SNSs positively affected smoking cessation self-efficacy. Accessing new information from bridging ties and developing strong bonds and trust-based relationships with bonding ties help members increase their self-efficacy to quit smoking (Phua, 2013).

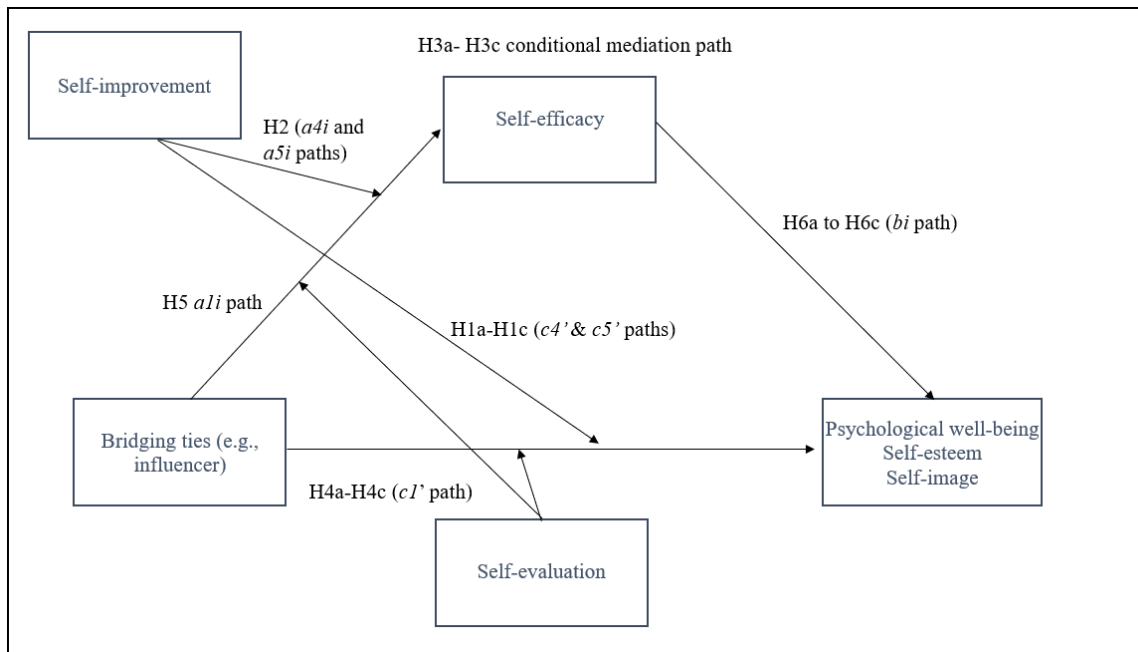
There is very little research regarding social comparison and self-efficacy as well. A study found that individuals high in self-efficacy were less vulnerable to experience negative effects such as envy and depression after engaging in social comparisons. These results demonstrate that the degree in which consumers are affected by social comparison depends, to certain extent, on their self-efficacy (Li, 2018). The current study argues that comparison to bridging ties moved by self-improvement (vs. self-evaluation) will lead to higher self-perceptions and psychological well-being through self-efficacy. Here, the

information accessed from bridging ties can prompt self-efficacy and therefore, increase psychological well-being and self-perceptions. Previous research by Granovetter (1983) and Putnam (2000) has shown that bridging ties can facilitate access to information that can be used to achieve self-improvement goals. Research also indicates that social comparison motivated by self-improvement can prompt self-efficacy. For example, research has found that comparison to others who have succeeded at a novel or life transition increased their perceived control to succeed at a comparable transition (Lockwood, et al., 2012). Similarly, this dissertation aims to demonstrate that young females who are driven by self-improvement will report higher self-efficacy after exposure to thinspiration content shared by bridging ties, and thus will enhance their self-perceptions and psychological well-being. In the case of self-evaluation comparison, there is evidence that proves that self-evaluation comparison can lead to a sense of inferiority (Li, 2018). Individuals who feel inferior might lower their self-efficacy as they can feel they lack the skills or abilities to achieve the lifestyle of those who they are comparing to. Based on these previous findings, the present dissertation proposes that when young females are driven by self-evaluation comparison, they will experience lower self-efficacy, and consequently lower psychological well-being and self-perceptions after exposure to fitness content shared by bridging ties.

By testing the moderating effect of social comparison motives, as well as the mediating effect of self-efficacy on psychological well-being and self-perceptions, study 1 provides a better understanding on how female consumers can optimize their benefits from social capital. Many social capital scholars have suggested that social capital can be very beneficial for individuals (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000; Lin, 2001), however the literature is lacking a deeper understating on how bridging ties can improve or deteriorate young female consumers' psychological well-being and self-perceptions

through self-efficacy depending on their drive for self-improvement or self-evaluation. The model representing the process of study 1 can be found in figure 1.

Figure 1: Proposed model of conditional mediation predicting psychological well-being, self-esteem, and self-image (study 1).



Chapter 5: Thin-Ideals Internalization (study 2)

Thin-ideals internalization process can be described as the adoption of thin ideals and the values it involves, such as “only thin females are considered beautiful” as guiding norms (Thompson et al., 2004). There is a growing body of evidence suggesting that thin-ideals internalization is a crucial factor in explaining females’ body-image disturbance (Halliwell and Dittmar, 2004; Homan, 2010; Thompson and Stice, 2001) dieting, compulsive exercising (Homan, 2010) and women’s anxiety (Dittmar and Howard, 2004). Some studies have demonstrated a mediator effect of thin-ideal internalization in the relation between social comparison and body dissatisfaction (Vartanian and Dey, 2013; Rodgers et al., 2015). Other studies have found evidence that it can moderate the link between social comparison and body dissatisfaction. Additionally, women who score high in thin-ideals internalization tend to engage in social comparison more often (Myers et al., 2012). Although thin-ideals internalization present important implication within fitspiration context, it has received little attention in fitspiration research. A study identified that fit-ideals internalization, which refers to the desire of a lean and tone body, was correlated with aesthetic motivations to exercise (Uhlmann, et a., 2020). Social media platforms like Instagram can promote a drive for lean and tone bodies as they often promote a fitness behavior by displaying images of fit women wearing workout clothes (Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2018).

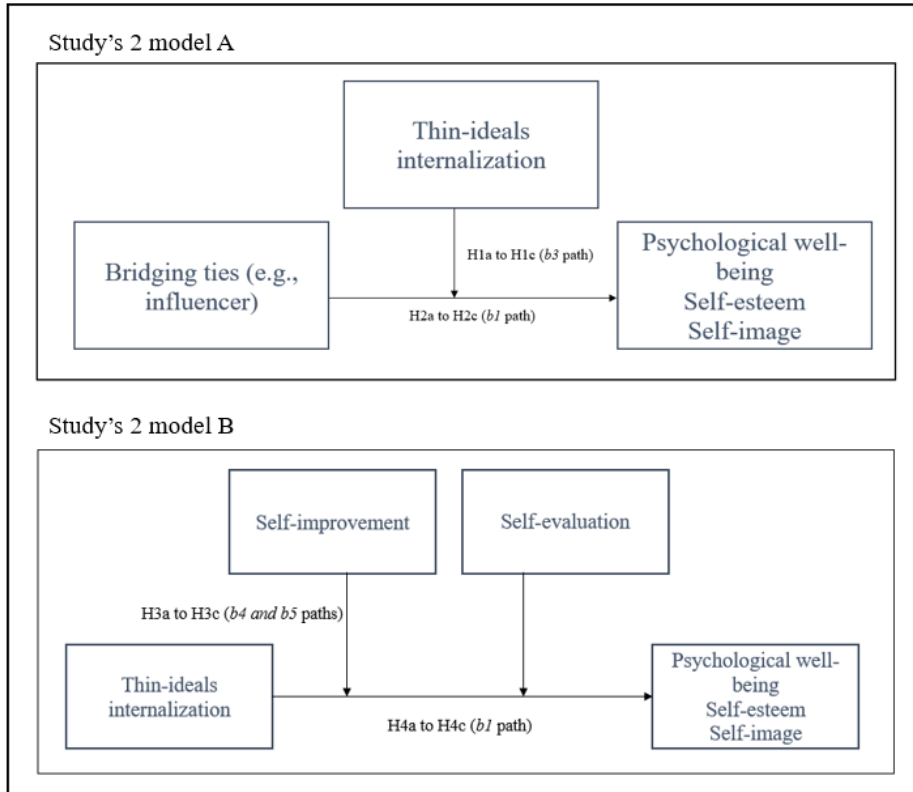
Self-presentation and body appearance have gained popularity in social media (Siibak, 2009). Like traditional media, photos found on social media can represent unrealistic beauty standards. For instance, a study found that exposure to appearance-related photos on Facebook was associated with thin-ideals internalization, body-objectification, body dissatisfaction, and thinness drive (Meier and Gray, 2014). A meta-analysis study found that use of social media was correlated with thin-ideals internalization

and body attractiveness ideals (Mingoia et al., 2017). Social media use promotes social comparison to images that portray thin ideals, which can increase the risk of eating disorders (Mabe et al., 2014). Another study that investigated social media effects among adolescents identified that social media and appearance-focused use of social media were linked to thin-ideals internalization as well as social and appearance comparisons (Jarmam, et al., 2021).

Thin-ideals internalization has been proven to affect body dissatisfaction (Fitzsimmons-Craft, et al., 2016). However, the existing literature lacks a distinction of different social ties, such as bridging ties, as well as motives for social comparison (self-improvement vs. self-evaluations), and how these constructs can affect female consumers' well-being. Study 2 attempts to fill that gap. Within the social capital framework there is vast evidence that bridging ties (e.g., influencers) can represent a great source of information (Granoveter, 1983; Putnam, 2000), however, research is lacking regarding the internalization of that information and how it impacts well-being. Since social media represents a powerful tool to access health and fitness related information (Jong and Drummond, 2016), it is important to understand how internalization of that information can impact young females' psychological well-being and self-perceptions (the model representing this process can be found in figure 2 model A). Within the social comparison context, thin-ideals internalization has been shown to have important implications in body dissatisfaction (Halliwell and Dittmar, 2004) but the current literature has neglected the distinction between self-improvement and self-evaluation. Making a clear distinction of self-evaluation and self-improvement comparisons can help address the question of whether self-improvement can mitigate the negative impact of thin-ideals internalization on psychological well-being and self-perceptions. In other words, the present dissertation proposes a moderating effect of social comparison motives (self-improvement and self-

evaluation) in the relationship between thin-ideals internalization and psychological well-being and self-perceptions (the model representing this moderation can be found in figure 2, model B.)

Figure 2: Proposed models testing the role of thin-ideals internalization (study 2).



HYPOTHESES

Study 1

H1a: Young females who are driven by self-improvement (vs. self-evaluation) will report higher psychological well-being after exposure to bridging ties fitspiration content.

H1b: Young females who are driven by self-improvement (vs. self-evaluation) will report higher self-esteem after exposure to bridging ties fitspiration content.

H1c: Young females who are driven by self-improvement (vs. self-evaluation) will report higher self-image after exposure to bridging ties fitness content.

H2: Young females who are driven by self-improvement (vs. self-evaluation) will report higher self-efficacy after exposure to bridging ties fitness content.

H3a: The positive effect of bridging ties on psychological well-being through increased self-efficacy will be significantly higher for young females who are driven by self-improvement (vs. self-evaluation).

H3b: The positive effect of bridging ties on self-esteem through increased self-efficacy will be significantly higher for young females who are driven by self-improvement (vs. self-evaluation).

H3c: The positive effect of bridging ties on self-image through increased self-efficacy will be significantly higher for young females who are driven by self-improvement (vs. self-evaluation).

H4a: Bridging ties will positively affect psychological well-being.

H4b: Bridging ties will positively affect self-esteem.

H4c: Bridging ties will positively affect self-image.

H5: Bridging ties will positively affect self-efficacy.

H6a: Self-efficacy will positively affect psychological well-being.

H6b: Self-efficacy will positively affect self-esteem.

H6c: Self-efficacy will positively affect self-image.

Study 2

H1a: Young females who score low (vs. high) on internalization of thin ideals and high on bridging ties will report higher psychological well-being.

H1b: Young females who score low (vs. high) on internalization of thin ideals and high on bridging ties will report higher self-esteem.

H1c: Young females who score low (vs. high) on internalization of thin ideals and high on bridging ties will report higher self-image.

H2a: Bridging ties will positively affect psychological well-being.

H2b: Bridging ties will positively affect self-esteem.

H2c: Bridging ties will positively affect self-image.

H3a: Young females who score low (vs. high) on internalization of thin ideals and who are driven by self-improvement (vs. self-evaluation) will report higher psychological well-being.

H3b: Young females who score low (vs. high) on internalization of thin ideals and who are driven by self-improvement (vs. self-evaluation) will report higher self-esteem.

H3c: Young females who score low (vs. high) on internalization of thin ideals and who are driven by self-improvement (vs. self-evaluation) will report higher self-image.

H4a: Thin-ideals internalization will negatively affect psychological well-being.

H4b: Thin-ideals internalization will negatively affect self-esteem.

H4c: Thin-ideals internalization will negatively affect self-image.

SECTION II: STUDY 1 AND MANIPULATION CHECK

Chapter 6: Method Section

STUDY DESIGN

The conditional mediation model proposed in study 1 was tested using a single factor (bridging ties: influencer vs. no influencer control condition) between subjects.

SAMPLE

After obtaining IRB approval, participants were recruited using Prolific Panel. GPower analysis indicated that 485 participants were a good sample size for this study. After excluding the cases that did not fit the study criteria, the total sample was $n = 474$ young females. Participants who identified as non-binary or males, failed an attention check, or whose time spent answering the survey was too far from the mean were excluded from the study. Participants' age ranged from 19 to 30 years old. ($M = 24.12$, $SD = 3.30$) with 60.5% identified as white, 12% as Hispanic, 13.3% as Asian, and 14.1% as other ethnic groups. A 37.1% of the sample reported to have a less than \$20,000 annual income, 17.7% reported to fall in the \$20,000 – \$34,999 category, 14.3% in the \$35,000 - \$49,999, 12.2% in the \$50,000 – \$64,999, and 18.6% reported an income equal or above \$65,000. Over 15% of participants reported to have some high school or high school diploma, over 26 % have some college (no credit), about 41% have a bachelor's degree, 7% an associate degree, 8.6% a master's degree, and less than 1% have doctorate degree. A more detailed description of the sample can be found in table 1.

