

In the past couple of decades, social media has become increasingly more ubiquitous in people's lives. Social media can be understood as a new platform for social comparison and identity formation that is extremely compelling, especially for younger females. Yet it is possible that this constant appraisal of oneself can be related to low self-esteem and even negative body image. If this is the case, then perhaps this trend can be combated with social media posts designed to improve body image.

To test this query, I have conducted an exploratory study of the impact of different types of Instagram posts on young adult women's body image. In particular, I studied three different types of social media posts Perloff identified for improving body image (2014). The types of social media posts are based on three distinct psychological constructs: the knowledge bias, the social norms theory, and the theory of positive psychology. I am particularly interested in knowing which of these three approaches deployed on Instagram, if any, is most effective in improving body image in young adult women. After receiving IRB approval for the study, I began recruiting 200 cisgender women ages 18-25 who report active Instagram use via convenience sampling methods.

Those who met the inclusion criteria were given a survey that measures intensity of Instagram use, body appreciation, and body dissatisfaction. Each participant will then be exposed to two different Instagram posts, one text-based and one image-based, that either violated the knowledge bias, took advantage of the social norms theory, drew on aspects of positive psychology, or served as controls. Finally, participants' body image measures will be assessed once more. Once all the data is collected, I will be conducting an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to determine statistical significance of the results.