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## "Studies have Revealed that Women Routinely Compare Themselves with the Encountered Mass-Mediated Thin Ideals "

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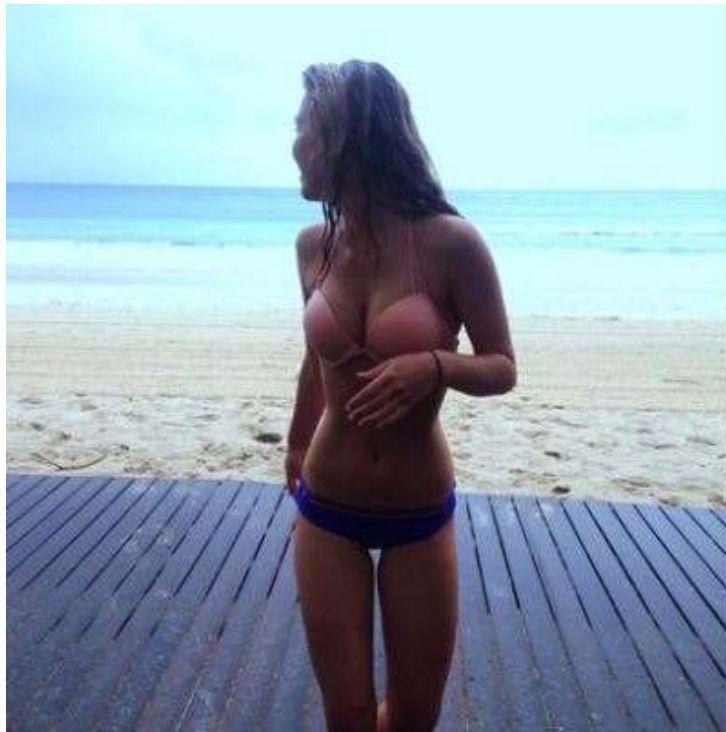
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Faculty Mentor: **Dr. Pavica Sheldon**, Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Arts, College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, UAH, Morton Hall 342, Huntsville AL 35899; ps0027@uah.edu, 256-824-2305; previously participated in the RCEU

Project Summary: Studies have revealed that women routinely compare themselves with the encountered mass-mediated thin ideals which, in turn, elicit negative comparisons. Little is known about how this negative effect can be counteracted. This project will test whether looking at social media images highlighting the artificial nature of mass-mediated, idealized female beauty reduces social comparison processes in a subsequent situation. The RCEU student will help gather relevant literature, find participants for the study, and administer the experiment. Participants will be college-age women. They will first complete questionnaire measuring body satisfaction and perfectionism. Then, all participants will be randomly assigned to one of two conditions. In the first condition, participants will be asked to look at images of a thin woman model. After exposure to six images, they will be asked to rate the attractiveness of the model and their desire to look like her. Finally, their body satisfaction will be assessed again to gauge the extent of social comparison. In the second condition, women will be exposed to the same images of the model, but this time accompanied with her captions emphasizing that “social media is *not* real life.” Again, their body satisfaction will be measured to see whether or not looking at the awareness images reduces social comparisons with the idealized model. The images shown to women in both conditions are real social media posts of a former Instagram star, Essena O’Neill. O’Neill was a social media celebrity from Australia who used to diet to look good for social media and her modeling career. Later she decided to initiate a movement where an individual's worth is not determined by their physical attributes or social media influence. She deleted thousands of photos from her Instagram account, re-captioning a select few with commentary poking fun at how contrived some of her more popular photos were. O’Neill famously deconstructed her Instagram page to prove it was not a reflection of reality. (An example of an image that will be shown to women in the second condition. In the first condition, participants will be shown an image without captions)



essenaoneill

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essenaoneill Edit real caption: This is what I like to call a perfectly contrived candid shot. Nothing is candid about this. While yes going for a morning jog and ocean swim before school was fun, I felt the strong desire to pose with my thighs just apart #thighgap boobs pushed up #vsdoublepaddingtop and face away because obviously my body is my most likeable asset. Like this photo for my efforts to convince you that I'm really really hot #celebrityconstruct

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marzontost @phoebgarrett @carolinefrecker

\_nadiasuhaimi @bothainaaa\_

emma\_2421 @babymayblackaby her account

wendy.can @j.arandez check the captions of her photos.

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...

Student Prerequisites: Students must be of junior or senior status in Communication Arts, Psychology, or Sociology and have a good understanding of social science research methods. An “A” grade in a social science research methods class is desirable.

Student Duties: The student will start the work by reviewing the relevant literature regarding social comparison and social media. Under my supervision, the student will conduct experiments with female UAH students. After collecting and entering the data, the student will assist with writing the results and discussion sections. At the end of the project, the student will have a 20-25 page manuscript ready for presentation at a conference.

Mentor Supervision and Interaction: Mentee and I will meet in my office once or twice per week, and more often if necessary. We will use a shared Dropbox folder to facilitate interpersonal communication. I will teach the student how to enter data into SPSS, and I will show them how to analyze data. I will also provide additional material on how to write a scholarly article, including a literature review, methodology, and the results and discussion sections. I will help the student with the final presentation of the project.