To assess how homogeneous the sample was, the frequency of Instagram use and exercise behavior were assessed. Data indicated that on average participants visit or use Instagram for ($M = 1.54$, $SD = 1.54$) hours. In regard to exercise behavior, the score

reported was 26.45 units which indicates that overall participants are active, and they obtain significant health benefits from engaging in their weekly physical activities. For more details in the interpretation of exercise behavior score, refer to the exercise behavior variable description in the “Measures” section.

Table 1: Sample characteristics for study 1

	Percent
Gender	
Female	100
Age	
19-30	100
Education	
High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)	15.82
Some college credit, no degree	26.4
Trade/technical/vocational training	0.2
Associate degree	7.0
Bachelor’s degree	41.1
Master’s degree	8.6
Doctorate degree	0.8
Income	
Less than \$20,000	37.1
\$20,000 to \$34,999	17.7
\$35,000 to \$49,999	14.3
\$50,000 to \$64,999	12.2
\$65,000 to \$79,999	6.8
\$80,000 to \$94,999	4.0
\$95,000 and over	7.8
Ethnic group	
White	60.50
Hispanic	12.00
Asian	13.3
Other	14.14

STUDY PROCEDURES

Manipulation check

To make sure the Instagram posts shared by the influencer conveyed fitspiration messaging, a manipulation check was employed before conducting the study.

Below are the manipulation check steps.

1. The manipulation check consisted of three groups: influencer 1, influencer 2, and the control group. The aim of the manipulation was to compare two different influencers and the control group to assess which influencer fits the fitspiration criteria best. In the influencer 1 and influencer 2 conditions, participants were exposed to four different Instagram posts promoting fitness products (diet plan, tracking app, online workout class, and online yoga class). In the control condition, participants were exposed to the same products, in this case the posts were shared by the four different fitness brands. The promotion of the products was placed in a plain background with no pictures of influencers in it. To avoid pre-existing attitudes, fictitious brands were used in all the Instagram posts. The Instagram posts can be found in the Appendix A.
2. A panel of judges consisting of graduate students at a major university in the U.S. were asked to rate the body shape of the influencer and the degree in which each post displays a fitspiration message. Each judge was asked to rate four Instagram posts (one per each product). After exposure to each Instagram post, they were asked to rate from (1= very curvaceous to 6= to very thin) the influencer shown in each post. Then, they were asked to indicate from (1=not at all inspired to 7=very inspired) how inspired they

- felt after viewing each post to 1) improve their fitness and 2) to be physically active.
3. To ensure participants took enough time to look at the posts, they were displayed for 10 seconds, they were also told to look at posts and read the comments as they would be asked questions about the Instagram posts later.
 4. The influencer that rated higher in thinness and thinspiration message was used in the main study.

Main study

After selecting the final stimuli, the main study was conducted. The following bullet points describe the study procedure step by step.

1. Participants received a link to answer the survey. Before exposure to the stimuli, all participants were asked questions regarding their motives for social comparison (self-improvement vs. self-evaluations) and their exercise behavior.
2. Then, participants were told they would see different Instagram posts, they were instructed to view the posts and read the comments as they would be asked some questions about them later.
3. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two bridging ties conditions (influencer vs. no influencer). In the treatment condition, participants saw four different fitspiration posts promoting fitness products (e.g., diet plan, tracking app, workout class, and yoga class) shared by a fitness female influencer (note that a real fitness influencer was used in the study, but her name was changed). In the control condition, participants saw the four different Instagram posts with the same products used in the treatment conditions, but the fitness influencer was not in the picture. The order in which each post was shown was randomized.

4. After exposure to each post, participants were asked to respond the questions regarding their self-efficacy, psychological well-being, self-esteem, and self-image. They responded to the set of questions after each Instagram post, meaning they answered the same set of questions four times. The order of these questions was also randomized to avoid order effect.
5. Finally, they responded to some demographic questions (ethnic group, income, and education).

MEASURES

Frequency of Instagram use

Frequency of Instagram use ($M = 1.54$, $SD = 1.54$) was adapted from Berryman's et al., (2018) scale. This measure is constituted by a single item in which participants were asked to indicate how many hours they spent on Instagram during an average day. Participants were instructed to type a numerical value ranging from 0 hours to 24 hours.

Exercise behavior

In order to assess the sample uniformity in terms of exercise behavior, participants were asked to report how many times a week they engage in different physical activities. The Leisure time exercise questionnaire (LTEQ) developed by Godin and Shephard (1985) aims to measure participants' self-reported exercise behavior by asking them to report the frequency they engage in exercise behavior for at least 15 minutes in an average week from mild, moderate to strenuous. A list of examples of mild, moderate, and strenuous exercises were provided to participants, they indicated the number of times they engaged in that exercise behavior in a typical week. To calculate the total LTEQ score, each category is multiplied by 9 if strenuous, by 5 if moderate, and by 3 if mild. The original LTEQ formula

is weekly leisure-time activity score = (9 x strenuous) + (5 x moderate) + (3 x mild). The list of exercise behaviors can be found in the complete questionnaire in appendix B. Some research work suggests excluding the mild category as it does not provide strong health benefits (Godin, 2011). Therefore, only strenuous and moderate exercise were computed to calculate exercise behavior in this dissertation. The total score was 26.45 units, which indicates that the sample is active, and they obtain valuable health benefits from their reported exercise behavior. According to Godin (2011), 24 units or more indicate an active sample and significant benefits; 14 to 23 moderately active and some benefits are obtained; less than 14 units can be described as insufficiently active and low or poor benefits obtained.

Independent variable

Bridging ties manipulation

Bridging ties was manipulated using an Instagram post shared by a fitness Instagram influencer. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions: The fitspiration influencer vs. no influencer control condition. In the fitspiration influencer condition, they were presented with four influencers' Instagram posts promoting different products from fictitious brands: a diet plan, workout tracking app, an online workout class, and an online yoga class. Each Instagram post displayed the same message tailored for each product e.g., "30 minutes a day can make a difference, with the brand X workout tracking app/ workout class/ yoga class you can make every minute count. I've tried their workout tracking app/ workout class/ yoga class for over a month and I'm loving the results. #fitspiration #fitness #wellness." For the diet condition, the comment was tailored differently: "Small changes can make a big difference, with the X brand diet plan you can start a healthier diet. I've tried their diet plan for over a month and I'm loving the results.

#fitspiration #Healthydiet #wellness.” Before conducting the study, the influencer’s body shape was assessed to make sure it fits the fitspiration ideals. When conducting the manipulation check, two different influencers were compared to assess the body shape of the influencer (influencer 1 vs. influencer 2). A panel of judges consisting of graduate students at a major university in the United States were randomly assigned to one of the three groups (influencer 1, influencer 2, and control group). They were asked to indicate the body shape of the influencer on a six-point scale from very curvaceous (1) to very thin (6). The influencer who was perceived as thinnest, which was influencer 1, was used in the main study. Only two groups were used in the main study: the selected influencer (influencer 1) and the control group. There were no significant statistical differences between influencer 1 and influencer 2. However, the influencer selected for the final study was the one who scored as thinnest by the panel of judges. The lack of significance might be due to the small sample ($n = 43$).

Manipulation and confound checks

Influencer body shape

The manipulation check aimed to measure if the influencer represents the fitspiration ideals such as a thin body. To assess the body shape of the influencer, two different influencers were compared in all the conditions (diet plan, tracking app, workout class, yoga class). Participants were asked to rate from (1= very curvaceous to 6= to very thin) the body shape of the influencers. The means and standard deviations can be found in table 2.

Inspiration to be fit

Fitspiration content is meant to be inspirational in the health and well-being context. Tiggemann and Zaccardo's (2015) 7-point scale was used to assess if the manipulation induced inspiration to be more physically active. Participants were asked to rate from (1=not at all inspired to 7=very inspired) "how inspired did you feel when viewing the Instagram post" to 1) improve your fitness and 2) to be physically active. The means and standard deviations of all the groups (control, influencer 1, and influencer 2) in the four conditions (diet plan, tracking app, and yoga class) can be found in table 3.

Pleasant and realistic

Participants were asked to grade how pleasant and how realistic each post (diet plan, tracking app, workout class, and yoga class) was. Results indicated that all the posts were very consistent in terms of how realistic and pleasant were perceived. The mean and standard deviations of each post can be found in table 3.

Attention check

To assess if participants were answering thoroughly the survey, and the stimuli conveyed the attempted message, they were asked to answer an attention check question after exposure to the posts "What was the post about?" in the four posts: diet plan, tracking app, workout class, and yoga class. The possible answer varied across the different conditions. For the diet plan, participants could choose 1) new fashion trends; 2) a diet plan; and 3) discussion of climate change. The correct answer was option 2. Data indicated consistent results across the three conditions in the diet post: control ($M = 2, SD = 0$), influencer 1 ($M = 2, SD = 0$), and influencer 2 ($M = 2, SD = 0$). In the tracking app, the options were 1) new food trends; 2) a workout tracking app; and 3) discussion of climate change. The correct answer was option 2. Similar results were found in the tracking app

post: control ($M = 1.93$, $SD = .26$), influencer 1 ($M = 2$, $SD = 0$), and influencer 2 ($M = 2$, $SD = 0$). In the workout class post, the options were 1) new food trends; 2) an online workout class; and 3) a college degree program. The correct answer was option 2. Results of the workout condition are as follow: control ($M = 1.93$, $SD = .27$), influencer 1 ($M = 1.94$, $SD = .25$), and influencer 2 ($M = 2.08$, $SD = .28$). Regarding the yoga class post, participants could choose 1) an online yoga class; 2) the newest iPhone; 3) a college degree program. The correct answer was option 1. Data indicated consistent results among the three conditions in the yoga post: control ($M = 1$, $SD = 0$), influencer 1 ($M = 1$, $SD = 0$), and influencer 2 ($M = 1.02$, $SD = .15$).

Moderating variables

Motives for social comparison

Motivation of social comparison was adapted from Helgeson and Mickelson (1995). Both self-improvement and self-evaluation scales range from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 7 (extremely likely). Self-improvement ($M = 5.17$ $SD = 1.05$), which refers to the tendency of engaging in social comparison to seek for information or inspiration to improve a specific attribute (Martin and Gentry, 1997) was measured with a 7-point Likert scale. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they compare to others for the purpose of fulfilling the following statements: To get better; To give me a goal; To improve my own situation; To learn what to do or what not to do; Because they serve as role models. The Cronbach's Alpha was .81. Self-evaluation ($M = 5.12$ $SD = 1.22$), which refers to the tendency to assess ones' self-worth by comparing to others was measured using the following items: To see how I'm doing; To provide insight into my own situation; To see if I'm making progress fast enough. Additionally, three items from the physical appearance comparison scales (PACS) developed by Schaefer and Thompson (2014) were

included to assess appearance related self-evaluation comparison, items include: to compare my physical appearance; to compare my body size; to compare my body shape. The Cronbach's Alpha was .85.

Mediating variable

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy to exercise was adapted from Chilton's et al., (2018) 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). This construct aims to measure people's expectations regarding their ability to exercise. It includes the following items: Do exercises that are good for me; Fit exercise into my regular routine; Find ways for me to exercise that I enjoy; Find places for me to exercise in the community; Know when to quit exercising; Do stretching exercises; Keep from getting hurt when I exercise. Means and Standard deviations were calculated in all the posts: Tracking app ($M = 5.30$, $SD = .97$), workout class ($M = 5.29$, $SD = .93$), and yoga class ($M = 5.29$, $SD = .99$). The Cronbach's Alpha were as follow: tracking app $\alpha = .83$, workout class $\alpha = .81$, and yoga class $\alpha = .84$. Since this scale does not include a measure of healthy eating, a general health self-efficacy scale ($M = 4.90$, $SD = .88$) ($\alpha = .60$) developed by Jayanti et al., (1998) was used to measure self-efficacy in the diet condition. This construct aims to measure people's expectation to engage in healthy behavior that might reduce some health risks. The five item, 7-point Likert scale includes the following items: I usually make an attempt to eat a well-balanced diet; I usually make an attempt to exercise regularly; In the long-run, people who take care of themselves stay healthy; People's ill health results from their own carelessness; In general, I can do things that make me healthy.

Dependent variables

Psychological well-being

Psychological well-being was measured using one of the six components of psychological well-being proposed by Ryff (1989); self-acceptance, which is defined as individuals' positive attitudes about themselves. The 7-point scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) includes the following items: When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out; I like most aspects of my personality; In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life (-). The means and standard deviations were as follow: diet ($M = 4.57, SD = 1.53$), tracking app ($M = 4.60, SD = 1.50$), workout class ($M = 4.59, SD = 1.53$), and yoga class ($M = 4.62, SD = 1.49$). The value for Cronbach's Alpha were as follow: diet $\alpha = .86$, tracking app $\alpha = .85$, workout class $\alpha = .85$, yoga class $\alpha = .85$.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem was adapted from Rosenberg's (1965) scale, this scale is one of the most used scales in scholarly research (Tomas and Oliver, 1999). In social science, self-esteem refers to the overall affective evaluation of a person's worth (Blascovich and Tomaka, 1991). This scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). This construct includes 10 items: On the whole I am satisfied with myself; I am able to do things as well as most people; I take a positive attitude towards myself; At times I think I am no good at all (-); I feel that I do not have much to be proud of (-); I feel that I have a good number of qualities; I certainly feel useless at times (-); I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others; I wish I could have more respect for myself (-); All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure (-). The means and standard deviations were as follow: diet ($M = 4.38, SD = 1.41$), tracking app ($M = 4.36, SD = 1.41$), workout class

($M = 4.35$, $SD = 1.41$), and yoga class ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.41$). The value for Cronbach's Alpha were as follow: diet $\alpha = .94$, tracking app $\alpha = .95$, workout class $\alpha = .95$, yoga class $\alpha = .95$.

