



# The Effect of Viewing Appearance-Based and Self-Compassion Social Media Content on Body Image

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## Introduction

- ❑ The body-positivity movement has been shown to have significant effects on increasing positive body image (Cohen et al., 2019)
- ❑ Research has also demonstrated a correlation between appearance-neutral self-compassion content and increased sense of self-worth (Wasylikiw et al. 2012)
- ❑ Past research has not directly compared the effects of viewing both the appearance-neutral and appearance-focused positive content on body self-esteem
- ❑ Past research in this and related content areas has lacked male representation

## Hypotheses

- ❑ H1: Participants in both experimental groups will experience an increase in measures of body self-esteem
- ❑ H2: participants in the appearance-neutral self-compassion condition will experience a greater increase in measures of body self-esteem than those in the appearance-focused body positive condition
- ❑ H3: Higher scores on measures of thin/muscular ideal internalization and/or trait appearance comparison will act as covariates in the relationship between the photo condition and body self-esteem

## Method

- ❑ Participants consisted of 252 college students (160 women, 92 men), 18-25 years of age, recruited from entry-level psychology classes
- ❑ Participants randomly assigned to view one of three photo exposure conditions
- ❑ Participants given demographic survey, social media use survey, and un-repeated measures of trait ideal internalization (SATAQ-4R-M; SATAQ-4R-F) and trait appearance comparison (PACS)
- ❑ Participants given pre-test and post-test measures of body self-esteem: state body appreciation, state body satisfaction, and state self-compassion (VAS items)
- ❑ Immediately after pre-test, participants viewed 20 images for at least 2 minutes

## Stimuli

- ❑ Evaluated by raters for relevancy
- ❑ Each photo-exposure condition consisted of 20 images, presented to participants in random order
- ❑ Participants in body-positive condition shown images matching their reported gender identity



Control



Body Positive



Self-Compassion

## Measures

- ❑ SATAQ-4R-F/SATAQ-4R-M ( $\alpha=.82/\alpha=.75$ )
  - ❑ e.g. "I feel pressure from the media to be thin"
- ❑ PACS ( $\alpha= .92$ )
  - ❑ e.g. "In social situations I sometimes compare my figure to the figures of other people"
- ❑ VAS Items for SBA/SBS/SSC ( $\alpha=.90/\alpha=.96/\alpha=.92$ )
  - ❑ e.g. "Despite my flaws, I accept my body for what it is"

## Results

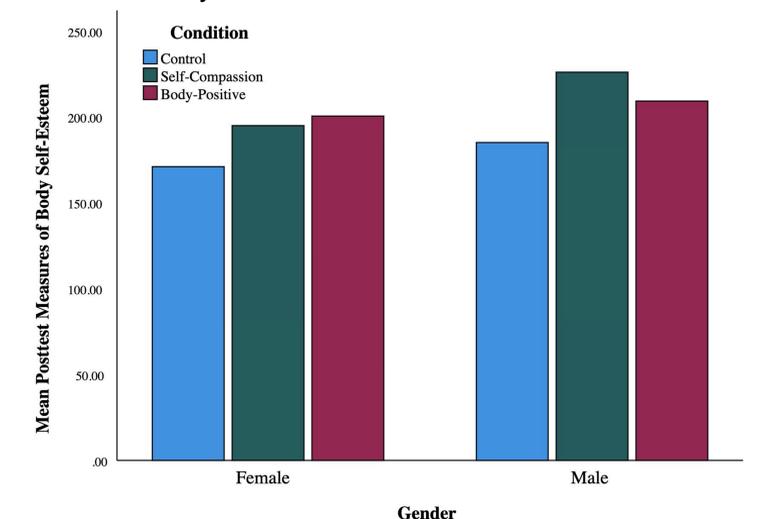
- ❑ Photo exposure condition had a significant effect on BSE ( $F(2,236)=11.5, p<.001$ ) and both the body-positivity ( $p<.001$ ) and self-compassion ( $p<.001$ ) conditions differed significantly from the control condition
- ❑ There was not a significant difference found between the two experimental conditions ( $F(2, 236)= 11.5, p=.88$ )
- ❑ Trait ideal internalization was as a significant covariate in the relationship ( $F(1,236)=1227.7, p=.04$ ); trait appearance comparison did not play a role ( $F(1,236)=.10, p=.75$ )
- ❑ Men and women differed significantly on both pre and posttest measures of BSE ( $t(261)=-3.19, p=.002$ ), PACS ( $t(272)=5.73, p<.001$ ), and SATAQ-4R scores ( $t(279)=4.226, p<.001$ )
- ❑ Both genders experienced a proportional increase in BSE after being exposed to either body positivity or self-compassion photo conditions
- ❑ Both post-BSE scores ( $t(89)= -3.022, p=.003$ ) and  $\Delta$ BSE scores ( $t(85) =2.094, p=.03$ ) were significantly different for men and women who were shown appearance-neutral self-compassion photos (See Figure 1)

## References

- Cohen, R., Fardouly, J., Newton-John, T., & Slater, A. (2019). #BoPo on Instagram: An experimental investigation of the effects of viewing body positive content on young women's mood and body image. *New Media & Society* 21(7), 1546-1564. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819826530>
- Wasylikiw, L., MacKinnon, A. L., & MacLellan, A. M. (2012). Exploring the link between self-compassion and body image in university women. *Body Image*, 9(1), 236-245. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2012.01.007>

Figure 1

Gender Differences in Posttest Measures of Body Self-Esteem by Condition



## Discussion

- ❑ Both appearance-based and self-compassion content are effective at increasing body self-esteem
- ❑ Individuals with high ideal internalization tendencies should be encouraged to incorporate more appearance-neutral positive content into their social media habits
- ❑ Challenging thin/muscular ideals with diverse body type representation, combined with the protective properties of viewing self-compassion content may be most effective for increasing body self-esteem especially in those with high trait ideal internalization
- ❑ Appearance-neutral self-compassion content may be especially effective at increasing body self-esteem in men

## Limitations

- ❑ More diverse participant population for more generalizable results

## Future Research

- ❑ Further incorporate men and gender nonconforming individuals
- ❑ Propose alternative methods to increasing body self-esteem