Self-image

Physical appearance self-image, defined as a person's self-concept regarding their physical appearance was adapted from Heatherton and Polivy's (1991) scale. This 7-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) includes the following items: I am pleased about my physical appearance; I am satisfied with the way that my body looks right now; I am satisfied with my weight; I am confident in my physical appearance. The mean and standard deviation were as follow: diet ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.78$), tracking app ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.77$), workout class ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.79$), and yoga class ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.78$). The value for Cronbach's Alpha were as follow: diet $\alpha = .95$, tracking app $\alpha = .95$, workout class $\alpha = .96$, yoga class $\alpha = .95$.

Chapter 7: Results Section

MANIPULATION CHECK

A t-test was computed to test which influencer’s body size (influencer 1 vs. influencer 2) was more representative of fitspiration ideals (e.g., a thinner body). Data indicated that influencer 1 was perceived as thinner than the influencer 2 in all the posts except for the diet post. However, results were not statistically significant. This might be due the small number of the sample $n= 16$ influencer 1 and $n= 13$ influencer 2. The means and standard deviation of all the Instagram posts (diet, tracking app, workout class, and yoga class) can be found in table 2. For the main study (study 1), only influencer 1 and the control group were used to test the independent variable. Influencer 2 was discarded.

Table 2: Comparison of influencer 1 and influencer 2 on their body shape ($n=16$ influencer 1 and $n=13$ influencer 2)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Diet plan			27	0.84
Influencer 1	4.38	0.89		
Influencer 2	4.46	1.39		
Tracking app			27	0.44
Influencer 1	4.44	1.21		
Influencer 2	4.08	1.26		
Workout class			27	0.42
Influencer 1	4.75	1.07		
Influencer 2	4.38	1.33		
Yoga class			27	0.42
Influencer 1	4.19	1.05		
Influencer 2	3.85	1.21		

In addition to testing the body shape of the influencers, a one way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare mean differences between the three different conditions: influencer 1, influencer 2, and control condition in regard to how pleasant and realistic the posts were perceived, and the extent in which the posts inspire participants to

be fit including all the Instagram posts: diet plan, tracking app, workout class, and yoga class. Data indicated that there were no significant differences between the three conditions (control, influencer 1, and influencer 2) in the diet post when rating how pleasant the post was [$F(2,40) = .32, p = .73$]. Data also indicated there were no significant differences among the three conditions when rating how realistic the diet post was [$F(2,40) = .21, p = .81$]. Similarly, when rating how inspired participants felt after viewing the diet post, not significant differences were found [$F(2,40) = .83, p = .44$]. In the case of the tracking app, no significant differences were found when participants rated how pleasant it was [$F(2,39) = .55, p = .58$], how realistic it was [$F(2,39) = .71, p = .50$], nor how inspirational it was [$F(2,40) = .32, p = .73$]. When comparing the workout posts, no significant differences were found in terms of how pleasant the post was [$F(2,40) = .02, p = .98$], how realistic it was [$F(2,40) = 1.94, p = .16$], nor how inspirational it was [$F(2,40) = .106, p = .62$]. In regards to the online yoga class posts, there were no significant differences when participants rated how pleasant it was [$F(2,40) = .74, p = .48$], how realistic [$F(2,40) = .03, p = .97$], nor how inspirational it was [$F(2,40) = 2.15, p = .13$]. Results indicate that all the conditions were very consistent in terms of how realistic, pleasant, and inspirational they were perceived. The means and standard deviations can be found in table 3.

Table 3: Means and standard deviations comparing the three conditions (influencer 1, influencer 2 and control group) in the diet, tracking app, workout class, and yoga class posts.

Variable	Group	Diet plan			Tracking app		
		<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
How pleasant the post was	Control	14	4.21	1.81	14	4.93	1.07
	Influencer 1	16	4.63	1.93	16	4.75	1.88
	Influencer 2	13	4.69	1.25	12	4.33	1.23
	Total	43	4.51	1.68	42	4.69	1.46
How realistic the post was	Control	14	4.29	1.49	14	4.57	1.28
	Influencer 1	16	4.00	1.83	16	4.06	2.08
	Influencer 2	13	3.92	1.19	12	3.83	1.27
	Total	43	4.07	1.52	42	4.17	1.62
How inspirational the post was	Control	14	3.00	1.61	14	4.00	1.30
	Influencer 1	16	3.09	1.59	16	3.56	1.69
	Influencer 2	13	3.69	1.30	13	3.69	1.55
	Total	43	3.24	1.51	43	3.74	1.51
		Workout class			Yoga class		
		<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
How pleasant the post was	Control	14	4.79	1.72	14	4.43	1.55
	Influencer 1	16	4.88	1.78	16	4.81	1.83
	Influencer 2	13	4.77	1.30	13	5.15	1.07
	Total	43	4.81	1.59	43	4.79	1.54
How realistic the post was	Control	14	5.07	1.07	14	4.29	1.44
	Influencer 1	16	4.25	1.65	16	4.25	1.69
	Influencer 2	13	4.15	1.21	13	4.15	1.21
	Total	43	4.49	1.39	43	4.23	1.44
How inspirational the post was	Control	14	4.21	1.05	14	3.29	1.66
	Influencer 1	16	3.72	1.66	16	3.44	1.52
	Influencer 2	13	3.77	1.62	13	4.46	1.64
	Total	43	3.90	1.46	43	3.70	1.64

STUDY 1

SPSS was used to analyze the data. A series of ANOVAs and PROCESS (Hayes, 2017) were computed to test study 1. The model proposed in this study can be represented with the conceptual diagram of a conditional process known as model 10 (see figure 1).

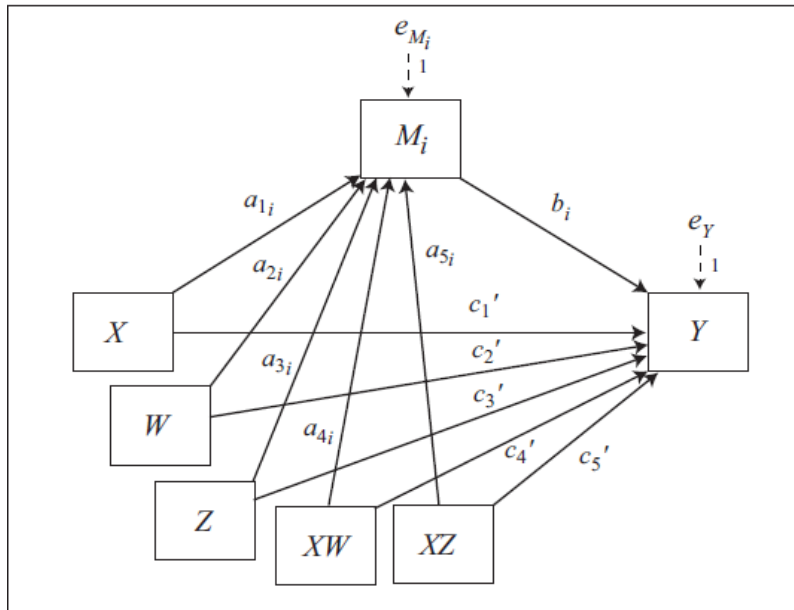
Model 10 was chosen for study 1 because it allows to test two moderating variables to explain the direct and indirect effect (through self-efficacy) of bridging ties on the dependent variables. Regression coefficients of (bridging ties x self-improvement) and (bridging ties x self-evaluation) determine how much the direct and indirect effect of bridging ties is dependent on self-improvement and self-evaluation. In other words, this model calculates the extent in which the conditional effect of bridging ties on the dependent variables changes as self-improvement changes by one unit, while self-evaluation remains constant, and it also calculates the extent in which the conditional effect of bridging ties on the dependent variables changes as self-evaluation changes by one unit, while self-improvement remains constant. The hypotheses were tested by computing the following two equations:

$$\text{Conditional indirect effect of } X \text{ on } Y \text{ through } M_i = (a1i + a4iW + a5iZ) bi$$

$$\text{Conditional direct effect of } X \text{ on } Y = c1' + c4'W + c5'Z$$

Where X is the independent variable (bridging ties), Y is the dependent variable (Psychological well-being/self-esteem/self-image), W is one of the moderating variables (self-improvement), and Z is the other moderating variable (self-evaluation). Note that PROCESS only allows to test one dependent variable at the time, therefore, the model was computed multiple times to test the model with all the three dependent variables. The statistical diagram, including the paths explaining the dependent variables can be found on figure 3.

Figure 3: Statistical diagram of study 1 (Model 10).



The hypothesized conceptual model (see figure 1) postulated that motives of social comparison (self-improvement and self-evaluation) moderate the direct and indirect (through self-efficacy) relationship between bridging ties and well-being (psychological well-being, self-esteem, and self-image). However, data did not provide any support for those moderations when predicting the mediating and dependent variables. Therefore, hypotheses H1a, H1b, H1c, and H2, were not supported. The coefficients for the process predicting psychological well-being can be found in table 4, self-esteem in table 5, and self-image in table 6. Note that the coefficients presented in table 4 to 6 indicate the paths to the mediator (M) and the dependent variables (Y). They don't quantify if the effect of the mediator on the dependent variables is conditional on the values of the moderators: self-improvement (W) and self-evaluation (Z). According to Hayes (2022), the bootstrap confidence interval at the values of the moderator indicates if the conditional mediation is significant. When zero is NOT within the interval, it can be concluded that the mediation effect is moderated by the moderators. After computing Hayes' PROCESS to test H3a,

H3b, and H3c it was determined that this path was not significant either, therefore, these hypotheses were not supported. Meaning that the effect of the mediating variable is not moderated by self-improvement nor self-evaluation. The confidence intervals for the conditional indirect effects on psychological well-being can be seen in table 7, self-esteem in table 8, and self-image in table 9. Regarding H4a, H4b and H4c, data indicated that bridging ties does not have a direct effect on psychological well-being, self-esteem, nor self-image, these hypotheses were rejected as well. Data demonstrated that bridging ties did not affect self-efficacy, consequently, H5 was not supported. Self-efficacy was found to have a significant effect on psychological well-being (H6a) in the diet post ($bi = 0.50$, $p < 0.001$) tracking app ($bi = 0.57$, $p < 0.001$), workout class ($bi = 0.60$, $p < 0.001$), and yoga class ($bi = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$). Hypothesis H6a was supported, data showed that self-efficacy had a significant effect on self-esteem (H6b) in the diet post ($bi = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$), tracking app ($bi = 0.56$, $p < 0.001$), workout class ($bi = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$), and yoga class, ($bi = 0.56$, $p < 0.001$), which provide support for H6b. Data also indicated that self-efficacy had a significant effect on self-image (H6c) in the diet post ($bi = 0.51$, $p < 0.001$), tracking app ($bi = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$), workout class ($bi = 0.57$, $p < 0.001$), and yoga class ($bi = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$).

The direct effect of self-improvement and self-evaluation were not hypothesized in the study but were found to have significant effect on self-efficacy and well-being. When examining the coefficients predicting psychological well-being (table 4), results indicated that self-improvement had a positive effect on self-efficacy in the diet post, but no effect on psychological well-being. Similar results were reported in the tracking app post; self-improvement had a positive effect on self-efficacy but no effect on psychological well-being, self-evaluation had a negative effect on self-efficacy and psychological well-being. In the workout class post, self-improvement had a positive effect on self-efficacy but no

effect on psychological well-being, self-evaluation had negative effect on self-efficacy and psychological well-being. In the yoga post, self-improvement had a positive effect on self-efficacy but no effect on psychological well-being, self-evaluation had a negative effect on psychological well-being. When looking at the coefficients predicting self-esteem (table 5), data demonstrated that self-improvement had a positive effect on self-efficacy but no effect on self-esteem in the diet post. In the tracking app post, self-improvement had an effect on self-efficacy but no effect on self-esteem, self-evaluation had a negative effect on self-efficacy and self-esteem. In the workout class post, self-improvement had a positive effect on self-efficacy and self-esteem, while self-evaluation had a negative effect on self-efficacy and self-esteem. In the yoga post, self-improvement had a positive effect on self-efficacy but no effect on self-esteem. Self-evaluation had no effect on self-efficacy but a negative effect on self-esteem. The coefficients illustrating the paths to predict self-image (table 6) show that self-improvement significantly predicts self-efficacy but not self-image. Self-evaluation did not have an effect on self-efficacy but did negatively impact self-image in the diet post. In the tracking post, self-improvement had a positive effect on self-efficacy and self-image. Self-evaluation had a negative effect on self-efficacy and self-image. In the workout class post, self-improvement had a positive effect on self-efficacy and self-image. Self-evaluation had a negative effect on self-efficacy and self-image. In the yoga class post, self-improvement had a positive effect on self-efficacy and self-image. Self-evaluation had no effect on self-efficacy but a negative effect on self-image.

Table 4: Model coefficients for the conditional process model predicting psychological well-being.

Antecedent	Self-efficacy (M)			Psychological well-being (Y)		
	Coeff.	SE	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	SE	P
Diet						
Bridging ties (X)	-0.17	0.443	0.706	0.02	0.732	0.973
Self-efficacy (M)	-	-	-	0.50	0.076	< 0.001
Self-improvement (W)	0.22	0.060	< 0.001	0.12	0.100	0.224
X x W	-0.02	0.082	0.803	0.06	0.135	0.655
Self-evaluation (Z)	-0.05	0.050	0.300	-0.32	0.083	< 0.001
X x Z	0.04	0.070	0.543	-0.07	0.115	0.532
	$R^2 = 0.061$			$R^2 = 0.159$		
	$F(5,468) = 6.093, p < .001$			$F(6,467) = 14.659, p < .001$		
Tracking App						
Bridging ties (X)	-0.66	0.487	0.179	0.16	0.703	0.817
Self-efficacy (M)	-	-	-	0.57	0.666	< .001
Self-improvement (W)	0.20	0.066	< .05	0.11	0.095	0.254
X x W	0.09	0.090	0.303	0.02	0.129	0.848
Self-evaluation (Z)	-0.12	0.055	< .05	-0.25	0.080	< .05
X x Z	0.01	0.077	0.846	-0.06	0.110	0.575
	$R^2 = 0.071$			$R^2 = 0.205$		
	$F(5,468) = 7.098, p < .001$			$F(6,467) = 20.052, p < .001$		
Workout class						
Bridging ties (X)	-0.67	0.470	0.156	0.45	0.709	0.529
Self-efficacy (M)	-	-	-	0.60	0.070	< .001
Self-improvement (W)	0.20	0.063	< .05	0.16	0.096	0.091
X x W	0.07	0.087	0.398	-0.04	0.130	0.734
Self-evaluation (Z)	-0.14	0.053	< .05	-0.32	0.081	< .001
X x Z	0.04	0.074	0.570	-0.03	0.111	0.766
	$R^2 = 0.068$			$R^2 = 0.219$		
	$F(5,468) = 6.856, p < .001$			$F(6,467) = 21.846, p < .001$		

Table 4: (continued).

Yoga class						
Bridging ties (X)	-0.75	0.500	0.134	0.47	0.690	0.499
Self-efficacy (M)	-	-	-	0.58	0.064	< .001
Self-improvement (W)	0.17	0.067	< .05	0.15	0.093	0.121
X x W	-0.12	0.092	0.177	-0.05	0.127	0.688
Self-evaluation (Z)	-0.11	0.057	0.052	-0.29	0.079	< .001
X x Z	0.02	0.079	0.849	-0.04	0.108	0.714
	$R^2 = 0.061$			$R^2 = 0.221$		
	$F(5,468) = 6.101, p < .001$			$F(6,467) = 22.079, p < .001$		

Table 5: Model coefficients for the conditional process model predicting self-esteem.

Antecedent	Self-efficacy (M)			Self-esteem (Y)		
	Coeff.	SE	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	SE	<i>p</i>
Diet						
Bridging ties (X)	-0.17	0.444	0.706	0.06	0.658	0.930
Self-efficacy (M)	-	-	-	0.42	0.069	< .001
Self-improvement (W)	0.22	0.060	< .001	0.14	0.090	0.116
X x W	-0.02	0.082	0.803	0.03	0.121	0.816
Self-evaluation (Z)	-0.05	0.050	0.298	-0.43	0.075	< .001
X x Z	0.04	0.070	0.543	-0.05	0.104	0.651
	$R^2 = 0.247$			$R^2 = 0.203$		
	$F(5,468) = 6.093, p < .001$			$F(6,467) = 19.829, p < .001$		
Tracking app						
Bridging ties (X)	-0.66	0.487	0.179	0.33	0.630	0.600
Self-efficacy (M)	-	-	-	0.56	0.060	< .001
Self-improvement (W)	0.20	0.066	< .05	0.14	0.086	0.113
X x W	0.09	0.090	0.303	-0.06	0.116	0.612
Self-evaluation (Z)	-0.12	0.055	< .05	-0.38	0.072	< .001
X x Z	0.01	0.077	0.846	-0.01	0.099	0.938
	$R^2 = 0.071$			$R^2 = 0.268$		
	$F(5,468) = 7.098, p < .001$			$F(6,467) = 28.501, p < .001$		

Table 5: (continued).

Workout class						
Bridging ties (X)	-0.67	0.470	0.156	0.35	0.631	0.584
Self-efficacy (M)	-	-	-	0.55	0.062	< .001
Self-improvement (W)	0.20	0.063	< .05	0.18	0.086	< .05
X x W	0.07	0.087	0.398	-0.07	0.116	0.538
Self-evaluation (Z)	-0.14	0.053	< .05	-0.40	0.072	< .001
X x Z	0.04	0.074	0.570	0.00	0.099	0.967
	$R^2 = 0.068$			$R^2 = 0.268$		
	$F(5,468) = 6.856, p < .001$			$F(6,467) = 28.478, p < .001$		
Yoga class						
Bridging ties (X)	-0.75	0.500	0.135	0.39	0.627	0.534
Self-efficacy (M)	-	-	-	0.56	0.058	< .001
Self-improvement (W)	0.17	0.067	< .05	0.15	0.085	0.075
X x W	0.12	0.092	0.177	-0.03	0.115	0.763
Self-evaluation (Z)	-0.11	0.057	0.523	-0.37	0.071	< .001
X x Z	0.02	0.079	0.849	-0.05	0.098	0.598
	$R^2 = 0.061$			$R^2 = 0.279$		
	$F(5,468) = 6.101, p < .001$			$F(6,467) = 30.111, p < .001$		

Table 6: Model coefficients for the conditional process model predicting self-image.

Antecedent	Self-efficacy (M)			Self-image (Y)		
	Coeff.	SE	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	SE	<i>p</i>
Diet						
Bridging ties (X)	-0.17	0.444	0.706	-0.89	0.831	0.286
Self-efficacy (M)	-	-	-	0.51	0.087	< .001
Self-improvement (W)	0.22	0.060	< .001	0.22	0.114	0.051
X x W	-0.02	0.082	0.803	0.09	0.153	0.556
Self-evaluation (Z)	-0.05	0.050	0.296	-0.61	0.095	< .001
X x Z	0.04	0.070	0.543	0.10	0.131	0.796
	$R^2 = 0.0611$			$R^2 = 0.201$		
	$F(5,468) = 6.093, p < .001$			$F(6,467) = 19.543, p < .001$		

Table: 6 (continued).

Tracking app						
Bridging ties (X)	-0.66	0.487	0.179	-0.40	0.821	0.628
Self-efficacy (M)	-	-	-	0.55	0.078	< .001
Self-improvement (W)	0.20	0.066	< .05	0.23	0.112	< .05
X x W	0.09	0.090	0.303	-0.01	0.151	0.930
Self-evaluation (Z)	-0.12	0.055	< .05	-0.53	0.094	< .001
X x Z	0.01	0.077	0.846	0.11	0.129	0.385
	$R^2 = 0.071$			$R^2 = 0.212$		
	$F(5,468) = 7.098, p < .001$			$F(6,467) = 20.922, p < .001$		
Workout class						
Bridging ties (X)	-0.67	0.470	0.156	-0.39	0.825	0.635
Self-efficacy (M)	-	-	-	0.57	0.081	< .001
Self-improvement (W)	0.20	0.063	< .05	0.28	0.112	< .05
X x W	0.07	0.087	0.398	-0.02	0.152	0.872
Self-evaluation (Z)	-0.14	0.053	< .05	-0.58	0.094	< .001
X x Z	0.04	0.074	0.570	0.12	0.130	0.353
	$R^2 = 0.068$			$R^2 = 0.229$		
	$F(5,468) = 6.856, p < .001$			$F(6,467) = 23.099, p < .001$		
Yoga class						
Bridging ties (X)	-0.75	0.500	0.135	-0.26	0.818	0.752
Self-efficacy (M)	-	-	-	0.55	0.076	< .001
Self-improvement (W)	0.17	0.067	< .05	0.27	0.111	< .05
X x W	0.12	0.092	0.177	-0.03	0.150	0.829
Self-evaluation (Z)	-0.11	0.057	0.053	-0.56	0.093	< .001
X x Z	0.02	0.079	0.849	0.09	0.128	0.477
	$R^2 = 0.061$			$R^2 = 0.229$		
	$F(5,468) = 6.101, p < .001$			$F(6,467) = 23.063, p < .001$		

Table 7: Bootstrap confidence intervals for the conditional effect of self-efficacy on psychological well-being.

Level of moderator/ conditions	Self- improvement (W)	Self- evaluation (Z)	Effect	95% Bootstrap confidence interval
Diet				
Low	4.20	3.833	-0.045	-.186 to .087
Average	5.40	3.833	-0.057	-.203 to .074
High	6.00	6.333	-0.010	-.127 to .118
Tracking app				
Low	4.20	3.833	-0.121	-.322 to .057
Average	5.40	3.833	-0.057	-.229 to .096
High	6.00	6.333	-0.004	-.148 to .152
Workout				
Low	4.20	3.833	-0.120	-.319 to .045
Average	5.40	3.833	-0.067	-.241 to .084
High	6.00	6.333	0.022	-.125 to .176
Yoga				
Low	4.20	3.833	-0.098	-.299 to .088
Average	5.40	3.833	-0.012	-.183 to .153
High	6.00	6.333	0.053	-.099 to .219

W and Z values in conditional table are at the 16th, 50th, and 84th percentiles.

Table 8: Bootstrap confidence intervals for the conditional effect of self-efficacy on self-esteem.

Level of moderator/ conditions	Self-improvement (W)	Self-evaluation (Z)	Effect	95% Bootstrap confidence interval
Diet				
Low	4.20	3.833	-0.038	-.157 to .072
Average	5.40	3.833	-0.048	-.169 to .056
High	6.00	6.333	-0.009	-.104 to .097
Tracking app				
Low	4.20	3.833	-0.118	-.308 to .058
Average	5.40	3.833	-0.056	-.217 to .096
High	6.00	6.333	-0.004	-.145 to .144
Workout				
Low	4.20	3.833	-0.111	-.283 to .043
Average	5.40	3.833	-0.062	-.213 to .081
High	6.00	6.333	0.021	-.114 to .160
Yoga				
Low	4.20	3.833	-0.095	-.289 to .084
Average	5.40	3.833	-0.012	-.175 to .143
High	6.00	6.333	0.051	-.102 to .211

W and Z values in conditional table are at the 16th, 50th, and 84th percentiles.

Table 9: Bootstrap confidence intervals for the conditional effect of self-efficacy on self-image.

Level of moderator/ conditions	Self- improvement (W)	Self- evaluation (Z)	Effect	95% Bootstrap confidence interval
Diet				
Low	4.20	3.833	-0.046	-.183 to .087
Average	5.40	3.833	-0.058	-.199 to .068
High	6.00	6.333	-0.011	-.130 to .113
Tracking app				
Low	4.20	3.833	-0.116	-.302 to .055
Average	5.40	3.833	-0.055	-.216 to .091
High	6.00	6.333	-0.004	-.149 to .142
Workout				
Low	4.20	3.833	-0.114	-.298 to .047
Average	5.40	3.833	-0.064	-.221 to .083
High	6.00	6.333	0.021	-.124 to .163
Yoga				
Low	4.20	3.833	-0.094	-.290 to .080
Average	5.40	3.833	-0.011	-.171 to .147
High	6.00	6.333	0.050	-.098 to .208

W and Z values in conditional table are at the 16th, 50th, and 84th percentiles.

Chapter 8: Study 1 Discussion Section

Study 1 aimed to address the question of how bridging ties that share fitspiration content in social media can affect females' well-being. Specifically, this study attempted to test the moderating effect of motives of social comparison on the direct and indirect (through self-efficacy) relationship between bridging ties and young females' well-being including psychological well-being, self-esteem, and self-image. Although data did not support a moderation effect of social comparison motives on self-efficacy nor young females' well-being, some interesting findings were discovered. There was no evidence of a direct effect of bridging ties on self-efficacy nor well-being. This might be due to participants not being familiar with the influencer shown in the posts. Previous research that has provided evidence of significant effects of social capital have measured it by assessing social ties individuals already possess (e.g., Steinfield et al., 2008; Brooks et al., 2014). The present study had participants exposed to an influencer they were not familiar with.

Data did not support a moderation effect of social comparison motives. Instead, data showed a direct effect on self-efficacy and well-being in some of the posts. By observing the model predicting psychological well-being (Table 4), the data reports a positive effect of self-improvement on self-efficacy. Which was expected, as individuals driven by self-improvement comparison are inclined to seek for information to learn how to improve (Martin and Gentry, 1997), they can enhance their self-efficacy. There was no evidence of a direct effect of self-improvement on psychological well-being. These findings are in line with previous research that suggests that a focus on self-improvement can reduce the negative impact of social comparison, for instance, Halliwell and Dittmar (2005) found no significant effects of self-improvement comparison on body focus anxiety. In contrast, self-evaluation negatively impacted self-efficacy and psychological well-being

in the tracking app and workout posts and affected psychological well-being in the yoga class post. When examining the paths leading to self-esteem (table 5). Data demonstrates that self-improvement had a positive effect on self-efficacy in all the posts, and a positive effect on self-esteem but only in the workout class post. Self-evaluation was found to negatively impact self-efficacy in the tracking app and workout posts, and self-esteem in the tracking app, workout class, and yoga class posts. The paths leading to self-image (table 6), indicated that self-improvement positively affect self-efficacy in all the posts and self-image in the tracking app, workout class, and yoga class posts. Self-evaluation was found to negatively influence self-efficacy in the tracking app and workout class posts, and self-image in all the posts.

Although the outcomes of motives of social comparison on well-being have been explored before (e.g., Halliwell and Dittmar, 2005; Knobloch-Westerwick and Romero, 2011), there is no evidence on how different motives of social comparison can impact self-efficacy. The results of this study contribute to the literature by showing that self-improvement is associated with perceived self-efficacy, meaning that young females who tend to engage in self-improvement comparisons are more likely to have higher perceived self-efficacy to engage in healthy behavior such as exercising. Data also indicated that self-improvement had no effect on psychological well-being, but it was found to positively affect self-esteem and self-image. Findings of the present study also illustrate the effect of self-evaluation on self-efficacy. This means that young females who have a higher drive for self-evaluation, are more likely to have a lower perceived self-efficacy to engage in healthy behaviors. These findings were also expected, as previous research has demonstrated that social comparison induced by self-evaluation can elicit feelings of inferiority (Li, 2018).

Self-efficacy was found to have important implications on well-being. Results indicate that higher self-efficacy led to enhanced psychological well-being, self-esteem, and self-image. These findings are parallel to previous research indicating that self-efficacy is a predictor of well-being. For instance, Rottmann's et al., (2010) study found that self-efficacy was associated with well-being among cancer patients. Other studies have found evidence of a mediator effect, a study identified that entrepreneurial self-efficacy mediates the relationship between access to resources and well-being, as entrepreneurs who possess critical resources during the early stages of their projects are more confident in their ability to succeed at the startup tasks, they enhance their well-being (Marshall et al., 2020).

Results of the study lead to conclude that exposure to fitspiration messages in social media shared by influencers is not as important as their drive for social comparison. When young females have a drive for self-improvement, they might mitigate the negative effect of social comparison, as it was observed in the prediction of psychological well-being where self-improvement had no significant effects. Self-improvement is associated with higher self-esteem and self-image, as data showed in some of the Instagram posts. Another important note is that self-improvement positively affects perceived self-efficacy. In contrast, when young females have a drive for self-evaluation, they reported lower self-efficacy and well-being. Self-evaluation was found to negatively impact psychological well-being, self-esteem, and self-image in some of the Instagram posts.

SECTION III: STUDY 2

Chapter 9: Method Section

SAMPLE

GPower analysis suggested that $n=394$ was a good sample size to test the model proposed in study 2. Participants were recruited using Prolific panel. After discarding the cases that did not fit the criteria, the total sample was $n=296$. The same screening criteria used in study 1 was used in this second study. The age range was 19 to 30 years old; the age mean was ($M = 24.56$, $SD = 3.25$). Further details of the sample can be found on table 10.

To assess the homogeneity of the sample, participants were asked how often they use social media in one day ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 2.20$) and often they engage in exercise behavior LTEQ = 26.08 points. The same measures used in the first study were used in study 2.

Table 10: Sample characteristics for study 2

	Percent
Gender	
Female	100
Age	
19-30	100
Education	
High school graduate, diploma, or the equivalent (for example: GED)	13.5
Some college credit, no degree	23.3
Trade/technical/vocational training	0.3
Associate degree	9.1
Bachelor's degree	40.9
Master's degree	11.8

Table: 10 (continued).

Doctorate degree	1
Income	
Less than \$20,000	40.5
\$20,000 to \$34,999	14.5
\$35,000 to \$49,999	13.2
\$50,000 to \$64,999	11.5
\$65,000 to \$79,999	9.1
\$80,000 to \$94,999	5.1
\$95,000 and over	6.1
Ethnic group	
White	63.5
Hispanic	10.1
Asian	13.5
Other	12.9

STUDY PROCEDURES

Participants were given a Qualtrics survey link to be filled out. They were instructed that only young females from 19 to 30 years old qualify to participate in the study. Then, they were instructed to answer the survey questions. The order of the questions was randomized to avoid order effect.

MEASURES

Frequency of social media use

Frequency of social media use ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 2.20$) was measured with the same measure used in study 1.

Exercise behavior

The samples' exercise behavior was assessed with the same measure used in study 1. The LTEQ = 26.08 points, which indicates that sample is substantially active.

Independent variable

Bridging ties

Bridging ties ($M = 5.15$ $SD = 0.87$) was adapted from Williams' (2006) 10 items scale. This 7-point Likert scale includes the following items: Interacting with people online makes me interested in things that happen outside of my town; Interacting with people online makes me want to try new things; Interacting with people online makes me interested in what people unlike me are thinking; Talking with people online makes me curious about other places in the world; Interacting with people online makes me feel like part of a larger community; Interacting with people online makes me feel connected to the bigger picture; Interacting with people online reminds me that everyone in the world is connected; I am willing to spend time supporting general online community activities; Interacting with people online gives me new people to talk to; Online, I come in contact with new people all the time. Additionally, four items related to access to fitness information were added: By interacting with people online I can access information on how to be more fit; By interacting with people online I can access information on how to improve my physical appearance; By interacting with people online I can access information on healthy eating; By interacting with people online I can access information on the latest fitness trends. Based on this sample bridging ties had acceptable reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .88).

Thin-ideals internalization (moderator in model a, IV in model b)

The thin-ideals internalization ($M = 4.32$ $SD = 1.36$) was measured using Heinberg's et al., (1995) attitudes toward appearance questionnaire (SATAQ). The internalization process of thin ideals can be described as the adoption of thin ideals and its respective values as guiding principles (Thompson et al., 2004). This 7-point Likert scale

includes the following items: Women who appear in TV shows and movies project the type of appearance that I see as my goal; I believe that clothes look better in thin models; Music videos that show thin women make me wish that I were thin; I do not wish to look like the models in the magazines (-); I tend to compare my body to people in magazines and on TV; Photographs of thin women make me wish that I were thin; I wish I looked like a swimsuit model; I often read magazines like Cosmopolitan, Vogue, and Glamour and compare my appearance to the models. Additionally, two items in relation to social media were added: I often compare my appearance to the influencers I see on social media; I often compare my appearance to the celebrities I see on social media. The reliability was acceptable (Cronbach's alpha= .93).

Moderating variables

Motives for social comparison

The same scales used to measure self-improvement ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 1.12$) and self-evaluation ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 1.18$) used in study 1 were implemented in this study. The motives for social comparison had acceptable reliability: self-improvement (Cronbach's alpha= .83) and self-evaluation (Cronbach's alpha= .85).

Dependent variables

The same scales of study 1 were used to measure psychological well-being ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 1.43$), self-esteem ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 1.25$) and self-image ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.69$). The scales had acceptable reliability Cronbach's alpha= .81, Cronbach's alpha= .93, and Cronbach's alpha= .95 respectively.

Chapter 10: Results Section

Hayes' model 1 was computed to test hypotheses H1a to H2c. The regression model did not provide support for a moderation effect of thin-ideals internalization when predicting psychological well-being [$R^2 = 0.052$, $F(3,292) = 5.335$, $p < .01$], $b_3 = 0.026$, $p = 0.702$, self-esteem [$R^2 = 0.137$, $F(3,292) = 15.420$, $p < .001$], $b_3 = 0.047$, $p = 0.404$, nor self-image [$R^2 = 0.152$, $F(3,292) = 17.402$, $p < .001$], $b_3 = 0.090$, $p = 0.228$. H1a to H1c were not supported. Regarding hypotheses H2a to H2c, data did not provide support for a direct effect of bridging ties on psychological well-being ($b_1 = 0.248$, $p = 0.399$), self-esteem ($b_1 = 0.180$, $p = 0.466$), nor self-image ($b_1 = -0.141$, $p = 0.667$). As a result, hypotheses H2a to H2c were not supported. Within this model only thin-ideals internalization had a significant effect on self-image $b_2 = -0.944$, $p < .05$.

Hayes' model 2 was computed to test hypotheses H3a to H4c. The regression model did not support the moderation effect of self-improvement nor self-evaluation when predicting psychological well-being [$R^2 = 0.037$, $F(5,290) = 2.253$], $p < .05$; moderation effect of self-improvement ($b_4 = -0.069$, $p = 0.190$); moderation effect of self-evaluation ($b_5 = 0.019$, $p = 0.718$). Similar results were observed when predicting self-esteem [$R^2 = 0.117$, $F(5,290) = 7.710$, $p < .001$]; moderation effect of self-improvement ($b_4 = -0.066$, $p = 0.134$); moderation effect of self-evaluation ($b_5 = 0.032$, $p = 0.484$). Data suggests that the moderations predicting self-image were not significant either [$R^2 = 0.170$, $F(5,290) = 11.869$, $p < .001$]; moderation effect of self-improvement ($b_4 = -0.003$, $p = 0.954$); moderation effect of self-evaluation ($b_5 = -0.046$, $p = 0.451$). Therefore, Hypotheses H3a to H3c were not supported. Regarding the direct effect of thin-ideals internalization, there was no significant direct effect on psychological well-being ($b_1 = 0.239$, $p = 0.373$), self-esteem ($b_1 = -0.013$, $p = 0.953$), nor self-image ($b_1 = -0.118$, $p = 0.689$). Consequently, Hypotheses H4a to H4c were not supported. When computing model 2, self-improvement

had a positive effect on psychological well-being ($b_2 = 0.474, p < .05$) and self-esteem ($b_2 = 0.507, p < .05$).

Chapter 11: Study 2 Discussion Section

Study 2 aimed to test the moderation effect of thin-ideals internalization in the relationship between bridging ties and well-being. Additionally, the second study attempted to illustrate the moderation effect of self-improvement and self-evaluation in the relationship between thin-ideals internalization and the different measures of well-being. Results of the second study did not provide support for the moderation effect of thin-ideals internalization when predicting psychological well-being, self-esteem, nor self-image. When computing the model, there was no support for a direct effect of bridging ties on psychological well-being, self-esteem, nor self-image. Although no support was found for a direct effect of bridging ties within the model proposed in study 2, this relationship shouldn't be discarded. These results might be due to the small size of the sample. The effect of bridging ties was also tested with Hays's (2022) model 4 (using self-improvement as a mediator), and different results were found. Within model 4, bridging ties were found to directly impact psychological well-being $c' = .31, p < .05$ and self-esteem $c' = .28, p < .05$. Within this path, bridging ties were found to directly impact self-improvement $ai = .31, p < .001$. These results indicate that interacting with bridging ties on social media is associated with enhanced psychological well-being and self-esteem, at the same time, bridging ties might provide females opportunities for self-improvement comparison.

While the moderation of thin ideals internalization was not supported, data indicates that there is a direct impact of thin-ideals internalization on self-image, these findings are aligned with previous studies that have found similar outcomes (e.g., Ura and Preston, 2015). However, no effect was found on psychological well-being and self-esteem. These results yielded to conclude that young females who have higher internalization of thin ideals tend to have lower self-image. When testing the moderation role of motives of social comparison, no support was found for the moderation effect.

Instead, self-improvement was found to directly impact psychological well-being, self-esteem, but no effect on self-image was found. These findings confirm that self-improvement have important implications on young females' well-being. Meaning that young females who compare to others for the purpose of improving certain attributes, might enhance their psychological well-being and self-esteem by doing so.

SECTION IV: GENERAL DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Chapter 12: General Discussion

The present research work contributes to the growing literature of social media and its impact on young females' well-being within the framework of social capital and social comparison theories. The analyses of study 1 and 2 propose a structural approach to understand and operationalize bridging ties. When bridging ties was manipulated in study 1, no significant effects were found when predicting the different measures of well-being. Study 1 manipulated bridging ties using a fitness influencer sharing information about a diet plan and other fitness digital products. This can be cataloged as the outcome approach, where social capital is measured based on the outcomes obtained from social ties (Williams, 2006). The problem with this approach is that it can be assumed that a source of information is a bridging tie, which is not true: bridging ties can provide information, but a source of information is not necessarily a bridging tie. By no means do I suggest that an influencer cannot be a bridging tie; an influencer can be a bridging tie, but they must be perceived as such by the individual. This dissertation argues that a more appropriate operationalization of social capital should include both the resource and the outcome. One of the pioneered definitions of social capital describes it as "The profits which accrue from membership in a group are the basis of the solidarity which makes them possible" (Bourdieu, 1986, p 249). This approach recognizes that benefits obtained from social capital are a result of participating in social groups. Social ties are not given or assigned; they are constructed by investing in relationships (Bourdieu, 1986). This dissertation argues that a more appropriate conceptual and operational definition of social capital should include both the resource and the outcome. Some studies have measured social capital from a resource approach (e.g., Beaudoin, 2011), this approach can be measured

based on the similarity of individuals' socioeconomic characteristics (e.g., ethnic group). The issue with this operationalization is that lacks key theoretical elements of social capital such as emotional support and accessibility of information (Williams, 2006). Similarly, if the measure only accounts for the outcomes of social capital such as information, the resources or investment in those resources would be neglected. The measure of bridging ties used in study 2 includes both the resources and the benefits obtained from those resources as it measures how interacting with bridging ties gives them access to information. This measure accounts for the resource or investment (interacting with bridging ties) and the outcome (information obtained). In conclusion, when defining or operationalizing social capital, the resource and the return should not be separated. A complete operationalization of social capital should clearly measure how interaction or investment in those social ties allows them to obtain the expected outcome, such as information.

Another important finding remains a contribution within the fitspiration context. The data analysis of study 1 demonstrates that exposure to thin and toned bodies alone does not affect young females' well-being. These findings contrast previous findings that have associated fitspiration content with body dissatisfaction, and lower affect (Griffiths and Stefanovski, 2019). Moreover, data demonstrated that self-improvement and self-evaluation directly affect well-being and self-efficacy. Particularly, self-improvement had a direct positive effect on self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-image. These findings suggest that young females can enhance their perceived self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-image by engaging in self-improvement comparisons. Conversely, self-evaluation negatively impacts self-efficacy, psychological well-being, self-esteem, and self-image. These findings are consistent with previous studies that have found negative effects related to self-evaluation comparison such as of envy (Chae, 2018), depression (Lup et al., 2015),

sadness (Rosenthal-von der Pütten, et al., 2019), lower self-esteem (Vogel, et al., 2015), and body dissatisfaction (Fardouly and Vartanian, 2015). These results show that different motives of social comparison can lead to different outcomes: self-improvement is related to higher self-efficacy and well-being, but self-evaluation is associated with lower perceived self-efficacy and well-being.

Study 2 demonstrated that social media interaction with bridging ties can be very beneficial for young females, as bridging ties positively affect psychological well-being and self-esteem. These results suggest that young females can enhance their well-being by accessing information on how to improve their fitness and physical appearance by interacting with bridging ties.

Chapter 13: Limitations and Future Research

Study 1 did not find support for a significant effect of bridging ties on the different measures of well-being, these findings might be due to the lack of interaction with those bridging ties as participants were not familiar with the influencer shown in the Instagram posts. Future research should measure the interaction component by selecting an existing influencer and recruit some of the followers or create an influencer page on Instagram or other social media page and have participants follow the influencer for a specific period of time (E.g., a month), this could be a good operationalization of social capital as it covers both the resource (interaction with bridging ties) and the outcome (access to information provided by the influencer). Moreover, study 1 did not find support for the moderation effect of motives of social comparison (self-improvement vs. self-evaluation) in the relationship between bridging ties and the different measures of well-being. Future research should manipulate motives of social comparison to tests if prompting participants to compare to the influencer would arouse a different result. Further, some scholars (e.g., Chan et al., 2020) argue that a manipulated independent variable (X) can only account for causal effect on the mediator (M) and dependent variable (Y), these paths should look like this: $X \rightarrow M$ and $X \rightarrow Y$. When the mediator is measured instead of manipulated, one cannot neglect the possibility that another variable confounds the effect of the mediator on the dependent variable, or the $M \rightarrow Y$ path. Future research should test the mediation effect of self-efficacy on well-being by manipulating self-efficacy. Furthermore, the model proposed in study 2b did not provide evidence of a direct effect of bridging ties on well-being. However, this relationship shouldn't be discarded as these results might be due to the sample size. When using a different model (e.g., model 4), there was evidence of a direct effect on well-being. Study 2 was tested using a sample size smaller than the one

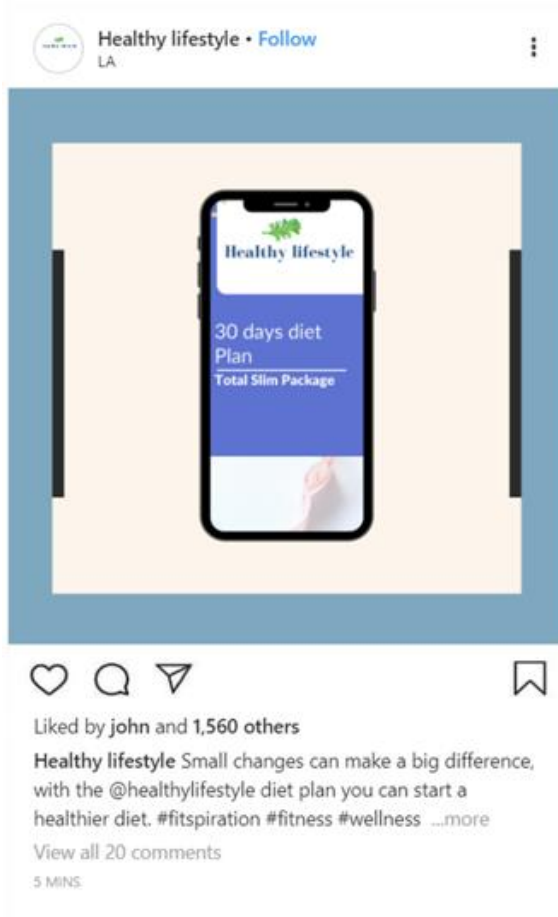
suggested by the GPower analysis. Future research could test the same model with a larger sample.

Future research could expand the understanding of the impact of social media on well-being by using a more diverse sample such as adolescents and young females. Further, research should test the differences between Millennials and Gen Z. Research has identified that Gen Zs and Millennials believe that social media use has a negative impact on their psychological well-being (Mintel, 2022), however, there is no empirical research that test the differences that these two generations could have in terms of the effects of social media use on their well-being. Both Gen Zs and Millennials recognize the negative impact of social media on their wellness but that does not keep them from using social media, as they appreciate the entertainment and updates they provide access to (Mintel, 2022). More research is needed to understand how these generations that represent different lifecycles (e.g., adolescence, young adulthood, and adulthood) are being affected by their social media consumption. Additionally, future research could broaden the understanding of social media effects by addressing differences between fitspiration and body positivity, these two movements are relatively new, but quickly gaining attention on social media. Both movements have been praised and criticized. For instance, fitspiration content has been applauded for content inspiring females to live a healthier lifestyle but criticized for objectifying the female body (Lupton, 2017). The same phenomenon is observed with body positivity, due to the increase of popularity in social media, the message conveyed might deviate from its initial objective which is to promote acceptance of all types of bodies, and concentrate on appearance-focused content (Cohen et al., 2019). More research is needed to provide insights regarding the impact of these types of content on consumers' well-being.

Appendix A

STIMULI USED IN STUDY 1

Control diet and tracking app posts



Control workout and yoga posts

Jump & Sweat • Follow
LA



The smartphone screen displays the Jump & Sweat logo at the top, followed by the text "JUMP & SWEAT" and "WORKOUT APPROPRIATE" below it. The background of the screen is a light blue and green gradient.

Like Comment Share Bookmark

Liked by john and 1,560 others

Jump & Sweat 30 minutes a day can make a difference, with the @jump&sweat workout class you can make every minute count. #fitspiration #fitness #wellness ...more

View all 20 comments

5 MINS

Mind & body • Follow
LA



The smartphone screen displays the Mind & Body logo at the top, followed by the text "ONLINE YOGA CLASS" below it. The background of the screen is white with blue diagonal stripes.

Like Comment Share Bookmark

Liked by john and 1,560 others


Mind & body 30 minutes a day can make a difference, with the @mind&body yoga class you can make every minute count. #fitspiration #fitness #wellness ...more

View all 20 comments

5 MINS

Influencer 1 diet and tracking app posts

Priscila Jones • Follow
LA



Liked by john and 1,560 others

Priscila Jones Small changes can make a big difference, with the @healthylifestyle diet plan you can start a healthier diet. I've tried their diet plan for over a month and I'm loving the results. #fitspiration #healthydiet #wellness ...more

View all 20 comments
5 MINS

Priscila Jones • Follow
LA



Liked by john and 1,560 others

Priscila Jones 30 minutes a day can make a difference, with the @body&wellness workout-tracking app you can make every minute count. I've tried their tracking app for over a month and I'm loving the results. #fitspiration #fitness #wellness ...more

View all 20 comments
5 MINS

Influencer 1 workout and yoga posts

Priscila Jones • Follow
LA



Liked by john and 1,560 others

Priscila Jones 30 minutes a day can make a difference, with the @jump&sweat workout class you can make every minute count. I've tried their workout class for over a month and I'm loving the results. #fitspiration #fitness #wellness ...more

View all 20 comments

5 MINS

Priscila Jones • Follow
LA



Liked by john and 1,560 others

Priscila Jones 30 minutes a day can make a difference, with the @mind&body yoga class you can make every minute count. I've tried their class for over a month and I'm loving the results. #fitspiration #fitness #wellness ... more

View all 20 comments

5 MINS

Influencer 2 diet and tracking app posts

Emma Jones • Follow
LA



Liked by john and 1,560 others

Emma Jones Small changes can make a big difference, with the @healthylifestyle diet plan you can start a healthier diet. I've tried their diet plan for over a month and I'm loving the results. #fitspiration #healthydiet #wellness ...more

View all 20 comments

5 MINS

Emma Jones • Follow
LA



Liked by john and 1,560 others

Emma Jones 30 minutes a day can make a difference, with the @body&wellness workout-tracking app you can make every minute count. I've tried their tracking app for over a month and I'm loving the results. #fitspiration #fitness #wellness ...more

View all 20 comments

5 MINS

Influencer 2 workout and yoga posts

 Emma Jones • Follow
LA



Like Comment Share

Liked by john and 1,560 others

Emma Jones 30 minutes a day can make a difference, with the @jump&sweat workout class you can make every minute count. I've tried their workout class for over a month and I'm loving the results. #fitspiration #fitness #wellness ...more

View all 20 comments

5 MINS

 Emma Jones • Follow
LA



Like Comment Share

Liked by john and 1,560 others

Emma Jones 30 minutes a day can make a difference, with the @mind&body yoga class you can make every minute count. I've tried their class for over a month and I'm loving the results. #fitspiration #fitness #wellness ...more

View all 20 comments

5 MINS

Appendix B

COMPLETE QUESTIONNAIRES

Attention checks

The Magna Carta was created in 1215. What year was the Magna Carta created in?

- a. 1215
- b. 1315
- c. 1415

The quality of our data and results is important. Do you promise to thoughtfully read the questions and provide your best answers?

Yes, I promise to provide my best answers.

No, I cannot promise to provide my best answers.

I'm not sure.

Study 1

1. What is your age?
2. Gender
Female ___ Male ___ Nonbinary ___ Other ___
If other than female, end of survey.
3. Indicate the extent to which you compare to others for the purpose of fulfilling the following goals. Rate your response on a scale from 1 – 7, with 1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree.
 - a. To get better.
 - b. To give me a goal.
 - c. To improve my own situation.
 - d. To learn what to do or what not to do.
 - e. Because they serve as role models.
4. Indicate the extent to which you compare to others for the purpose of fulfilling the following goals. Rate your response on a scale from 1 – 7, with 1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree
 - a. To see how I'm doing.
 - b. To provide insight into my own situation.
 - c. To see if I'm making progress fast enough.
 - d. To compare my physical appearance.
 - e. To compare my body size.
 - f. To compare my body shape.
5. During a typical 7-day period (a week), how many times on average do you do the following kinds of exercise for more than 15 minutes during your free time?
Strenuous exercise
(Heart beats rapidly)

(e.g., running, jogging, hockey, football, soccer, squash, basketball, cross country skiing, judo, roller skating, vigorous swimming, vigorous distance bicycling)

Moderate exercise

(Not exhausting)

(e.g., fast walking, baseball, tennis, easy bicycling, volleyball, badminton, easy swimming, alpine skiing, popular dancing)

Mild exercise

(Minimal effort)

(e.g., yoga, archery, fishing from riverbank, bowling, horseshoeing, golf without using a cart, easy walking)

6. Instructions: You will view 4 Instagram posts shared by an influencer/fitness brand. After looking at each post, you will need to answer a series of questions. Please make sure to observe the post and read the comments carefully.
[They will be randomly assigned to one of the two groups: bridging ties or control group]
7. Rate your response on a scale from 1 – 7, with 1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree the following statements regarding your capability to engage in a healthy behavior such as exercising to achieve your fitness goals. “I am confident I can...”
 - Do exercises that are good for me.
 - Fit exercise into my regular routine.
 - Find ways for me to exercise that I enjoy.
 - Find places for me to exercise in the community.
 - Know when to quit exercising.
 - Do stretching exercises.
 - Keep from getting hurt when I exercise.

<scale used in the Diet post>

 - I usually make an attempt to eat a well-balanced diet.
 - I usually make an attempt to exercise regularly.
 - In the long-run, people who take care of themselves stay healthy.
 - People’s ill health results from their own carelessness.
 - In general, I can do things that make me healthy.
8. Rate from 1 being strongly disagree to 7 being strongly agree the following statements.
 - When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out.
 - I like most aspects of my personality.
 - In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life.
9. Rate from 1 being strongly disagree to 7 being strongly agree the following statements.
 - On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
 - I am able to do things as well as most people.

I take a positive attitude towards myself.
At times I think I am no good at all.
I feel that I do not have much to be proud of.
I feel that I have a good number of qualities.
I certainly feel useless at times.
I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
I wish I could have more respect for myself.
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

10. Rate from 1 being strongly disagree to 7 being strongly agree the following statements.

I am pleased about my physical appearance.
I am satisfied with the way that my body looks right now.
I am satisfied with my weight.
I am confident in my physical appearance.

11. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.

Some high school, no diploma
High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
Some college credit, no degree
Trade/technical/vocational training
Associate degree
Bachelor's degree
Master's degree
Doctorate degree

12. What is your gross annual income?

Less than \$20,000
\$20,000 to \$34,999
\$35,000 to \$49,999
\$50,000 to \$74,999
\$75,000 to \$99,999
Over \$100,000

13. Which category best describes you?

White (Eg: German, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, French, etc)
Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin (Eg: Mexican or Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadoran, Dominican, Colombian, etc)
Black or African American (Eg: African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somalian, etc)
Asian (Eg: Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, etc)
American Indian or Alaska Native (Eg: Navajo nation, Blackfeet tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village or Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc)

Middle Eastern or North African (Eg: Lebanese, Iranian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian, etc)

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Eg: Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Tongan, Fijian, etc)

Some other race, ethnicity or origin

Study 2

1. Gender

Female ___ Male ___ Nonbinary ___ Other ___

If other than female, end of survey.

2. Indicate the extent to which you compare to others for the purpose of fulfilling the following goals. Rate your response on a scale from 1 – 7, with 1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree.

- To get better.
- To give me a goal.
- To improve my own situation.
- To learn what to do or what not to do.
- Because they serve as role models.

3. Indicate the extent to which you compare to others for the purpose of fulfilling the following goals. Rate your response on a scale from 1 – 7, with 1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree.

- To see how I'm doing.
- To provide insight into my own situation.
- To see if I'm making progress fast enough.
- To compare my physical appearance.
- To compare my body size.
- To compare my body shape.

4. During a typical 7-day period (a week), how many times on average do you do the following kinds of exercise for more than 15 minutes during your free time?

Strenuous exercise

(Heart beats rapidly)

(e.g., running, jogging, hockey, football, soccer, squash, basketball, cross country skiing, judo, roller skating, vigorous swimming, vigorous distance bicycling)

Moderate exercise

(Not exhausting)

(e.g., fast walking, baseball, tennis, easy bicycling, volleyball, badminton, easy swimming, alpine skiing, popular dancing)

Mild exercise

(Minimal effort)

(e.g., yoga, archery, fishing from riverbank, bowling, horseshoeing, golf without using a cart, easy walking)

5. Rate from 1 being strongly disagree to 7 being strongly agree the following statements.
 - a) Interacting with people online makes me interested in things that happen outside of my town.
 - b) Interacting with people online makes me want to try new things.
 - c) Interacting with people online makes me interested in what people unlike me are thinking.
 - d) Talking with people online makes me curious about other places in the world.
 - e) Interacting with people online makes me feel like part of a larger community.
 - f) Interacting with people online makes me feel connected to the bigger picture.
 - g) Interacting with people online reminds me that everyone in the world is connected.
 - h) I am willing to spend time supporting general online community activities.
 - i) Interacting with people online gives me new people to talk to.
 - j) Online, I come in contact with new people all the time.
 - k) By interacting with people online I can access information on how to be more fit.
 - l) By interacting with people online I can access information on how to improve my physical appearance.
 - m) By interacting with people online I can access information on healthy eating.
 - n) By interacting with people online I can access information on the latest fitness trends.
6. Rate from 1 being strongly disagree and 7 strongly agree the following statements.
 - a) Women who appear in TV shows and movies project the type of appearance that I see as my goal.
 - b) I believe that clothes look better on thin models.
 - c) Music videos that show thin women make me wish that I were thin.
 - d) I do not wish to look like the models in the magazines.
 - e) I tend to compare my body to people in magazines and on TV.
 - f) Photographs of thin women make me wish that I were thin.
 - g) I wish I looked like a swimsuit model.
 - h) I often read magazines like Cosmopolitan, Vogue, and Glamour and compare my appearance to the models.
 - i) I often compare my appearance to the influencers I see on social media.
 - j) I often compare my appearance to the celebrities I see on social media.
7. Rate from 1 being strongly disagree to 7 being strongly agree the following statements.

- a. When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out.
 - b. I like most aspects of my personality.
 - c. In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life.
8. Rate from 1 being strongly disagree to 7 being strongly agree the following statements.
- a. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
 - b. I am able to do things as well as most people.
 - c. I take a positive attitude towards myself.
 - d. At times I think I am no good at all.
 - e. I feel that I do not have much to be proud of.
9. Rate from 1 being strongly disagree to 7 being strongly agree the following statements.
- a. I am pleased about my appearance.
 - b. I am satisfied with the way that my body looks right now.
 - c. I am satisfied with my weight.
 - d. I am confident in my physical appearance.
10. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.
- a. No schooling completed
 - b. Some high school, no diploma
 - c. High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
 - d. Some college credit, no degree
 - e. Trade/technical/vocational training
 - f. Associate degree
 - g. Bachelor's degree
 - h. Master's degree
 - i. Doctorate degree

References

- Åberg, E., Koivula, A., & Kukkonen, I. (2020). A feminine burden of perfection? Appearance-related pressures on social networking sites. *Telematics and Informatics*, *46*, 101319.
- Apaolaza, V., Hartmann, P., Medina, E., Barrutia, J. M., & Echebarria, C. (2013). The relationship between socializing on the Spanish online networking site Tuenti and teenagers' subjective wellbeing: The roles of self-esteem and loneliness. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *29*(4), 1282-1289.
- Appel, M., Marker, C., & Gnambs, T. (2020). Are social media ruining our lives? A review of meta-analytic evidence. *Review of General Psychology*, *24*(1), 60-74.
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological review*, *84*(2), 191.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A., & Adams, N. E. (1977). Analysis of self-efficacy theory of behavioral change. *Cognitive therapy and research*, *1*(4), 287-310.
- Bandura, A., & Wessels, S. (1994). Self-efficacy (Vol. 4, pp. 71-81). NA.
- Bauman, A. E., Reis, R. S., Sallis, J. F., Wells, J. C., Loos, R. J., Martin, B. W., & Lancet Physical Activity Series Working Group. (2012). Correlates of physical activity: why are some people physically active and others not?. *The lancet*, *380*(9838), 258-271.
- Beaudoin, C. E. (2011). News Effects on Bonding and Bridging Social Capital: An Empirical Study Relevant to Ethnicity in the United States. *Communication Research*, *38*(2), 155–178. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650210381598>
- Berryman, C., Ferguson, C. J., & Negy, C. (2018). Social media use and mental health among young adults. *Psychiatric quarterly*, *89*(2), 307-314.
- Blachnio, A., Przepiorka, A., & Pantic, I. (2016). Association between Facebook addiction, self-esteem and life satisfaction: A cross-sectional study. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *55*, 701-705.
- Blascovich J., & Tomaka J., (1991). Measures of self-esteem. In Shaver, P. R., Wrightsman, L. S., Andrews, F. M., Robinson, J. P., & Andrews (Eds.), *Measures of personality and social psychological attitudes* (pp 115-155)
- Boepple, L., & Thompson, J. K. (2016). A content analytic comparison of fitspiration and thinspiration websites. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, *49*(1), 98-101.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*: 241–258. The forms of capital. *New York: Greenwood*.
- Brooks, B., Hogan, B., Ellison, N., Lampe, C., & Vitak, J. (2014). Assessing structural correlates to social capital in Facebook ego networks. *Social Networks*, *38*, 1-15.
- Cao, Q., Lu, Y., Dong, D., Tang, Z., & Li, Y. (2013). The roles of bridging and bonding in social media communities. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, *64*(8), 1671-1681.
- Carrotte, E. R., Prichard, I., & Lim, M. S. C. (2017). “Fitspiration” on social media: A

- content analysis of gendered images. *Journal of medical Internet research*, 19(3), e6368.
- Chae, J. (2018). Explaining females' envy toward social media influencers. *Media Psychology*, 21(2), 246-262.
- Chan, M., Hu, P., & KF Mak, M. (2020). Mediation analysis and warranted inferences in media and communication research: Examining research design in communication journals from 1996 to 2017. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 1077699020961519.
- Chilton, J. M., Gosselin, K. P., & Haas, B. K. (2018). Development of the Self-Rated Abilities for Health Practices—Adolescent Version: A Self-Efficacy Measure. *Journal of Nursing Measurement*, 26(1), 134-141.
- Chou, T. C., Chen, J. R., & Pan, S. L. (2006). The impacts of social capital on information technology outsourcing decisions: A case study of a Taiwanese high-tech firm. *International Journal of Information Management*, 26(3), 249-256.
- Chou, H. T. G., & Edge, N. (2012). "They are happier and having better lives than I am": The impact of using Facebook on perceptions of others' lives. *Cyberpsychology, behavior, and social networking*, 15(2), 117-121.
- Chua, T. H. H., & Chang, L. (2016). Follow me and like my beautiful selfies: Singapore teenage girls' engagement in self-presentation and peer comparison on social media. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 55, 190-197.
- Clipson, T. W., Wilson, S. A., & DuFrene, D. D. (2012). The social networking arena: Battle of the sexes. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 75(1), 64-67.
- Cohen, R., & Blaszczynski, A. (2015). Comparative effects of Facebook and conventional media on body image dissatisfaction. *Journal of eating disorders*, 3(1), 1-11.
- Cohen, R., Irwin, L., Newton-John, T., & Slater, A. (2019). # bodypositivity: A content analysis of body positive accounts on Instagram. *Body image*, 29, 47-57.
- Cohen, R., Newton-John, T., & Slater, A. (2017). The relationship between Facebook and Instagram appearance-focused activities and body image concerns in young women. *Body image*, 23, 183-187.
- Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American journal of sociology*, 94, S95-S120.
- Collins, R. L. (1996). For better or worse: The impact of upward social comparison on self-evaluations. *Psychological bulletin*, 119(1), 51.
- Corning, A. F., & Gondoli, D. M. (2012). Who is most likely to fat talk? A social comparison perspective. *Body Image*, 9(4), 528-531.
- Cramer, E. M., Song, H., & Drent, A. M. (2016). Social comparison on Facebook: Motivation, affective consequences, self-esteem, and Facebook fatigue. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 64, 739-746.
- De Caroli, M. E., & Sagone, E. (2014). Generalized self-efficacy and well-being in adolescents with high vs. low scholastic self-efficacy. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 141, 867-874.
- Deighton-Smith, N., & Bell, B. T. (2018). Objectifying fitness: A content and

- thematic analysis of# fitspiration images on social media. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 7(4), 467.
- Dijkstra, P., Kuyper, H., Van der Werf, G., Buunk, A. P., & van der Zee, Y. G. (2008). Social comparison in the classroom: A review. *Review of educational research*, 78(4), 828-879.
- Dittmar, H., & Howard, S. (2004). Thin-ideal internalization and social comparison tendency as moderators of media models' impact on women's body-focused anxiety. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23(6), 768-791.
- Donath, J., & Boyd, D. (2004). Public displays of connection. *BT technology Journal*, 22(4), 71-82.
- Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook "friends:" Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of computer-mediated communication*, 12(4), 1143-1168.
- Ellison, N. B., Vitak, J., Gray, R., & Lampe, C. (2014). Cultivating social resources on social network sites: Facebook relationship maintenance behaviors and their role in social capital processes. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 19(4), 855-870.
- Esnaola, I., Rodríguez, A., & Goñi, A. (2010). Body dissatisfaction and perceived sociocultural pressures: Gender and age differences. *Salud mental*, 33(1), 21-29.
- Fardouly, J., & Vartanian, L. R. (2015). Negative comparisons about one's appearance mediate the relationship between Facebook usage and body image concerns. *Body image*, 12, 82-88.
- Fardouly, J., Willburger, B. K., & Vartanian, L. R. (2018). Instagram use and young women's body image concerns and self-objectification: Testing mediational pathways. *New media & society*, 20(4), 1380-1395.
- Ferguson, C. J., Muñoz, M. E., Garza, A., & Galindo, M. (2014). Concurrent and prospective analyses of peer, television and social media influences on body dissatisfaction, eating disorder symptoms and life satisfaction in adolescent girls. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 43(1), 1-14.
- Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human relations*, 7(2), 117-140.
- Festinger, L. (1957). Social comparison theory. *Selective Exposure Theory*, 16.
- Fitzsimmons-Craft, E. E., Bardone-Cone, A. M., Crosby, R. D., Engel, S. G., Wonderlich, S. A., & Bulik, C. M. (2016). Mediators of the relationship between thin-ideal internalization and body dissatisfaction in the natural environment. *Body Image*, 18, 113-122.
- Frison, E., & Eggermont, S. (2017). Browsing, posting, and liking on Instagram: The reciprocal relationships between different types of Instagram use and adolescents' depressed mood. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 20(10), 603-609.
- Foley, M. W., & Edwards, B. (1997). Editors' introduction: Escape from politics? Social theory and the social capital debate. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 40(5), 550-561.
- Gerber, J. P., Wheeler, L., & Suls, J. (2018). A social comparison theory meta-analysis

- 60+ years on. *Psychological bulletin*, 144(2), 177.
- Ghaznavi, J., & Taylor, L. D. (2015). Bones, body parts, and sex appeal: An analysis of# thinspiration images on popular social media. *Body image*, 14, 54-61.
- Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American journal of sociology*, 78(6), 1360-1380.
- Granovetter (1983): The strength of weak ties: A network theory revisited. In *Schlüsselwerke der Netzwerkforschung* (pp. 243-246). Springer VS, Wiesbaden.
- Grieve, R., Indian, M., Witteveen, K., Tolan, G. A., & Marrington, J. (2013). Face-to-face or Facebook: Can social connectedness be derived online?. *Computers in human behavior*, 29(3), 604-609.
- Griffiths, S., & Stefanovski, A. (2019). Thinspiration and fitspiration in everyday life: An experience sampling study. *Body image*, 30, 135-144.
- Godin, G. (2011). The Godin-Shephard leisure-time physical activity questionnaire. *The Health & Fitness Journal of Canada*, 4(1), 18-22.
- Godin, G., & Shephard, R. J. (1985). A simple method to assess exercise behavior in the community. *Can J Appl Sport Sci*, 10(3), 141-146.
- Halliwell, E., & Dittmar, H. (2004). Does size matter? The impact of model's body size on women's body-focused anxiety and advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23(1), 104-122.
- Halliwell, E., & Dittmar, H. (2005). The role of self-improvement and self-evaluation motives in social comparisons with idealized female bodies in the media. *Body Image*, 2(3), 249-261.
- Hawi, N. S., & Samaha, M. (2017). The relations among social media addiction, self-esteem, and life satisfaction in university students. *Social Science Computer Review*, 35(5), 576-586.
- Hayes, A. F. (2017). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach*. Guilford publications.
- Hayes, Andrew F (2022). *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis: a Regression-Based Approach / Andrew F. Hayes*. Third edition. New York: Guilford Publications, Print.
- Heatherton, T. F., & Polivy, J. (1991). Development and validation of a scale for measuring state self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social psychology*, 60(6), 895.
- Heinberg, L. J., Thompson, J. K., & Stormer, S. (1995). Development and validation of the sociocultural attitudes towards appearance questionnaire. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 17(1), 81-89.
- Helgeson, V. S., & Mickelson, K. D. (1995). Motives for social comparison. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 21(11), 1200-1209.
- Ho, S. S., Lee, E. W., & Liao, Y. (2016). Social network sites, friends, and celebrities: The roles of social comparison and celebrity involvement in adolescents' body image dissatisfaction. *Social Media+ Society*, 2(3), 2056305116664216.
- Homan, K. (2010). Athletic-ideal and thin-ideal internalization as prospective predictors

- of body dissatisfaction, dieting, and compulsive exercise. *Body image*, 7(3), 240-245.
- Hou, Y., Xiong, D., Jiang, T., Song, L., & Wang, Q. (2019). Social media addiction: Its impact, mediation, and intervention. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of psychosocial research on cyberspace*, 13(1).
- Huang, Y. (2016). Downward social comparison increases life-satisfaction in the giving and volunteering context. *Social Indicators Research*, 125(2), 665-676.
- Huang, L. V., & Liu, P. L. (2017). Ties that work: Investigating the relationships among coworker connections, work-related Facebook utility, online social capital, and employee outcomes. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 72, 512-524.
- Jarman, H. K., Marques, M. D., McLean, S. A., Slater, A., & Paxton, S. J. (2021). Social media, body satisfaction and well-being among adolescents: A mediation model of appearance-ideal internalization and comparison. *Body Image*, 36, 139-148.
- Jayanti, R. K., & Burns, A. C. (1998). The antecedents of preventive health care behavior: An empirical study. *Journal of the academy of marketing science*, 26(1), 6-15.
- Johnson, H. G. (1960). The political economy of opulence. *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science/Revue canadienne de economiques et science politique*, 26(4), 552-564.
- Jong, S. T., & Drummond, M. J. (2016). Exploring online fitness culture and young females. *Leisure Studies*, 35(6), 758-770.
- Kim, J. W., & Chock, T. M. (2015). Body image 2.0: Associations between social grooming on Facebook and body image concerns. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 48, 331-339.
- Kim, Y. C., Lim, J. Y., & Park, K. (2015). Effects of health literacy and social capital on health information behavior. *Journal of health communication*, 20(9), 1084-1094.
- Klein, W. M. (1997). Objective standards are not enough: affective, self-evaluative, and behavioral responses to social comparison information. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 72(4), 763.
- Knobloch-Westerwick, S. (2015). Thinspiration: Self-improvement versus self-evaluation social comparisons with thin-ideal media portrayals. *Health Communication*, 30(11), 1089-1101.
- Knobloch-Westerwick, S., & Romero, J. P. (2011). Body ideals in the media: Perceived attainability and social comparison choices. *Media Psychology*, 14(1), 27-48.
- Kwan, G. C. E., & Skoric, M. M. (2013). Facebook bullying: An extension of battles in school. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29, 16–25. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/>
- Lancee, B. (2016). Job search methods and immigrant earnings: A longitudinal analysis of the role of bridging social capital. *Ethnicities*, 16(3), 349-367.
- Lewallen, J., & Behm-Morawitz, E. (2016). Pinterest or thinterest?: Social comparison and body image on social media. *Social Media+ Society*, 2(1), 2056305116640559.
- Li, Y. (2018). Upward social comparison and depression in social network settings: The roles of envy and self-efficacy. *Internet Research*.
- Lin, N. (1999). Social networks and status attainment. *Annual review of sociology*, 25(1),

- 467-487.
- Lin (2001). Building a network theory of social capital. In Lin, N., Cook, K. S., & Burt, R. S. (Eds.), *Social capital: Theory and research*. Transaction Publishers. (pp 3-30).
- Lockwood, P., Shaughnessy, S. C., Fortune, J. L., & Tong, M. O. (2012). Social comparisons in novel situations: Finding inspiration during life transitions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 38(8), 985-996.
- Luff, G. M., & Gray, J. J. (2009). Complex messages regarding a thin ideal appearing in teenage girls' magazines from 1956 to 2005. *Body Image*, 6(2), 133-136.
- Lup, K., Trub, L., & Rosenthal, L. (2015). Instagram# instasad?: exploring associations among instagram use, depressive symptoms, negative social comparison, and strangers followed. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 18(5), 247-252.
- Lupton, D. (2017). Digital media and body weight, shape, and size: An introduction and review. *Fat Studies*, 6(2), 119-134.
- Mabe, A. G., Forney, K. J., & Keel, P. K. (2014). Do you "like" my photo? Facebook use maintains eating disorder risk. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 47(5), 516-523.
- Marshall, D. R., Meek, W. R., Swab, R. G., & Markin, E. (2020). Access to resources and entrepreneurial well-being: a self-efficacy approach. *Journal of Business Research*, 120, 203-212.
- Martin, M. C., & Gentry, J. W. (1997). Stuck in the model trap: The effects of beautiful models in ads on female pre-adolescents and adolescents. *Journal of advertising*, 26(2), 19-33.
- Meier, E. P., & Gray, J. (2014). Facebook photo activity associated with body image disturbance in adolescent girls. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 17(4), 199-206.
- Micheels, E. T., & Nolan, J. F. (2016). Examining the effects of absorptive capacity and social capital on the adoption of agricultural innovations: A Canadian Prairie case study. *Agricultural Systems*, 145, 127-138.
- Milam, L. A., Cohen, G. L., Mueller, C., & Salles, A. (2019). The relationship between self-efficacy and well-being among surgical residents. *Journal of surgical education*, 76(2), 321-328.
- Mingoia, J., Hutchinson, A. D., Wilson, C., & Gleaves, D. H. (2017). The relationship between social networking site use and the internalization of a thin ideal in females: A meta-analytic review. *Frontiers in psychology*, 8, 1351.
- Mintel. (2022) Tech and wellness. <http://academia.mintel.com>
- Myers, T. A., Ridolfi, D. R., Crowther, J. H., & Ciesla, J. A. (2012). The impact of appearance-focused social comparisons on body image disturbance in the naturalistic environment: The roles of thin-ideal internalization and feminist beliefs. *Body Image*, 9(3), 342-351.
- Nabi, R. L., Prestin, A., & So, J. (2013). Facebook friends with (health) benefits?

- Exploring social network site use and perceptions of social support, stress, and well-being. *Cyberpsychology, behavior, and social networking*, 16(10), 721-727.
- Norbutas, L., & Corten, R. (2018). Network structure and economic prosperity in municipalities: A large-scale test of social capital theory using social media data. *Social Networks*, 52, 120-134.
- Oh, H. J., Ozkaya, E., & LaRose, R. (2014). How does online social networking enhance life satisfaction? The relationships among online supportive interaction, affect, perceived social support, sense of community, and life satisfaction. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 30, 69-78.
- Ozimek, P., Bierhoff, H. W., & Hamm, K. M. (2020). How we use Facebook to achieve our goals: a priming study regarding emotion regulation, social comparison orientation, and unaccomplished goals. *Current Psychology*, 1-14.
- Page-Tan, C. (2021). Bonding, bridging, and linking social capital and social media use: How hyperlocal social media platforms serve as a conduit to access and activate bridging and linking ties in a time of crisis. *Natural Hazards*, 105(2), 2219-2240.
- Pavlova, M. K., Lechner, C. M., & Silbereisen, R. K. (2018). Social comparison in coping with occupational uncertainty: Self-improvement, self-enhancement, and the regional context. *Journal of personality*, 86(2), 320-333.
- Perloff, R. M. (2014). Social media effects on young women's body image concerns: Theoretical perspectives and an agenda for research. *Sex roles*, 71(11), 363-377.
- Pew Research Center (2021). *Social media use in 2021*.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/04/07/social-media-use-in-2021/>
- Phua, J. (2013). Participating in health issue-specific social networking sites to quit smoking: how does online social interconnectedness influence smoking cessation self-efficacy?. *Journal of Communication*, 63(5), 933-952.
- Phua, J., Jin, S. V., & Kim, J. J. (2017). Uses and gratifications of social networking sites for bridging and bonding social capital: A comparison of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. *Computers in human behavior*, 72, 115-122.
- Prichard, I., Kavanagh, E., Mulgrew, K. E., Lim, M. S., & Tiggemann, M. (2020). The effect of Instagram# fitspiration images on young women's mood, body image, and exercise behaviour. *Body Image*, 33, 1-6.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and schuster.
- Robinson, L., Prichard, I., Nikolaidis, A., Drummond, C., Drummond, M., & Tiggemann, M. (2017). Idealised media images: The effect of fitspiration imagery on body satisfaction and exercise behaviour. *Body image*, 22, 65-71.
- Robinson, M. J., & Knobloch-Westerwick, S. (2020). Seeking inspiration through health testimonials: Improving mothers' self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and behavior in handling children's sleep behavior. *Health Communication*, 35(12), 1455-1465.
- Rodgers, R. F., McLean, S. A., & Paxton, S. J. (2015). Longitudinal relationships among

- internalization of the media ideal, peer social comparison, and body dissatisfaction: implications for the tripartite influence model. *Developmental psychology*, 51(5), 706.
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press
- Rosenthal-von der Pütten, A. M., Hastall, M. R., Köcher, S., Meske, C., Heinrich, T., Labrenz, F., & Ocklenburg, S. (2019). “Likes” as social rewards: Their role in online social comparison and decisions to like other People's selfies. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 92, 76-86.
- Rottmann, N., Dalton, S. O., Christensen, J., Frederiksen, K., & Johansen, C. (2010). Self-efficacy, adjustment style and well-being in breast cancer patients: a longitudinal study. *Quality of Life Research*, 19(6), 827-836.
- Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 57(6), 1069.
- Satici, S. A., & Uysal, R. (2015). Well-being and problematic Facebook use. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 49, 185-190.
- Schaefer, L. M., & Thompson, J. K. (2014). The development and validation of the physical appearance comparison scale-revised (PACS-R). *Eating behaviors*, 15(2), 209-217.
- Scholten, V., Omta, O., Kemp, R., & Elfring, T. (2015). Bridging ties and the role of research and start-up experience on the early growth of Dutch academic spin-offs. *Technovation*, 45, 40-51.
- Shakya, H. B., & Christakis, N. A. (2017). Association of Facebook use with compromised well-being: A longitudinal study. *American journal of epidemiology*, 185(3), 203-211.
- Sheeran, P., Maki, A., Montanaro, E., Avishai-Yitshak, A., Bryan, A., Klein, W. M., ... & Rothman, A. J. (2016). The impact of changing attitudes, norms, and self-efficacy on health-related intentions and behavior: A meta-analysis. *Health psychology*, 35(11), 1178.
- Shen, C., Monge, P., & Williams, D. (2014). Virtual brokerage and closure: Network structure and social capital in a massively multiplayer online game. *Communication Research*, 41(4), 459-480.
- Sherlock, M., & Wagstaff, D. L. (2019). Exploring the relationship between frequency of Instagram use, exposure to idealized images, and psychological well-being in women. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 8(4), 482.
- Siibak, A. (2009). Constructing the self through the photo selection-visual impression management on social networking websites. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of psychosocial research on cyberspace*, 3(1), 1.
- Simpson, C. C., & Mazzeo, S. E. (2017). Skinny is not enough: A content analysis of fitspiration on Pinterest. *Health communication*, 32(5), 560-567.
- Slater, A., Cole, N., & Fardouly, J. (2019). The effect of exposure to parodies of thin-ideal images on young women’s body image and mood. *Body image*, 29, 82-89.

- Song, H., Cramer, E. M., & Park, N. (2019). Cultural differences in social comparison on Facebook. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, *38*(2), 172-183.
- Steinfeld, C., Ellison, N. B., & Lampe, C. (2008). Social capital, self-esteem, and use of online social network sites: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of applied developmental psychology*, *29*(6), 434-445.
- Tiggemann, M., Slater, A., Bury, B., Hawkins, K., & Firth, B. (2013). Disclaimer labels on fashion magazine advertisements: Effects on social comparison and body dissatisfaction. *Body image*, *10*(1), 45-53.
- Tiggemann, M., & Zaccardo, M. (2015). "Exercise to be fit, not skinny": The effect of fitspiration imagery on women's body image. *Body image*, *15*, 61-67.
- Tiggemann, M., & Zaccardo, M. (2018). 'Strong is the new skinny': A content analysis of# fitspiration images on Instagram. *Journal of health psychology*, *23*(8), 1003-1011.
- Thompson, J. K., & Stice, E. (2001). Thin-Ideal Internalization: Mounting Evidence for a New Risk Factor for Body-Image Disturbance and Eating Pathology. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *10*(5), 181-183.
- Thompson, J. K., Van Den Berg, P., Roehrig, M., Guarda, A. S., & Heinberg, L. J. (2004). The sociocultural attitudes towards appearance scale-3 (SATAQ-3): Development and validation. *International journal of eating disorders*, *35*(3), 293-304.
- Tomas, J. M., & Oliver, A. (1999). Rosenberg's self-esteem scale: Two factors or method effects. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, *6*(1), 84-98.
- Tulin, M., Lancee, B., & Volker, B. (2018). Personality and social capital. *Social psychology quarterly*, *81*(4), 295-318.
- Turner, J. C. (1975). Social comparison and social identity: Some prospects for intergroup behaviour. *European journal of social psychology*, *5*(1), 1-34.
- Uhlmann, L. R., Donovan, C. L., & Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J. (2020). Beyond the thin ideal: Development and validation of the Fit Ideal Internalization Test (FIIT) for women. *Psychological Assessment*, *32*(2), 140.
- Ura, M., & Preston, K. S. (2015). The Influence of Thin-Ideal Internalization on Women's Body Image, Self-esteem, and Appearance Avoidance: Covariance Structure Analysis. *American Communication Journal*, *17*(2).
- Utz, S. (2016). Is LinkedIn making you more successful? The informational benefits derived from public social media. *New Media & Society*, *18*(11), 2685–2702. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444815604143>
- Valkenburg, P. M., Peter, J., & Schouten, A. P. (2006). Friend networking sites and their relationship to adolescents' well-being and social self-esteem. *CyberPsychology & behavior*, *9*(5), 584-590.
- Vartanian, L. R., & Dey, S. (2013). Self-concept clarity, thin-ideal internalization, and appearance-related social comparison as predictors of body dissatisfaction. *Body image*, *10*(4), 495-500.
- Vaterlaus, J. M., Patten, E. V., Roche, C., & Young, J. A. (2015). # Gettinghealthy: The

- perceived influence of social media on young adult health behaviors. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 45, 151-157.
- Veldhuis, J., Konijn, E. A., & Knobloch-Westerwick, S. (2017). Boost your body: Self-improvement magazine messages increase body satisfaction in young adults. *Health Communication*, 32(2), 200-210.
- Venter, A. (2019). Social media and social capital in online learning. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 33(3), 241-257.
- Verduyn, P., Lee, D. S., Park, J., Shablack, H., Orvell, A., Bayer, J., ... & Kross, E. (2015). Passive Facebook usage undermines affective well-being: Experimental and longitudinal evidence. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 144(2), 480.
- Villalonga-Olives, E., & Kawachi, I. (2017). The dark side of social capital: A systematic review of the negative health effects of social capital. *Social science & medicine*, 194, 105-127.
- Vogel, E. A., Rose, J. P., Roberts, L. R., & Eckles, K. (2014). Social comparison, social media, and self-esteem. *Psychology of popular media culture*, 3(4), 206.
- Vogel, E. A., Rose, J. P., Okdie, B. M., Eckles, K., & Franz, B. (2015). Who compares and despairs? The effect of social comparison orientation on social media use and its outcomes. *Personality and individual differences*, 86, 249-256.
- Williams, D. (2006). On and off the'Net: Scales for social capital in an online era. *Journal of computer-mediated communication*, 11(2), 593-628.
- Wills, T. A. (1981). Downward comparison principles in social psychology. *Psychological bulletin*, 90(2), 245.
- Zhang, S., Anderson, S. G., & Zhan, M. (2011). The differentiated impact of bridging and bonding social capital on economic well-being: An individual level perspective. *J. Soc. & Soc. Welfare*, 38, 119.